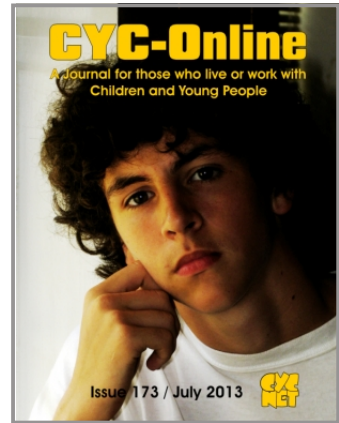


CYC-Online

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

Issue 173 / July 2013





ISSUE 173: JULY 2013

Contents

Editorial: Moments of Generosity at the World / 3

It's the End of the World as we Know It (and I feel fine) / 6
Kiaras Gharabaghi

Turning My Self Inside-Out: My Theory Of Me. / 9
Gerry Fewster

Creating Trusting Connections / 30
Jack Phelan

Vulnerability: The Key to Rhizomatic Relationship / 32
Hans Skott-Myhre

Optimism and the future of Child and Youth Care. / 36
James Freeman

Child and Youth Care Approaching a Global Critical Mass / 39
Laura Steckley

Take One: World Reflections in Newfoundland / 41
Aurora Demonte and Heather Sago

Take Heed, CYC Supervisors...Take Heed / 43
Frank Delano

What Do We Think of the Children? / 47
John Stein

A Glimpse into a Life You've Never Lived / 49
Louisa M. Riccobono

Developing inclusive ecological assessments / 55
Chris Walter and Manuela Costa

The Dolphin Story: Four complexities in residential treatment of juvenile offenders . . . / 59
Robert Heintzelman

Postcard from Leon Fulcher / 64

EndNotes / 67

Information / 70



Moments of Generosity at the World



The CYC World came. The CYC World ended. The World is over.

As most readers of CYC-Online will be aware, we have just finished the 1st ever CYC World Conference, hosted by the CYC Association of Newfoundland & Labrador and CYC-Net. By all accounts it was a successful gathering of the CYC Clan!

The World was filled with moments of generosity. In the following, I want to acknowledge some of these moments, because I think in many ways they reflect the character of our field: caring, generous, giving, and responsive to the needs of others. So, here are some examples of generosity from our field, at the World.

Silent Auction: We made an appeal for people to bring and donate items from their corner of the World for the Silent Auction – proceeds to go to CYC-Net – so many people responded, and so many people made bids, that over 4500\$ was raised for CYC-Net. Thanks for the help!

Picking up the old foggie: So Gerry and Judy were hobbling down the hill to go on a tour. A car passed, backed up, asked them if they wanted a lift (it was a

conference member) – but more amazing, when Gerry and Judith finished their tour, the same person was waiting there to take them back to the hotel.

Puffin Poker cards: We made an appeal for people to donate cards for the first Puffin Poker game – and cards came in from all over the world – we had more cards than they could play out 😊 And they never did use the “Don’t mess with Texas’ cards- the first set for the next game (the Texans never showed up for Poker)

Puffin Poker Winner: Okay, this is my favourite story. The Puffin Poker game turned out to be a battle between three women. Finally the night wore off and it was time to finalize it and so one final hand, all in, was played and Johanna won the tournament. She collected her prize and we all went off to our separate lives.

The next day Johanna came to me and said “I had a great moment with my Puffin Poker Quiche last night and this morning. And I have decided I would now like to donate it to the Digital Media Collection (Social Archives).

I said “wonderful. We will put your



name on it.” She responded, after a moments reflection “Would you please put the names of the three women finalists on it.” Now that is CYC generosity at its best!

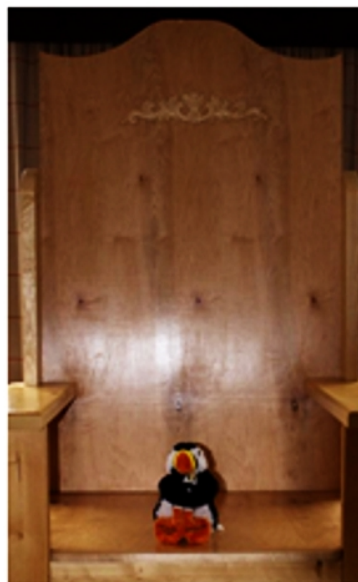


Joanna's trophy is shown above. It will be engraved, and stored in the DMC, as she requested.



Here is Joanna, with the 2 other Women Champions, Laura and Melissa.

Puffin Mascots: The Puffin was the mascot of the World.



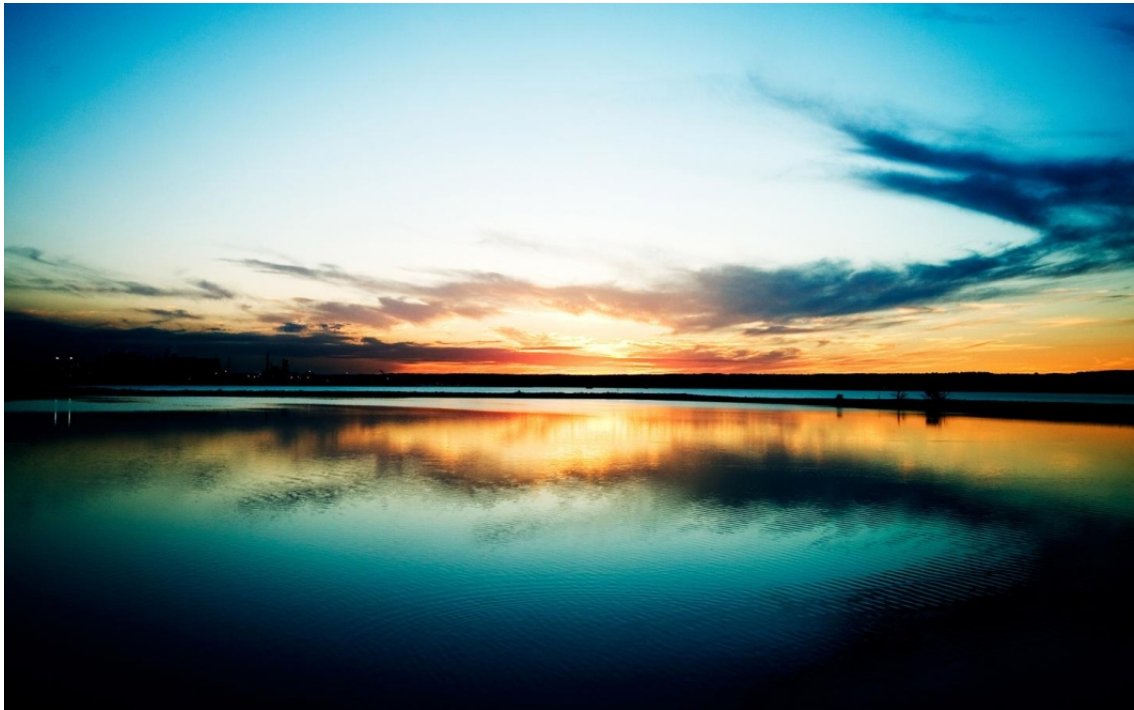
For the Puffin Poker game, and the launch of the Digital Media Collection Social Archives, I asked Lori to find two delightful Puffins – one as a gift for the Dealer, Kim Snow from Ryerson, and the other as a permanent mascot of the DMC. Lori found them, gave them to me and said ‘my gift’! Damn fine gesture to the future of the World and of the DMC. Thanks Lori! Below is Penny Pokerpuffin in her Throne Chair.

Thom

View the video of the Opening of Conference and the Presentation by Gerry Fewster at

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6YND9PFKIAuclRfQ0RKcENaZVU/edit?usp=sharing>





It's the End of the World as we know it (and I feel fine)

Kiaras Gharabaghi

I don't remember a conference that was anticipated with as much excitement as the CYC World Conference held last month in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. For me personally, it was the prospect of seeing many of my friends from the field, getting an opportunity to make new friends, and pushing the envelope on CYC discussion and debate a little further. I was also looking forward to pro-

viding a great opportunity for the Ryerson University students that came along, 12 of them in total, but in particular the five that had been active all year in my various student engagement projects, to really connect to the field through the amazing personalities of our CYC Community.

Well, the CYC World Conference did not disappoint. I certainly enjoyed my time spent with good friends, I learned

quite a few new things from presenters representing huge diversity in perspective, geography and identity, and my students certainly felt something very special happen to them over the course of the week. I am convinced they will all stay in touch well after graduation, and some of them will make their mark on our field in the no-so-distant future.

The Conference was impressive in other ways too. In spite of a much lower registration fee than what has sadly become customary, the 'extras' were fantastic, including the food (breakfast, lunch and most dinners were included, as well as snacks and coffee throughout the day), an amazing 'kitchen party' (a Newfoundland tradition) which was far better than the usual conference banquet, and a conference bag that has itself a history of CYC values and ethics, having been hand crafted in South Africa in partnership with a Newfoundland child and youth-serving organization. The conference organizing team was beyond description, friendly, available, responsive, and simply superb in every respect.

One of many highlights at this conference, for me at least, was the launch of the CYC Social Archive, which seeks to capture and forever provide access to, the social history of the CYC field, with emphasis on our gatherings, the personalities, the stories, the artifacts, the photos and evidence of some of the more intense social/substantive informal discussions that unfold outside of the core conference program. Organized by the DMC Collective, and hosted by Ryerson University, this Social Archive will be a tremendous resource for new entries into our field to

get a sense of where we came from and how we evolved over the years and decades. So many attendees at the launch event brought 'stuff' for the Social Archive (photos, T-shirts from other gatherings, pins, conference bags from other gatherings, etc.), with many promises to send along more 'stuff' to my office in the coming weeks and months.

The conference had some low moments as well. Most importantly, we were all devastated to learn that the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, headed by the always 'wise' and 'well-informed' Minister Jason Kenney, had (at the last minute) refused to grant visitor visas to a large number of conference delegates from developing countries. We all very much missed these friends and colleagues from Africa and elsewhere, and certainly their absence mitigated what would otherwise have been undoubtedly the most global of CYC Conferences ever held in North America.

In spite of this set back, there was another element of the conference that I thought was very special, but that may have been experienced differently by others. It was a rare gathering of 'elders' in what for me at least is the foundation of the North American CYC field, including the likes of Gerry Fewster, Mark Krueger, Jack Phelan, Thom Garfat, Jim Anglin, Leon Fulcher and others. I enjoyed being amongst these individuals, talking CYC and (re)-connecting with these wonderful individuals who have for several decades pushed our field along to become 'something' (admittedly, we are still not sure what exactly that is). I suppose it must be said that this grouping of individuals also



reveals some challenges for the field as we move into the future. After all, these are all white, male, able-bodied, and generally middle class individuals, thus pointing to an urgent need to critically examine the way we have come to create (inadvertently, I think) the appearance of a little bit of an 'exclusive club' in our field.

In spite of this undercurrent, or perhaps because of it, I left the World Conference with a great deal of optimism.

It captured for me what has already been accomplished in our field, and it laid out, even if not always explicitly, what now must be tackled. This is the time to throw the doors wide open, and to create spaces for 'lingering' at the 'Crossroads'. The

theme of the conference was 'connecting at the crossroads'; I like to think of 'lingering' at the crossroads because it implies not a momentary activity, not a specific decision-point, not a dichotomy of either connecting or not, but instead a space for trying each other out, of experiencing each other, in all of our diversity: gender, age, identity, culture, ideas, perspectives, nationalities, geographies and class.



Sting photographed with a famous person at the World conference.

It is indeed the end of the World as we know it; I feel fine because I am convinced that between now and Vienna in 2016 (where the next World Conference will be held in conjunction with FICE International), our face, and therefore our collective experience of CYC, will change, grow and evolve to something quite wonderful. In fact, I can't help but notice just how much the CYC conversations are being influenced these days by ideas that

are consistent with CYC values, but are embedded in very different theoretical frameworks. Vienna will provide a space for social pedagogy and CYC to come together in an exploration of being with young people (and families and communi-

ties) and that promises openings for other participants, other ideas, and other themes. And geographically, it may provide better access to more people, especially those from Africa and Asia.

In closing, I want to reinforce just how much I enjoyed making new connections and friends at this conference. Therefore, I will end this month with a completely random picture of one of those new connections I have made.

Turning My Self Inside-Out: My Theory Of Me

GERRY FEWSTER

Abstract: While the idea of “Self” might tantalize the mind, the experience of “Self” can only emerge from the direct, moment-by-moment, immersion in life. In this article, the author attempts to bring these two spheres into communion within the framework of his own personal and professional experience of working with children.

All my images of myself as I wished to be were images of myself armed. Because I did not know who I was, any image of myself, no matter how grotesque, had power over me. This much I understand now. But the man can give no help to the boy, not in this matter nor in those that follow. The boy moves always out of reach.

— T. Wolff (1989)

On the one hand, the idea of “Self” is very simple — it’s just me experiencing each moment from my own unique perspective. On the other hand, it is a mind-boggling notion that urges me to come to terms with my place in the cosmos. Beyond our daily struggle to survive are there any questions more

important than: “Who am I?”, “Who are you?”, and “What are we doing here together?” Yet none of these questions can be addressed in dependently. Without “you,” there can be no “me,” and without our *relatedness*, there is nothing for us to share. In the human journey, then, relating to Self and relating to others are essential aspects of the same developmental process.

Paradoxical as it may appear, the more I am able to experience my Self as a separate and unique being, the more I am able to become an active participant in seeking, creating, and sustaining my relationships with others — and vice-versa. I believe that this quest for *relational autonomy* is a central, life-long, developmental theme. For me this has translated into a dogged determination to transform obligations into choices, each step moving me closer



to the centre of my own life and toward authentic connectedness with others.

As a professional, it took me over 30 years to become completely convinced that within each and every “client” there is a powerful essence with all of the wisdom and resources to respond to circumstances and create a unique experience of life. As a practitioner, it is taking almost this long to learn how to work toward creating the conditions in which this essence can be invited to come

forward and take its place in the world. Even now, I struggle to sustain the faith and the discipline that make it possible for me to simply sit back and allow the process to unfold. But every time I am privileged to witness this remarkable transformation taking place, my own separate and unique sense of Self becomes confirmed.

What I Was Told

Being trained in the traditions of western psychology I was always led to believe that the Self is an idea we carry around in our heads — a complex and recurring pattern of thoughts through which we define our qualities, identify our potentials, and evaluate our performances. According to this view, any feelings we happen to have about our Selves, including our sense of personal esteem, are simply emotional responses to such thoughts, triggered

through our day-to-day encounters with the world.

Most of my mentors seemed to agree that this image of Self begins to form very early in life and develops through the assimilation of feedback from our primary caregivers. As these “significant others” respond to us, so we begin to internalize their definitions and appraisals of who we are, our place in the scheme of things, and our value in the world. Since this Self view is held together by

our actions, we generally learn to do those things that confirm our “identity” within our prescribed network of relationships. Later, as we come to recognize our Selves by observing and evaluating our own behaviour, we develop our own internal Self-affirming feedback loop, giving our Selves a sense of continuity. As cognition develops, so the emerging idea of who we are becomes increasingly complicated and differentiated. Given the mind’s preoccupation with creating consistency and predictability in our lives, this Self view, along with its associated feelings and behaviours, also becomes increasingly stable. By the time we enter school, it is so well established that, although subsequent experiences may produce some interesting new melodies, the basic theme remains relatively constant, perhaps for a lifetime. Some might think of this as our “personality.”



As an aspiring professional, it was important for me to recognize that any modification to a client's established Self view could only occur through powerful and persistent changes in the program of messages received from significant others. In working with children, my first task would be to become "significant," although my teachers never seemed quite sure about how I should do this. Then I would need to be very aware of the verbal and nonverbal feedback I offered, paying particular attention to how such opinions and appraisals were being received and incorporated into the child's existing configuration of ideas. It also occurred to me that, in order to create an effective internal feedback loop, the child would need to learn behaviours compatible with any change in Self image. Encouraging a child to behave in ways incompatible with her or his view of Self would likely result in "cognitive dissonance" anxiety or even cognitive fragmentation. I realized that it would be a delicate and difficult task, demanding all of my professional skills and insights.

Believing the Self Concept to be a central ingredient in the process of psychological growth and change, I worked diligently to bring Self-modification techniques into my professional practice while continuing to play around with my own theoretical variations (Fewster, 1977). Yet, even in my most zealous professional moments, I always harbored a notion (an intuition, you might say) that, at its core, my own sense of Self was more than a constructed identity defined by what others had to say about me. Surely there was more to *me* than that!

From the inside, it always seemed that I had some part in influencing how others responded toward me and, while I have spent much of my life seeking the approval of others, I have always treasured that part of me that is essentially indifferent to what others might think of me or expect of me. In fact, as the years passed by, it became increasingly clear that the *real* Gerry Fewster was quite different from the image that had been constructed and presented through my interactions with others — particularly the "significant" ones. So, while it seemed okay for me to apply my well-learned theories to other lives, at some level I exempted my own Self from the process — an objective professional stance, of course. Having been trained in the fine art of Behaviour Modification, however, I was already quite capable of taking myself out of the equations of my professional theories and practices.

My Disowned Self

So, however much I learned about the cognitive Self and its dependence upon external messages, I continued to have this unsettling sense that my "real" Self had little to do with what others (including my parents) happened to think of me, and that their opinions were probably more about *them* than about *me*. My professional mind continued to assure me that my discomfort had to be some form of "cognitive dissonance" caused by external feedback incompatible with my well-established Self view. Yet, so often, the glitch in my belly seemed to occur when such information was actually confirming what early significant others had always said



about me — “a carefree lad who likes people, but not too bright.” If there were contradictory messages coming from the inside, I could only assume that they were lurking somewhere in my unconscious, so I simply held onto my breath and concentrated on maintaining my place in the world.

Though I became reasonably adept in the use of language, I made sure that my endarkened messenger was not empowered with words, fearing that what it had to say might be totally unacceptable to others and, therefore, to me. Had this wordless voice simply countered everything the outside world was saying about me, I might have explained it away in terms of what Carl Jung called “the shadow” — the unconscious extension of the Self in the opposite direction. But much of what I sensed about my Self on the inside wasn’t really opposite, just different. I was many years into my adulthood when I discovered the sad, creative, and intelligent being who was more interested in Self expression than in other people’s lives. Contrary to all of my theoretical formulations and predictions, this discovery was made with little or no feedback from others.

In recent years, as I have struggled to bring this part of my Self into the world, I have been fortunate to be around people who have acknowledged and welcomed the tentative glimpses of my lost Self, without any particular investment or judgment. But, as this Self finds such expression, it undergoes its own transformations; not into what others might want but into a growing sense of aliveness and purpose that generates an ever-widening

spectrum of thoughts, emotions, and connections. Through the expression of my sadness comes the unfettered joy of being engaged in life and through my quest to be seen comes the simple pleasure of reaching out to see and touch other lives. I have often wondered how my life would have been if my early significant others had seen all of this in me but, to use a hackneyed phrase, “life is a process.” I also know that those who nurtured me through those early years did the very best they could and they could not give to me what they, themselves, did not have.

So, like most people, I grew up being far more concerned with the outside voices than with whatever might be speaking to me from the inside. Meeting external expectations and being what others wanted me to be was more than a matter of choice, it was a matter of survival. As a child, my compliance was simply the price to be paid in ensuring that my most basic physical and psychological needs were addressed. And the more my fledgling mind developed its need to provide me with a consistent and predictable world (including a consistent and predictable me) the more I deferred to the external authorities for my knowledge of Self — always seeking their approval or, failing that, their attention. In this way, my Self-esteem became inextricably linked to my capacity for conformity, if not obedience. Of course there were times, particularly during that period we like to call “adolescence,” when I decided to rebel against the leviathan of external expectations. A well-meaning social worker once explained to my distraught parents that this was a “normal” developmental



phase, critical for something called “individuation” to occur. But she was wrong; this was no expression of the inner me — I had effectively cut myself off from that source of information. Whatever they seemed to want from me, I did the very opposite. I was simply rattling the bars of my cage. Had I found a way out, I wouldn’t have had two clues about what to do with my hard-earned freedom. The information I needed remained securely locked away on the inside. So there was no hope of “individuation”; I was as tied to the external world as I’d ever been. Real freedom, somebody once said, is wearing your galoshes even if your mother says you have to.

Later, my teachers, who always seemed free from such inner conflict, assured me that my wordless voice was merely intuition — an interesting human experience but basically irrelevant in the overall scheme of things. The more enlightened ones said it was probably the residue of redundant preverbal learning while others talked of primitive urges, ids or libidos, that needed to be controlled by the mind, or ego, in the service of some version of “reality.” I remember leaving church in my early teens convinced that, deep inside, I was a sinner who needed to be cleansed of my inner desires and forgiven for their momentary expressions. So, given the warnings of parents, teachers, Sigmund Freud, and Father Laflin, I had every reason to stay well clear of my wretched inner world. While I was curious about what George Herbert Mead (1934) had in mind when he talked about the “I” behind the “me” and excited by Carl Jung’s liberation of the unconscious, it

was the philosophers (well, some of them) who continued to stimulate my interest in the mindless Self. Who am I once I stand outside my own mind? Or, as some alien once asked, “When the mind asks itself a question and proceeds to come up with the answer, isn’t there is an immediate conflict of interest?”

The implication that both excited and concerned me was that if there really is a Self that lies beneath the mind’s miraculous and devious contortions, then it is unlikely to be located in the brain. Left to its own devices, it appears that this complex little organ is quite preoccupied with its organizational tasks in the service of the mind — *the brain has no mind of its own*. But who else, or what else, could possibly serve to influence or direct its attention? Surely not the sinister wordless voice that would destroy me from the inside out. Far better that I seek the approval of my “elders” and find redemption in the eyes of God. In more recent years, however, my experience has suggested the opposite. It seems that whenever I do contact that inside place, usually somewhere deep in my belly, I eventually discover only my own well-being, along with a profound sense of good will toward others. Remarkable as it may seem, in this place I need no moral prescriptions to guide me, no set of expectations to motivate me and no Self sacrifices to express my humanity. Yet however Self-full I might feel for a time, sooner or later my restless mind jumps in with its list of reminders about what must be done if I am going to succeed and, thereby, feel good about myself.

The Humanistic Movement of the



1960s and '70s appeared to grant unexpected permission for me to explore my wordless Self without having to endure the punishing judgments of others, the loss of my professional dignity, or the wrath of God. Terms such as “Self Awareness” and “Self Actualization” were bandied about as emblems of a new-found freedom as many of us struggled for authenticity, peeling back the layers of the “phony” Self with hard-core group encounters, mind-bending drugs, or simply “letting it all hang out” through carefree catharsis. Rather than promote the cause of Self exploration, however, this colourful rebellion simply substituted one set of external prescriptions for another. Encouraged to “do your own thing,” most of us had no idea what to do other than to follow the gurus of the new authority — one that seemed to support any form of self-indulgence. No wonder it was termed the “me” generation. Apart from a smattering of perfunctory research (e.g., Jourard, 1968; Schutz, 1973), the notion of an authentic Self gradually became lost in a new brand of mysticism, fuelled by the growing popularity of eastern philosophy, that sought the Self in the realm of higher consciousness through transcendentalism and meditation.

During these heady years, a relatively small group within the Human Potential movement were cultivating the field of Bio-Energetics. Harvesting the ideas of Wilhelm Reich (1986), a renegade from the camp of Sigmund Freud, and encouraged by early discoveries in the realm of bio-feedback, practitioners like Feldenkrais (1949), Lowen (1980) and Rolf (1974) began to discover how both the

body and the mind seem to reflect the same energetic system. Through their pioneering work they showed how the body actually contains information hitherto considered to be the matter of the mind. Using various body-work techniques to release energy blocks, they found that their clients also “released” memories and traumas, often dating back to the experiences of early childhood. Stuff that might have taken years to splutter from the analyst’s couch came gushing out in a mindless catharsis of verbalizations, sounds, and contortions. Still searching for personal authenticity, many of us lined up to tear the shackles from our imprisoned Selves and finally announce our arrival in the world — *to release the Primal Scream* (Janov, 1970).

It was fascinating work and, indeed, a whole generation of body-work theory and method has subsequently emerged from the efforts of these early pioneers. The basic problem was that, as with most forms of psychotherapy, there was little real evidence to suggest that the catharsis had any lasting beneficial effect in terms of enhanced authenticity or personal well being. It seems that both body and mind have a tendency to revert back to a familiar pattern, or *stasis*, however blocked or uneasy it happens to be. Some commentators have even gone so far as to suggest that such dramatic revisiting of early injuries or trauma could be damaging to the Self, creating even more defenses and further silencing whatever might lie behind the commotion (e.g., Ogden, 1997). Speaking personally, I can only say that such body-work experiences did little to bring my own inner voice into the world.



On the other hand, it is important to recognize that the bio-energetic pioneers were instrumental in bringing our attention to the fascinating relationship that seems to exist between our bodies and our minds, leading to the distinct possibility that our sense of Self actually encompasses both.

In spite of many tantalizing issues raised by the “Humanists,” the movement as a whole did little to establish its own empirical base. To some extent this can be attributed to the failure or reluctance of its proponents to develop new methodologies capable of examining the complex, non-observable phenomena that make up the human subjective experience. Charged with the crime of being “non-scientific,” many self-confessed humanists simply abandoned any form of grounded reality and transcended into the “New Age,” substituting mysticism for knowledge and faith for evidence. Personally, I wasn’t looking to transcend anywhere. On the contrary, I was hoping to descend, to peer down into the darkness, rather than seek the everlasting light of the cosmos.

My Professional Dilemma

Ironically, much of the terminology left over from the “me generation” was subsequently incorporated into the mainstream cognitive traditions. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the preoccupation with the notion of Self Esteem that dominated popular psychology for over 20 years. Throughout Europe and North America, educators, parents, and helping professionals were devising and applying methods designed to enhance the Self Esteem of kids. High Self Esteem was

considered to be the foundation for all forms of success, from scholastic achievement to pro-social behaviour. In clinical psychology, the enhancement of Self Esteem became integrated into models of social competence and incorporated into the practices of cognitive behaviour modification. In the State of California (where else?) the pursuit of Self Esteem was written into official government policy. Yet few people seemed to be very concerned about the Self that the kids were supposed to feel good about. What mattered was to get lots of positive feedback and, above all, to avoid the vicious trap of feeling bad about having low Self Esteem.

Again I went along with all of this professionally, but by now I had become determined that my own sense of Self would never again be manipulated by the stuff — positive or negative — dished out through the agenda of others. At that time I was the director of a large residential centre for children and we were anxious to show that our efforts to enhance the esteem of our residents were paying dividends. To convince ourselves and our sponsors, we ran batteries of Self Esteem inventories to support our claim that the kids were changing their self concepts and evaluating these images more favourably. Even more impressively, behaviour rating scales provided convincing evidence that identified “undesirable” behaviours were being replaced by new sets of socially appropriate responses. And, yes, the same effects were being documented in the area of school achievement. Contextually, there was no doubt that relationships between the staff and the residents were becoming increasingly positive as success



became a commodity to be shared. In short, we appeared to have created a highly successful, self-reinforcing, treatment program.

Given all of this, it was difficult to call our methods into question but, once again, I found myself believing that something was wrong with this picture. I recalled the boyhood summers I spent with my Aunt Nellie who, unlike my parents, always rewarded me with small gifts and kind words whenever I “behaved myself,” weeding in her garden, looking after her two cocker spaniels, and running to the corner store. I quickly learned what I had to do to please her and, having deep-rooted questions about my abilities and acceptability, I pursued this cause with something of a passion. I became very attached to Aunt Nellie and much preferred her “good boy” definition of me to the one that my parents and teachers seemed to hold, though God knows, I had tried to please them also. I desperately wanted to live with her and bask in the positive light of her presence, always resenting the inevitable return to the harsher realities of life at home. If you had “measured” my Self Esteem during these short summer episodes, I’m convinced that you would have seen a marked improvement. I would have done anything for Aunt Nellie and there is no question in my mind that it was she who decided that I should abandon my thespian fantasies to



become a “people worker.” It was far more important for her to *like* me than for her to *know* me, so I showed her what she wanted to see and she gladly reflected this back with a smile and a candy bar. In terms of our relationship, I really didn’t know Auntie Nellie and she certainly never came to know me. In fact, we were

so busy using each other for our secret purposes that we weren’t even curious about each other.

Yet, for years I wrote to her regularly about my progress and waited anxiously for her letters of approval. Eventually, my need for external validation could not be

satisfied with the odd letter from an aging aunt and I began searching elsewhere for such gratification — from my friends, colleagues, teachers, and bar-room acquaintances. To be honest, I was also looking for the same type of validation from my clients, though I would never have admitted this at the time. Yes, I understood the principles of “countertransference,” but that was just another theory about other lives. Working with children, my sense of esteem was inextricably bound up in their willingness to respond to my administrations and I worked diligently to elicit the momentary high brought about by their conformity. To the outside world, I was a dedicated and effective practitioner and that world continued to bestow its approval upon me. On the inside, however, I was becoming



tired. At a deeper level, I was struggling to contain the resentment that comes from living a life dedicated to fixing and pleasing others. On the odd occasion when I tried to dig beneath the resentment in the hope of finding some strength on the inside, I found nothing. I realized that I was dependent upon others for my sense of Self and my feelings of worthiness but I soldiered on regardless, until I became worn out, burnt out, and, finally, dropped out.

So the more I looked at our successful treatment program, the more unease I felt about what might be lurking beneath the surface. Were we being a bunch of Aunt Nellies, using our social reinforcement strategies to shape other Selves and create an insidious form of dependency? Certainly our primary techniques were external — focusing more upon the evaluations of the practitioner than whatever the kids might be experiencing on the inside. If they were invited to explore their feelings, such invitations usually occurred following the successful application of positive feedback — “Yes, now you approve of me I feel really good.” There was no question in my mind that kids became “attached” to those staff who were designated to dispense approval to them, although I noted that when these staff were not on duty many of the behaviours supporting the child’s old identity returned. Residents were encouraged to pursue particular activities in which they might experience “success” and through which the staff could remain “positive.” To what extent the staff were promoting their own self images through the “success” of the kids is a matter for

speculation but my intuition certainly raised the question. For some reason, I still had a preference for those kids who didn’t seem to give a hoot what others thought of them, although I realize that they too lived in their own psychological prison. For me something had to change, but it’s difficult to bring about change when everything seems to be working out so well. Who in their right mind would listen? I was in desperate need of theories that might speak to my intuition.

Many humanistic writers, of course, have posited the notion of a “Core Self” that forms the essence of who we are, including our unique qualities and innate potentials. Within this tradition it has long been assumed that it is in the emergence and development of this essential Self that the full expression of our humanness become realized. Of late, I have been particularly interested in the work of Jack Rosenberg (Rosenberg, Rand, & Assay, 1985) and his notion that what we generally come to think of as “personality” is actually a “defensive-style” established in early childhood as a response to Core Self injury (pp. 169-196). But, in general, the scientific evidence has always been weak, as none of this has been available for observable, cognitively focused, research. Over the last few years, however, the supportive evidence has been steadily growing, though much of it may have been ignored by the traditionalists. It seems that, for obvious reasons, their agenda is unable to incorporate the findings. Although it isn’t possible to review all of the contributions, I would like to cite a smattering of the evidence that supports my intuitive view of my intuitive self.



While reading the first few chapters of Daniel Stern's book, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (1985), I felt an odd stirring of emotion. I was at a loss to explain why a textbook, written in such a precise and academic style, could possibly trigger feelings in my belly that my head could make no sense of. Having argued for some time that child and youth care should be primarily concerned with the subjective experience of the child or young person, I was drawn immediately to his opening proposition that it was time to stop viewing pre-verbal children from an adult or clinical perspective and attempt to understand what the world of the infant might be like from the inside out. Using the traditional blend of theory and observation, Stern begins to sketch out a world in which infants are actively involved in negotiating relationships with their caregivers. Given the obvious needs for physical survival it isn't unreasonable to assume that babies are capable of acting on their own behalf — but Stern pushes the issue well beyond this. In his analysis, they are actively involved in negotiating relationships based upon mutuality and shared "meaning," the creation of a "we." At the centre of this

primary developmental quest is an emerging sense of Self that is constantly organizing and reorganizing experience. Hence we have a paradoxical picture of a human infant who is clearly dependent on the one hand and Self determined on the other; a separate being, not so much seeking independence as connection. Because all of this is seen to occur in the months following birth, long before the infant is capable of forming a cognitive image of

the Self or using symbolic processes, it stands to reason that this learning process is not a function of "mind" — at least in the cerebral sense. What, then, is the basis of the infant's "curiosity"? How is it incorporated into experience? Where is such learning stored, if not in cognition? Is such information even accessible to the "mind" when cognitive abilities develop?

In grappling with these questions, my own adult mind seemed anxious to dismiss the idea of a Self-directed infant, preferring to attribute the whole thing to some notion of biological or genetic pre-programming. Yet, for some reason, this line of thought failed to satisfy my strange emotional state, a sense that something was being left unaccounted for and unexplored. In retrospect it seems that, at some level, I had already accepted the existence of my own "core" Self that I needed to recognize and explore while my mind continued to search for a convenient theory.

The general idea that the infant lives in a relational world was well articulated by the Object Relations theorists and I was always fascinated by Jean Liedloff's *Continuum Concept* (1975) that describes the child's inherent ability to know and express its own needs. But the notion of babies seeking relationships by systematically gathering, assimilating, and integrating information from their own unique subjective experience begged the question of who, or what, might be driving this process. The idea that an infant might possess a Self seemed like a far-fetched notion, yet here was Daniel Stern openly challenging his own psychoanalytic training and questioning the very



foundations of cognitive and developmental theory. And there was I, struggling to bring my own body and mind into the same equation.

In recent years, the proposition that we are born with a pre-existing inner life has become standard in the field of pre- and perinatal psychology. Thanks to the contributions of people like Thomas Verny (1984), David Chamberlain (1998), and Alessandra Piontelli (1992), we are no longer surprised when infants recall events that occurred during the second and third trimester of the pregnancy. The idea that the unborn child is affected by the physical and emotional states of the mother has been widely accepted, but it now seems clear that her thoughts and feelings, specifically those relating to the child, are also transmitted, received, and in some way understood. The evidence suggests that this is not a one-way system of communication. Rather than being a passive recipient in this process, the child actively speaks back to the mother, communicating its moods, its needs, its pleasures, and its discomforts. Although the mechanics of this relationship might be seen as biological, its essential nature is energetic — each party responding to shifts in the energy patterns that they create and share. In other words, mother and child are already involved in a *relationship* in which they are learning about themselves and each other. In this we can only assume that factors that inhibit the ability of either to hear and respond to the other have a profound influence on Self and the quality of this relationship. Taking this a step further it also seems that the in-utero child is also “aware” of messages emanating from

mother’s external world, recognizing father or partner, passages read from books, musical sequences — it seems that most pre-nates prefer Bach to Beethoven.

Speculating about the phenomena of pre-natal and pre-verbal learning, Thomas Verny coined the term “cellular memory” (1984) to describe how early experiences might be stored in the body as a growing accumulation of sensory material. The difference between Verny’s formulations and the discoveries of the earlier body-workers lies in the manner in which such information is acquired and assimilated. Here we are not just talking about early traumas that become locked into the body but about the systematic acquisition, integration, and expression of information across a wide range of individual experience. One interesting aspect of learning at this level is that it appears to take place “holistically” rather than incrementally. Infants, for example, learn to recognize human faces and inanimate objects by grasping the whole image in one take. By the same token, they “remember” passages from Dr. Seuss and pieces of music heard prior to birth by recognizing their energetic or rhythmic qualities rather than their component parts. With research now revealing that this holistic mode of learning also provides the foundation for the acquisition of language we might begin to question our step-by-step educational methods — but that’s another story. What matters here is that we are beginning to explore a realm of human “awareness” that originates not in the mind but in the senses — developmentally speaking, feelings precede thoughts. At the centre of this process is a subjective essence that



receives, organizes, and integrates internal and external information into an emergent and coherent system of “knowing.” Because this inner regulatory core is capable of initiating and sustaining actions based upon its own sense of history or continuity, it has all of the characteristics embodied in Stem’s definition of Self. Taken together, they also represent the foundations of psychological health.

While all of this might not be enough for my mind to embrace my own “core” Self, it does address my opening question about being more than an idea that I carry in my head. Theoretically, of course, it’s possible to accept all of this and still contend that the child’s sense of Self emerges from the impact of external stimuli upon the organism, but, if there is some form of awareness underlying the cognitive Self image, then the integration of this experience into the conscious life of the individual must be essential for integrated growth and development to occur. In other words, it would be critical for this energetic awareness and cognitive awareness to share an open channel of communication. If, on the other hand, this mindless and wordless realm expresses the essence of our being, as many have suggested (e.g., Almaas, 1986; Gendlin, 1978), then it must contain seeds of our authenticity, our autonomy, and our individuality. Ontologically speaking, it is the “I” within the “Me.” Because it exists beyond the mind, it is sensed rather than observed — a “presence” expressed through its own unique energetic qualities. From the inside, it is experienced as a simple “knowing,” a feeling of aliveness that translates into “I am here in this moment

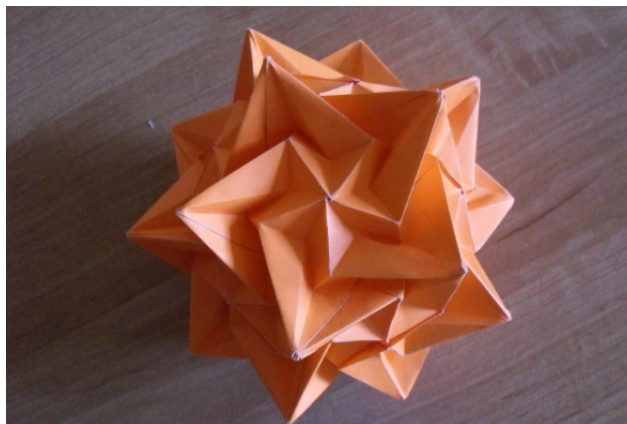
in all that I am - wordless and timeless.” Could this be what we bring into and take out of this world? From the outside it is recognized, not through a meeting of minds, but in direct engagement with another Self. Could this be the unadorned essence of the human relationship — a place where our very existence is asserted and confirmed? If so, then each glimpse, each moment of contact would surely be worth a million words — a spiritual experience, perhaps?

To begin to examine this hypothesis, all we have to do is ask ourselves the simple question — “Do I believe that I am more than a bundle of biological urges conditioned by my environment and dependent upon others for my definitions of Self?” If the answer is “no,” then all we can do is wonder about who just asked the question. But if we hesitate, even for a moment, then the proposition of the core or essential Self is certainly worthy of our full consideration. If our answer is an unqualified “yes,” then surely this Self is worthy of our full attention. And if we don’t know how to access this inner experience and are intimidated by the prospects of Self discovery, all we really have to do is let our head take a rest and breathe into our belly — who knows who we might find there?

For me, it’s interesting to note that my mind has had to struggle through all of the above deliberations, and many more, to come to terms with what I have known all along. The *real* Gerry Fewster has always been there, waiting to be seen and heard — by me and by those who have become significant in my life. Conversely, the *real* Gerry Fewster has always been potentially



available to see and hear other Selves. I've always known that my feelings are not simply responses to my thoughts. Developmentally my ability to feel preceded my ability to think; only my egotistical mind would attempt to deny this. Whenever I discipline my mind to back off from its constant preoccupation with survival, it comes face to face with a Gerry Fewster who needs no justification to be in this world; a Gerry Fewster whose personal worth is equal to any other; a Gerry Fewster whose experience is as valid as any other; a Gerry Fewster who seeks only to find expression and rediscover his own connectedness to others and to life in general. And finally, when my mind opens up to what my body already knows, I will be free to become all that I am.



Working with Children (or anybody else for that matter)

So, what does all this have to do with working with children? Well, at the risk of sounding redundant, I want to underscore the basic proposition, or thesis, underlying all that has been said thus far:

Regardless of the context, developmental history, and presenting problems the basic task is for the child to access, or reclaim, the inner resources of the Self and to live at the centre of his or her own life, taking ownership of personal experience and assuming

responsibility for personal choices. From this perspective, the day-to-day challenges within the life of the child are not problems to be remediated; they are the opportunities through which the child may come to recognize, understand, and transform his or her emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns. For this to occur, the child's authentic experience needs to be seen, heard, and verified by those adults who assume parental and developmental responsibilities. In this way, the child's inner sense of Self finds expression and validation in the outside world and continues to serve as a critical point

of reference through all learning and developmental tasks. This means that the significant adults must be sufficiently secure, centred, and contained within their own sense of Self to recognize the child as a unique and separate being while offering the teaching and training essential for the child's emotional, cognitive and social development.

For those of us who have followed traditional theories and practices in working with children, this challenge may involve a radical reappraisal of our position. In the first place it demands that we put on hold all of those time-tested techniques that attempt to re-program the child's Self image, emotional states, and behaviour based upon our beliefs about what the child *should* think, feel, and do. It means



that we must focus upon the development of the child *from the inside out* and not upon her or his willingness to conform to our wishes and expectations. Whether we happen to be parents or professionals, we must take ownership of our own agenda and recognize that, however well intentioned we believe ourselves to be, we are not at the centre of that child's life. From this perspective, the only hope that has any real value is the hope that the child will eventually assume that place of centrality and become Self-directed, rather than spend his or her life chasing (or opposing) the expectations of others.

But how many of us can settle for such a simple aspiration? Like so many of my colleagues over the years, I have invested much of my life in striving to please, fix, or otherwise make things right for others in the vain hope that, in return, I will be acknowledged, accepted, and loved. Yet no amount or recognition or acclaim will ever be enough to satisfy a Self that continues to question its place in the world. And no matter how much I adorn this personal addiction with layers of professionalism, I know that, somewhere beneath it all, is that little kid who believed that his survival depended upon his ability to keep Mommy close by keeping Mommy happy. In my professional disguises, I came to the conclusion that my survival depended upon my apparent ability to bring about changes in the lives of my "clients." As an agency director, I constantly reminded myself that failure to produce successful "outcomes" would result in funding cut-backs and program closures. I shudder to think of the energy that I have expended on this personal treadmill. Yet even when I

was worn out with the futility of it all, my rational mind cut in to remind me that, even if I did all of the personal work necessary to break free, nobody would support a professional whose only claim is the desire to see and hear his clients for who they really are.

In "reality," very few children actually experience being seen or heard at the core Self level: we adults cannot give to children what we ourselves have never had. How many of us can honestly say that we were truly seen and heard by our caretakers and teachers for who we really are? How many of us were actually encouraged to develop relationships based upon the full expression of our authentic Selves, saying our real yes's and real no's without fearing the consequences? How many of us were supported in exploring our own dreams and pursuing our own ambitions regardless of the agenda of those responsible for our upbringing? How many of us have now managed to create relationships in which we allow those closest to us to be free from our own survival fears? And how many of us can actually sit and listen to another human being without imposing our own needs to fix, change, assuage, praise, or otherwise affect the picture that is unfolding before us?

Having a boundary – this child is not an extension of me

From the outside, a Self can only be fully acknowledged by another Self that has no agenda other than to see and to hear. Rather than bringing their Selves to their children in open curiosity and acceptance, however, many caregivers are



unable to recognize and suspend their own agenda, though they may sincerely believe that they are acting in the child's best interests. To the degree that adults are unaware of their own needs and expectations, they are destined to repeat the relational legacies of their own childhood.

Working with individuals, couples, and families over the years, I've been fascinated by how particular configurations of these unmet needs are formed into repetitive relational patterns that are passed on from generation to generation — until someone has the courage to bring them into the light and make the commitment to break the cycle. Sometimes they are locked into particular roles played out by particular family members or emerge as relational themes, assumptions, beliefs, fears, and longings that persistently influence expectations of Self and other. In his examination of such cross-generational influences, Rosenberg (Rosenberg, Rand, & Assay, 1985) pursues three interrelated avenues of inquiry: (1) "Was this child wanted?"; (2) "By whom?"; (3) "For what?" As these questions are addressed, so the hidden agenda embedded in the family histories of both parents are brought into awareness. By taking ownership of these patterns and attending to their own needs, it becomes possible for the parents to embark upon the painstaking task of freeing themselves, and their children, from the legacies of the past.

This is not to suggest that it is pathological for parents or care givers to have hopes and wishes for their children — only that they should take ownership of such expectations, recognizing that they are about them and their needs and not

about the child. Making this separation is referred to as having a "Boundary" that delineates where one person ends and the other begins. This makes it possible for the adult to acknowledge the Self of the child while exploring the substance of her or his own Selfhood. In this way, the adult-child relationship becomes a two-way affair that engages both Selves in an active learning process.

Unless this occurs, children must learn to survive in a context of overt and covert messages that draw attention away from their own inner experience in order to learn and comply with powerful and pervasive adult agendas. As I have said before, this is not a matter of choice but a simple matter of survival. Far better to become what others would have you be than to face the terror of abandonment or the agonizing pain of rejection. Left unseen and unheard, the core Self retreats. Where this fledgling Self is openly rejected, disapproved of, or even punished, it sets about protecting itself from the pain with layers of defenses that, over time, become firmly entrenched in the structures of "personality" and the musculature of the body. Where parental needs predominate, this becomes particularly evident during the period frequently referred to as "the terrible twos." This is the time when the child's need is to be at the centre of his or her world, to feel that sense of omnipotence that is critical for the development of personal efficacy and autonomy. Adults who have never experienced this for themselves respond to their own needs for power and control by confronting and punishing the child — and the cycle continues.



To the degree that professionals become significant in the lives of children, which they must do if a child's sense of Self is going to be affected through the encounter, the imposition of their personal and professional agenda must be carefully examined. This point is eloquently expressed by Alice Miller (1986) as she challenges her colleagues, in this case psychoanalysts, to be aware of how their theoretical models influence their perceptions of, and their responses to, their patients. Once "objectified" in this way, the subjective experience of the client is selectively taken and interpreted according to the orientation of the practitioner and the pre-determined goals of "treatment." Although child and youth care work might be less esoteric than psychoanalysis, it certainly contains many ideas, assumptions and methodologies. Additionally, since many practitioners are intent upon developing "personal" relationships with their clients, the agenda of their own personal issues is particularly relevant, if not critical (Fewster, 1990). To revert to a previous example, I never did develop that sense of healthy narcissism in my early years, and, in my professional role, I still find myself on the brink of power struggles with kids who seem to want everything their own way. Of course, I could find theoretical justification for imposing my authority, but what I really need to examine is the possibility that both I and my client are reacting to the same unmet need. Rather than simply winning the power struggle, my real challenge is to recognize my own issue and to appreciate my client for bringing it back to my attention. Even if I continue to be "triggered,"

at least I'm learning once again about boundaries —knowing where I end and the child begins. Only in this way can I bring myself to a place where I can see and hear the subjective experience of the child and support the expression of her or his core Self. This implies that I am also addressing issues of my own core Self and, as most of us know, this isn't easy work. On the other hand it takes one Self to see and hear another.

The Energetic Boundary

Given the notion that the core Self is essentially energetic, rather than cognitive or verbal, it follows that the boundaries of the Self must also be sensed and expressed energetically (Rand & Fewster, 1997). As Self energy radiates outward it responds to the outside world by expanding and contracting, depending upon its own experience in the moment. Sometimes it will seek closeness with external objects and sometimes it will push for more space or distance. When that object happens to be another person it will intuitively determine the desired closeness within that particular relationship at that moment in time.

Although this simple mechanism can be readily observed in the unsocialized responses of infants to those around them, it can still be experienced by adults who have retained or reclaimed access to the resources of the core Self. At this level, a boundary is experienced as a *felt sense in the body* — a simple "knowing" of what is too close and what is too far. When this Self energy flows freely, and with awareness, the parameters of this Self boundary are sensitive and flexible, constantly shift-



ing in response to the needs of the authentic Self and the changing conditions of the external world. In this sense, boundaries are both intrapsychic and interpersonal, making it possible to have relatedness as well as autonomy and, above all, choice. With the development of cognition and language it becomes possible for a person to establish a solid sense of Self, saying the real “yes’s” and real “no’s” that make fulfilling and responsible relationships possible. Without such boundaries, there can be no sense of Self. And, if there is no Self, there can be no relationships.

Self-Other Presence

Grounded in both the body and consciousness, boundaries allow the Self to become fully *present* and available to engage with others and the world in a sensitive and responsible manner. At the core level, the Self is experienced as a sense of well-being and continuity that is *felt in the body*. For this core Self to be nurtured and supported in its authentic expression it requires the energetic presence of another Self that is contained within its own boundary. The relationship between the two Selves is defined at the *contact boundary* where one Self ends and the other begins.

By freely expanding and contracting their own energy field, people with effective boundaries can remain *present*, yet determine the degree to which the Self will actually participate in any given situation. Around such people, it is possible for others to sense this state of *presence* and containment within the energy field, though it is most clearly seen in the eyes.

In its evolved form, this condition encompasses a state of mind that is similarly open, free of preoccupation, and fully invested in the moment. Where the intention is simply to make contact, to see and hear another Self, the mind is also free of all other agendas and strategic designs.

Where the emerging Self has been rejected or injured, the flow of Selfenergy becomes blocked — disconnected from bodily, emotional, and cognitive awareness. This breakdown in the integrative processes of body and mind translates into particular patterns of dis-ease that might be experienced physically, mentally, or emotionally — and expressed behaviourally. In the so-called “therapeutic relationship,” then, the task becomes one of inviting the core Self to come forward, moving through the blocks to transform the Self-defeating patterns into a new alignment of intellectual, emotional and body energy — a renewed relationship with Self. But, for any of this to take place, she or he who offers the invitation, must be truly *there* — *energetically, emotionally, and intellectually available, fully present*.

The Professional Challenge

While I might appear to be arguing for the abandonment of all theories and agendas in our dealings with children, a critical reader would be justified in pointing out that the above thoughts contain their own brand of theories, assumptions, and intentions. But my position is not that we should simply abandon all these things in order to bring ourselves to the direct experience of Self. Although this might be the ultimate outcome, my essential point is that we should be *aware* of all that we



bring to the party and learn how to *bracket-off* or suspend any intention that might stand in the way of our seeing and hearing the experience of the child. Of course, it could always be argued that any attempt to suspend a personal agenda is, in itself, an agenda but all such mind games aside, the task of being in touch with Self, while being open to the experience of another Self, remains the ultimate intimidating challenge. And, in this, my conclusion is clear. The quest for Self awareness and development must begin with us, the caring adults.

This is not to suggest that all who commit to working with others must first possess a fully integrated sense of Self. The important point is that, with awareness, they should be involved in their own process of Self discovery and expression, taking full ownership of whatever they find there. They should begin with the experience of their own body-sense, using the breath to access and release the energies of the core Self. They should work to contain these energies within a boundary that can move toward contacting, without invading, another Self. They should train their own mind to respond to what is happening on the inside and the outside *in the moment* while placing the “client” at the centre of their attention. They should practice the art of “mirroring” — reflecting back their experience of the client free from any specific intention to affect or influence the experience of the client. And, if and when they decide to introduce some form of *intervention* in the process, they should do so with a dedicated focus upon what is occurring for both themselves and the client *in the here and now*. In

this way, the helping relationship becomes an open process of mutual and reciprocal learning.

If all of this sounds intimidating, it is. But I know of no other way to break the pattern of professional helpers using the power of their roles to impose their “fixes” on recipient clients. On the other hand, the discipline and the skills involved represent, for me, the highest standards of professional practice. More importantly, they underscore what it means to be truly human and fully engaged in the human journey.

Summary

The theories or assumptions that underlie all of the above might be summarized as follows: The Self emerges through direct contact with other Selves. The Core or Authentic Self will find expression only through encounters with other Core or Authentic Selves. When such contact is not available, rejecting or impositional, the Core Self loses its place of centrality in favor of a cognitive Self that is negotiated through social interaction. Since this interaction is driven by the conscious and unconscious agenda of other negotiated Selves it becomes dependent upon external definitions and ideals. Detached from its own Core, the emerging Self image is false or illusionary and, to the degree that it contains an implanted “ideal,” the individual is left to evaluate herself or himself through the expectations of others. In this condition, the person remains externally motivated, chasing an ever changing and unattainable ideal — and herein lie the seeds of neurosis, stress, depression, Selfhate, and



despair. Self-esteem becomes a commodity to be traded and manipulated, rather than a feeling of well-being that arises from an inner sense of “rightness” that exists somewhere at the centre of us all.

From this perspective, it is clear that the emergence and development of the Self occur within the context of primary relationships. In fact, I prefer to think of this as a single relational configuration in which the individual relates to Self, to Other, and to the contextual world. Consequently, I am led to the conclusion that all of our personal issues are created in relationship and can only be addressed and transformed through relationship. Hence, in the practice of child and youth care, the personal relationship is not something to be used in the service of some predetermined outcome. In the process of growth or change, it is both the inexhaustible means and the indefinable end. By the same token, the Self of the practitioner is not a commodity to be used to fix the Self of the child. Rather, its presence offers a gentle invitation for the Self of the child to come forward and be acknowledged at the contact boundary. Where such contact occurs there is nothing else that needs to be done — this is the work.

A final reflection

As I look back over all that I have written here, beginning with my opening statements about simplicity and complexity, I am left with a sense that, at the deepest level, the essence of Gerry Fewster has not found expression here. While my words describe how my sense of Self emerges through my connections and reflections with other Selves, there is something else

— something about a connection that moves far beyond the smattering of philosophy and theory that I have used to service my beliefs. Somewhere, beyond the mind and beneath the senses, lies the simple truth of my divinity, a wordless understanding of my place within the whole. If I urge my intellect to explain this, I could tell you about chaos theory (Gleick, 1988) and demonstrate how the patterns of my life bear testimony to my inherent unpredictability and how this uncertainty is contained within the boundary of an implicate order beyond our comprehension (Bohm, 1980). I might attempt to explain my consciousness of Self and Other through quantum theory (Zohar, 1990). And I could invoke the principles of Complexity (Waldrop, 1992) to show how, under ideal conditions, my tenuous Self would emerge as an “open” system with infinite potential for growth and connectedness. In other words, I would employ the principles of the “new science” to tell *you* more about *me*.

But the chances are that I will never become a scientist at the centre of my own experience, striving to bring subject and object together within a single equation. More likely I will continue with the more humble human ambition to bring my Self into an experience that, in some mysterious way, expresses all of life. For me, the recognition of my own divinity is not an elusive destination but a point of departure — a pre-existing state of knowing that every person I meet, every colleague who seeks my collaboration, and every child I work with shares that same divinity. I know that somewhere, behind the masks, the anger, the hurt, the fear, and the confusion, lies an essence that also



knows what I know. And, whatever we create in this life, it is within this known state of relatedness that all of our destinies lie.

References

- Almaas, A.H. (1986). *Essence: The diamond approach to inner realization*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc.
- Bohm, D. (1980). *Wholeness and the implicate order*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Chamberlain, D.B. (1998) Prenatal receptivity and intelligence. *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health*, 12 (3-4), 95-117.
- Feldenkrais, M. (1949). *Body and mature behavior*. New York: International University Press.
- Fewster, G. (1977). *The social agency*. Calgary: WRHH Publications.
- Fewster, G. (1990). *Being in child care: A journey into self*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Gendlin, E.T. (1978). *Focusing*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gleick, J. (1988). *Chaos: Making a new science*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Janov, A. (1970). *The primal scream*. New York: Dell.
- Jourard, S.M. (1968). *Disclosing man to himself*. New York: Van Nostrand.
- Liedloff, J. (1975). *The continuum concept: Allowing human behavior to work successfully*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Lowen, A. (1980). *Fear of life*. New York: Collier Books.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Miller, A. (1986). *Thou shalt not be aware: Society's betrayal of the child*. New York: Meridian.
- Ogden, P. (1997). Hakomi integrated somatics: Hands-on psychotherapy. In C. Caldwell (Ed.), *Getting in touch: The guide to new body-centered therapies* (pp. 153-179). Illinois: Quest Books.
- Piontelli, A. (1992). *From fetus to child: An observational and psychoanalytic study*. New York: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Rand, M., & Fewster, G. (1997). Self, boundaries and containment: Integrative body psychotherapy. In C. Caldwell (Ed.), *Getting in touch: The guide to new body-centered therapies* (pp. 71-89). Illinois: Quest Books.
- Reich, W. (1986). *The function of the orgasm*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Rolf, I. (1974). *Structural integration*. New York: Viking Books.
- Rosenberg, J., Rand, M., & Assay, D. (1985). *Body, self and soul: Sustaining integration*. Atlanta: Humanics.
- Schutz, W. (1973). *Elements of encounter*. Big Sur, CA: Joy Press.
- Stem, D. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant*. New York: Basic Books.
- Verny, T.R. (1984). Working with pre- and perinatal material in psychotherapy. *The Pre and Perinatal Psychology Journal*, 8 (3), 161-185.
- Waldrop, M.M. (1992). *Complexity: The emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Wolff, T. (1989). *This boy's life: A memoir*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Zohar, D. (1990). *The quantum self: Human nature and consciousness defined by the new physics*. New York: William Morrow and Company.

Over the years Gerry has written a lot - too much, some might say. After 40 years in the field, he still believes that child and youth care is the ultimate profession.



just returned home from the CYC World Conference in St. John's Newfoundland. It was an excellent event. A lot of talking about the concept of "care" which got me thinking about what to say here.

We work with people who often have great difficulty allowing attachment to occur. They are fundamentally suspicious and self-protective which is quite reasonable given their experience in life so far. Yet our relational focus is to create trusting connections with each of them and to expand each person's attachment ability. The belief that prevents growth here is based on

the idea that no one cares for me, and in fact I do not deserve to be loved. The only reason anyone is nice is because they are getting paid or rewarded somehow, often involving exploiting the vulnerability exposed in allowing anyone near enough.

The wonderful part of being at this

type of conference is that you are surrounded by CYC people, old, young and

in-between. The place is full of CYC energy, and it feels great. As I went around connecting with others, I often shared a memory or checked on progress made or new changes in each person's life. Even with new people, there was some connection even if it was only "how was your workshop?"

What struck me is that CYC people care about each other and do it so naturally that the energy is palpable.

Youth and families such as those we work with do not think that anyone cares about them. When effective CYC practitioners

come into their lives, they start to feel cared about and this can be both nurturing and challenging. They know you are being paid to be nice to them, but when you care beyond that limit it is confusing to their belief system.

Effective CYC people connect with

Creating Trusting Connections



every youth in the group by commenting on how and what is important for each person, describing both verbally and physically that they think about, worry about, and are proud of this youth even when they are not at work. When you stop a youth and check on how his visit, test, sports event or any other experience worked out while you were away, it tells him/her that they were in your caring thoughts, which is not what they believed before you said it. When you live with youths and laugh, cry, play or sweat together and smile about it later, it surprises them because it says you think of them in a caring way.

I do not include here the casual, often impersonal comments that we use like "how's it going, Champ?" Or things like that. It also does not include the dutiful response of "good job" that is supposed to reinforce compliance. Caring comments are heartfelt and personally specific, and cannot be faked.

My favorite CYC worker from long ago could organize a kick ball game and as the pitcher would have a running commentary on each youth that came up to the plate which complimented them for something they had recently done and also made them laugh at the same time. All the youth knew that he cared deeply.

Family support workers who call or text to check between visits with caring messages or questions do the same. The basic message is that I care for you and keep you in my thoughts. This is a frightening message for many people and must be delivered in a way that does not require protective retaliation, so skill is needed here too.

Brilliant CYC workers (thanks Ernie Hilton for that one) do this well and naturally, it is not put on or faked. They actually do care all the time. That's why I love being around them and care so much for them.

— Jack Phelan



Vulnerability: The Key to Rhizomatic Relationship

Hans Skott-Myhre

“Even if you got as perfect as you could, when you got in there, that’s not what we want to see. We want you to go in, we want to be with you and across from you. We just want for ourselves and the people we care about and the people we work with to dare greatly.”

– Brené Brown

We often say that the field of child and youth care is premised on relationship. Indeed, it is one of the things that we claim that marks us as different from other helping professions. Yet, as many of the writers here have attested (Kiaras Gharabaghi, Thom Garfat, Jack Phelan among others) relationship is not a simple thing to initiate, develop or maintain. It is highly variable in composition, impact and trajectory. Relationships can be extraordinarily beneficial or massively destructive; often at the same time. It is in relationship that we find the antidote to alienation, as well as the insular and paranoid formations of community that lead to the worst forms of racism, heterosexism, sexism and xenophobia.

Without a doubt, we live in a complex and shifting web of relations composed of everyone and everything that we encoun-

ter moment to moment and day to day. These encounters elicit from us the capacity to act and to become whatever it is that we have the possibility of becoming, given the composition of the relational field at hand. Put in another way, in every moment, we are in a kaleidoscopic composition of variable capacities made up of all the elements of that moment. Each element, my desk, the computer, the window, the air quality, the spider on the inside of my window, the tree outside my window, the clutter on my desk, the shifting quality of light, my chair and so on, holds the ability to amplify what I can do. Conversely, the same elements can produce lethargy or passivity or what Spinoza calls the sad passions. It is the set of relationships in which I embedded in any given moment that produce me and which I produce.

This is the force or power behind relational child and youth care work. It is the rich matrix of all of the elements of an encounter between bodies in the context of the work that holds the capacity for radically composing what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as new worlds and new peoples. However, as we have noted, the composition of any given moment is com-



posed of variable and contradictory elements or possibilities. In each encounter, there is the capacity for creativity and revolutionary production of new modes of life. However, there is also the potential for domination and control leading to lethargy, passivity and compliance. Both of these processes, revolution or domination, are founded in relationship and both can be found in our workplaces and engagements with each other and young people on any given day.

In each of these instances a new world is formed, developed and put into play. It is the multiplicity of such worlds that form the outlines of the struggle for freedom or control, as they are dynamically created in each moment, in the encounter between all of the bodies in a program, a shelter, a street environment, a school, a family household. The question is what do we intend when we use the term relationship in Child and Youth Care? Do we intend relationship to mean that network of social relations that bind and constrain all of us to the will of the dominant system of rule? Or do we mean that system of relations that opens itself onto an infinite future of unknown possibility and idiosyncratic creativity and risk? Or perhaps we hope to walk a line between the two; neither too controlling nor too free?

I believe it is an important question worthy of a moment's reflection because each of these types of encounter requires significantly different forms of preparation and modes of thought and belief. I would argue, that in the first instance where the intention of the relationship is to shape and control another's behavior (so as to meet our own conscious or unconscious

expectations of normalcy), one has to be trained in the skill sets of concealment, self-protection, distancing and objectification. In the last, where one seeks a middle ground between freedom and compliance, one has to be trained in similar skill sets, but with the addition of some degree (not too much) of empathy, sympathy and kindness; in short a velvet glove for the iron fist. Driving these both modes of relationship is fear, shame and their close functional relative, denial. This complex psychological cocktail is emblematic of the last 500 years of colonial to postmodern capitalist social formations and more complex than I have time to unpack here. Suffice it to say that the belief in the necessity to control others is fundamentally rooted in the fear of one's own frustrated desires and the inculcated shame of the terrifying social effects such perversity has spawned.

The alternative, I would argue, is to be found in the legacy of encounter found in the nearly forgotten phenomenological and existential roots of our work. This notion of encounter is also extended in the work to be found in the equally neglected dusty corners of immanent approaches to psychology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy such as the work on schizoanalysis by Deleuze and Guattari or on intersubjectivity and freedom in Merleau Ponty. In these modes of thought, fear and shame give way to an experimental openness requiring the courage of vulnerability. In this work, to encounter the other is to open oneself; to allow for radical mutual co-evolution of who we are together and who might become if we were not this.

In her work on vulnerability as eluci-



dated in her TED talk, Brené Brown argues that vulnerability is the fundamental building block of relationships. She argues that innovation, change and creativity all have their genesis in the ability to be vulnerable. As CYC workers and thinkers this is a critical assertion. We all seek in our work, writing and thought about the encounters that we have with young people, to be innovative and creative. We hope to be involved in some variation of change. However, I would suggest that we all wrestle with the question of how vulnerable we dare to be with our peers, our bosses, the youth we encounter and ourselves. Many of us may see vulnerability as a weakness and feel that we must present ourselves as strong and invulnerable. Brown asserts that this is a dangerous and pervasive myth. I would agree and suggest that to shield ourselves from others is the truly weak position, because it cuts us off from the flow of life and creativity and forces us to live under conditions of siege. As we know, the end result of a long-term siege is starvation and cannibalism. I would argue, that those of us who feel the need to armor ourselves against the other and to appear invulnerable, experience a psychological and emotional form of starvation and self-cannibalism. Indeed, I would suggest that it is precisely this phenomenon that we call burn out.

Brown proposes that one of the other barriers to risking vulnerability is the prospect of shame. For many of us working with young people, there is the always the often unspoken differential in both power and privilege. Brown tells us that to understand the ways in which vulnerability is related to courage, we must acknowledge

the shame inherent in our privilege. In another vernacular Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we currently live in a historical moment of catastrophe, in which the brutality with which our fellow beings (both human and animal) are treated exceeds the capacity of our emotional comprehension. While we are not necessarily directly responsible for the victimization of our fellows, Deleuze and Guattari suggest we need to be accountable before them. To be accountable for our privilege means to have the courage to be vulnerable through acknowledging our own culpability in at least passively accepting the economic and social conditions that bring young people into our programs. It is so much easier to blame their developmental, neurological or psychological conditions or their families or their communities. To truly engage in a relationship, however, means to open oneself to the actuality that those of us who live reasonably well do so at the expense and suffering of others. Of course these economic and social relations are obscured from our view, but we must rip away the veil and have the courage to face the shame of our complicity. Helen Walters in her blog on Brown's TED talk states that, "We need to recognize and understand deep-rooted shame at the heart of any broken system if we are ever to change it." The question for us as CYC workers is, are we willing or able to admit the broken aspects of our field and face the deep rooted shame of the effects our broken system has on ourselves, young people, families and communities. In short are willing as a field to be vulnerable?

Brown also argues that it is necessary



to embrace failure if we are to be vulnerable. Failure she tells us is inevitable and part of any process of change. If we are fearful of failing and only valorize our successes there is no chance of being vulnerable. This is not a call to wallow in either shame or failure but to open both up to the light of critical examination and dynamic interrogation so as to access new creative forms of engagement that function in the actuality of our current situation, rather than in denial. Brown proposes that to open ourselves to the other, whether a young person, a peer, a colleague, an intimate, a stranger requires the ability to combat our tendencies towards secrecy, silence and judgment. The antidote to shame, fear of failure and their attendant tendencies, she tells us is the ability to join with others in common cause; the ability to be able to say “me too.” I would suggest that this means the capacity to see our commonality of struggle through our idiosyncratic strength in difference. How many of us in our work with young people find ourselves saying, “me too,” when encountering a young person’s struggle with adverse circumstances, or do we armor ourselves and say something like “there but for the grace of God?” Do we have the courage to be vulnerable in our commonality of struggle? Do we have the strength to risk opening ourselves to relationship as struggle and unpredictable experimentation?

Deleuze and Guattari describe our social world as a series of lines. The first of these are what they call molar lines. These are the lines that fix the world in place through ordering and delimiting the flexibility with which things can be described.

In CYC, such a line would include diagnostic categories, professional standards and competencies, developmental and normative descriptions, program rules and levels, neurological and biological definitions of young people, etc. Because these descriptions attempt to fix our understanding of the other and ourselves they actually decrease our capacity for vulnerability. Put another way, when we think we know something about someone else, it distances us from the actual engagement with their uniqueness and commonality with our own vulnerability; in short it places us in a privileged position where we know them but we remain hidden.

An alternative line proposed by Deleuze and Guattari is the rhizome. This line functions under the surface of what we can know, goes in all directions at once, can be entered at any point and when cut off simply sprouts a new direction. In CYC, this is the actual encounter between young people and ourselves. It is unpredictable, creative, productive, scary, and mutually transformative. It is subversive and cannot be blocked as long as we are open to the impossibility of the miraculous. Such a relationship requires the kind of vulnerability that Brown suggests. It is relationship in its messy actuality. For me, it is what CYC is all about. It is the encounter, with all its revolutionary possibilities, all its variable vulnerabilities, all the shame, fear of failure, and struggle and all the exhilaration of true risk when bodies collide that makes the work worthwhile. It is here that the future with all its attendant capacity comes into being. Here the world is born.



OPTIMISM AND THE FUTURE OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

James Freeman

Abstract: *This article considers the authors reflections following the first Child and Youth Care World Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador in June 2013. The author explains both personal and professional impact of the conference and outlines reasons to be optimistic about the future of the child and youth care field. Questions for reflection and discussion are included.*

The Child and Youth Care World Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador was a life changer for me. This was so on both a personal and professional level. On a personal level, a very dear friend taught me that week that the world holds more beauty and goodness than one simple life can hold. Another friend taught me the value and importance of infusing kindness in our acts of caring for young people. I am still recovering from the impact of these lessons and attempting to apply them in my life. These would have been missed moments for me were I not a part of the CYC tradition that keeps me open to new learning, a tradition for which I am very thankful.

A few days after the conference, Dawne MacKay-Chiddenton, one of the conference delegates posted the words of

Albert Schweitzer on the group Facebook page: "In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit". The conference was so full of meaningful moments of human encounters. Melissa Hare, another Canadian delegate, agreed and added that when CYC's get together such connections seem to just happen naturally.

One moment for me, although not the only or most significant, was in a crowded room with two of my best friends Kathleen Mulvey and Okpara Rice. We were invited to sit on a panel discussion moderated by the talented Frank Delano. Around 30 delegates gathered to listen to us respond to questions on leadership and personal development in our careers in



child and youth care. We discussed leadership styles, personal values, our own struggles, and a lot more. I am pretty sure I learned more from the questions and comments of those in the room than any thoughts I shared.

At the end of the hour a moment unfolds. Frank begins to wrap up the discussion, turns to Okpara, Kathleen, and myself and asks, "Are you optimistic about the future of child and youth care?"

I either had not really thought about the question before or maybe it was just the way Frank asked it. There have been times in my life where I certainly would have been ambivalent to the question. There have also been times in my life where I would have been negative or at least distrustful about the prospect. And here in this moment I find myself looking out at the delegates in the crowded room - representing a variety of countries and cultures - and a couple of thoughts come together in my heart and mind.

A rich and meaningful history

I'm optimistic about the future of child and youth care because we have such a rich and meaningful history. When we step back and look at the field, from our early roots all the way to recent events (Freeman, 2013), there are the stories, teaching, and examples of pioneers and others to inform our practice. A number of these men and women were present at the conference. I am just beginning to glean insights from Gary Fewster's 88-page monograph (Fewster, 2013), prepared specifically to celebrate the Child and Youth Care World Conference. As Thom Garfat and Leon Fulcher challenged

those present at the conference, let us not forget our elders and the wisdom they have passed down to us.

A deep base of resources

I'm optimistic about the future of child and youth care because we have a deep base of resources. More than ever before we have access to a range of resources we need. At the front of these is www.cyc-net.org. We have a platform for networking across the globe to support and encourage each other. We have access to experiences and expression in the writings of peers and elders. We have accessible training from world class providers. We have networks, associations, certifications, and conferences. What makes this meaningful and exciting is that these resources - and all that they offer to us - are coming from within the field itself. They are not being imposed by another discipline on us, nor are they a static base of knowledge.

Vibrant and talented workers

I'm optimistic about the future of child and youth care because we have vibrant, talented workers entering and sustaining the field - with a diversity of age, gender, backgrounds, and life experiences. As a whole, new CYCs entering the field are not only proving to be incredibly talented, but they are developing skills to connect with children, young people and families. And perhaps just as important, practitioners are not accepting new developments in the field without question. They are thinking critically, asking for meaning, balance, and voice in all that we do.



Conclusion

The CYCs working in the emergency shelter of the organization where I work recently received a thank you note from one of the teen boys. As you read it, let it be a thanksgiving to you for all the seemingly unappreciated acts of caring and kindness you provide each day. Possibly in some way it will also bolster your hope and optimism for the future of our field. He wrote, "Thank you for the amount of bull you guys put up with every day. Thank you for carrying out every request made by myself or any of my peers. Thank you for listening to us about our problems even after being disrespected. Thank you for staying late even when you should've been home a long time ago. Thank you for reasoning with us even when we are unreasonable. Your work usually goes unappreciated, but...we appreciate you even when it seems that we don't."

You and I come to the young people and families we serve with a rich history and deep resources. We also come with the support and network of vibrant and talented workers. Henry Maier described us as "engaged in a field of human practice where the ability to expand our skills occurs daily" (Maier, 2003). Perhaps one small thing he meant in that thought is that every moment of learning and development of skill we experience individually is also an ongoing contribution to our field at large. When we add up all of our learning and experiences that, to me, is enough to be optimistic about.

For reflection and discussion

What will be your contribution to the field today? Are you optimistic about the future? What would you add to the discussion? If you have a thought, share it with a colleague or send me a note at

jfreeman@casapacifica.org.

References

- Fewster, G. (2013). *Relational child and youth care: Principles and practices*. Cape Town: Pretext Publishing.
- Freeman, J. (2013). The field of child and youth care: Are we there yet? *Child & Youth Services*, 34(2), 100-111.
- Maier, H. (2003). I am envious of you, the leaders in the field of care practice. *Child and Youth Care Online*, 57. Retrieved from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-1003-garfat.html>



Follow CYC-Net at
@CYCareworkers



Child and Youth Care Approaching a Global Critical Mass

Laura Steckley

At the end of last month, over 500 people came together from around the world to attend the first ever CYC World Conference at St. Johns, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada..

The conference theme was 'Connecting at the Crossroads' – an apt one for two reasons: one, the conference organisers really get connection. Many people arrived already with a sense of connection due in large part to the International Child and Youth Care Network, but also due to the pre-conference activities. Moreover, the conference structure and activities were as much about the relational as they were about the sharing of information. So not only were there well-considered social activities that fostered the making or re-making or connections, the daily sessions were designed for deep topical engagement and connections amongst the participants. Our disciplinary wisdom tells us that such engagement and connection takes time, and this was clearly not forgotten in the designation of generous periods of time for each slot.

The other reason the conference title



is so apt is because Child and Youth Care is at a crossroads. We have a generation of what can now be deemed seminal contributors who are coming to that time to step back and work a good deal less; it is now the responsibility

of the next generation of committed contributors to pick up a bit more of the load. If this process goes well, the change won't necessarily be one for better or worse – it will just be different, as new energies and ways of seeing add the next strata to a rich and robust foundation.

My own place of work is at a bit of a crossroads as well. Once an institute solely dedicated to residential child care, we are now working out how to fulfil the much bigger remit of 'looked after children' (which can be defined loosely as children who, for whatever reason, need more care than is normally provided by their families of origin). In addition to this larger remit, the balance of our organisational focus is shifting significantly towards policy-level activities. This holds new opportunities for impact on a macro-level, but we are also concerned lest we lose our connections with (and di-

rect contributions to) direct practice. I think it is hard to hold the macro and the micro – the changes targeted at the big picture and the changes that happen between individuals – in mind simultaneously such that one’s priorities and actions are informed by both, whether that ‘one’ is an individual or an organisation. And yet the experience of connecting individually at a micro-level with kindreds who are also committed to CYC has renewed my enthusiasm and optimism for what is possible on a macro-level. You see, I think we might be approaching some sort of international critical mass where our efforts will become much more powerful than the sum of our collective parts. The connections I see and experience within this sector hold promise for an increasingly coherent effort on an international level. There is a growing appetite for a world in which the dominant aspiration is not the accumulation of wealth but the facilitation of flourishing, and Child and Youth Care is perfectly oriented towards this aim.

One contribution to this building energy will be the forthcoming International MSc in Child and Youth Care Studies by distant learning, led by Graham McPheat and soon to be delivered through CELCIS/GSSW (our newly expanded organisation). Having been part of micro-level changes in student development and macro-level changes in how residential child care is thought about, spoken about and practiced in Scotland through the MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care, we are excited by the possibility for similar contributions to developments internationally. The confer-

ence illustrated the many shared challenges that those involved in CYC, RCC and social pedagogy face. Events worldwide continue to restrict the financial resources dedicated to looked after children, challenging our ingenuity and determination to provide support, services and advocacy to individuals and communities who need it most. The connections made between practitioners and educators across countries and continents can strengthen our potential to positively influence discourses and policies, and to develop practice which is meaningful and effective. The enthusiasm expressed for the course and the number of people who spoke encouragingly about it, throughout the week and across the conference, has reinforced our conviction that an international, distance learning course serves as an excellent opportunity to make a positive contribution to individuals and practice across various localities, and to this growing, global connection.

We offered more detail about these current and forthcoming courses in a previous column (here:

<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/may2012.pdf> p.32). At that time, we were still trying to figure out whether such a course would be viable. We have since decided that there is enough evidence to make a go of it have been working away to make it happen (to be fair, Graham much more than I). So if you’d like more information about it, please get in touch with Graham: Graham.McPheat@strath.ac.uk.

I will inevitably be writing about it in future, as the learning we do together often inspires my monthly column.



Take One: World Reflections in Newfoundland

**"Stories matter. Many stories matter.
Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign,
but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.
Stories can break the dignity of a people,
but stories can also repair that broken dignity."**

— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Aurora Demonte and Heather Sago

For those that could not attend the World Conference in Newfoundland, we want to inform you of a video advocacy project that was initiated in Newfoundland and will continue gathering recordings over the next year. The project is three fold, to explore the following on a global scale: to define advocacy, to share stories of advocacy, and to examine the need for the professionalization of the field. We are seeking video submissions from both practitioners (of all levels of experience) and youth themselves to assist in this project and ecstatic with the response we've gotten to date.

It was mind-blowing the number of people who offered contributions to this project, emphasizing to us how important this endeavor is. Thus, just as our field exclaims inclusion – this project will have no ownership but rather will belong to all. The end goal is to have the advocacy pro-

ject completed and ready to present at the next World Conference in Vienna, Austria in 2016. For now what follows is a short update to either wet your taste buds, or to keep your palette satiated with news of the project's progress ...

Language Matters

- **Advocacy** as a word itself has an undertone of doing for or on behalf of others but not necessarily *with* others. CYC's identified that it is for this reason that our field seems to prefer the terms child, youth, family engagement and/or participation. While we might *do for* in crisis, the ultimate goal is to provide opportunity for children, youth and families to do for themselves to avoid creating systemic dependency. How? It seems CYC's further differentiate that we uphold rights, use knowledge as mobilization, hear and act to the voices of children, youth and



families, and ensure inclusion in our practice.

- **Empowerment** – we heard this word over and over but with some hesitation each time it was said. It seems not that we believe we have the capacity to give others power but rather that we can facilitate the process. Empowerment in CYC is therefore about creating power via building capacities, lifting barriers and increasing sanctioned power.
- **Identification** of the need to construct a framework of advocacy to include child, youth, and family voices, identifying the different ways in which oppression, covert or overt can occur; their views on rights-based professional relationships and to ensure their issues are heard and met with specific, meaningful outcomes.

People and Their Stories Matter

- Strong recognition of the relational approach and its imperative inclusion to effective participation and engagement. For many, this was the birthplace of stories promoting competency in child, youth, family, and community advocacy.
- Strength and sadness emerged side by side as many told of personal and professional consequences they'd received as a result of their involvement in advocacy efforts.

The Profession Matters

- The word professionalization seemed to raised internal conflict in those we spoke to. On one hand, many wanted recognition that our work with children, youth and families matters but on the other hand, we saw and heard about a deeply entrenched fear that we will become too prescriptive and lose ourselves in technique. CYC seems to be viewed *as a way of being* as opposed to a discipline separate and distinct from self. Perhaps it is within this unresolved dialogue that we exist as we do at this time.

We would like to leave you with a question: Are CYC's really social change agents? Some say yes, because we emphasize the power of healthy relationships and engage children, youth and families in their worlds. Some say no, because we cannot change others, we can only be present with them. What are your thoughts within such a debate?

We recognize that these are the major themes that have been identified thus far and expect that they will morph into various forms as the project moves forward. This is a collaborative effort so please take action, form a group and film each other as you share and banter through your unique definitions, stories and perceptions on advocacy and the field! We look forward to hearing (and seeing) from you all! Words matter, actions matter because silence can be detrimental in the lives of children, youth and families!

Please find us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/groups/CYCadvocacyproject
or email us at: CYCadvocacyproject@gmail.com



Take Heed, CYC Supervisors...Take Heed

Frank Delano



Many of the most important life or practice changing events in Child and Youth Care are not planned or thought out but seem to just “happen in the moment”, and we later look back at them as those “magic moments”. When Jill Shah and I developed a working definition of Supervision (Delano and Shah, 2009) we suggested that the dynamics in the supervisory relationship can create a parallel process in all other relationships. We were not referring to the traditional clinical definition of parallel process but rather the observation that as a supervisor plays out their relationship with a CYC Worker they can expect some of the basic components in their relationship will play themselves out in similar fashion with the worker and the child.

When a supervisor orients a new CYC worker to the work they will be doing with children they will hopefully be stressing the importance of the worker being self-reflective and to be making strong ef-

forts to consistently “meet the child and family where they are at”. Few would dispute that excellent practice entails the worker

using their skills and knowledge to adapt to the needs of the child. To best assess those needs it entails a desire to “enter the child’s world” and to carefully listen to the child in regard to what the child feels they need to grow. In this way it becomes a healthy, collaborative adult-child relationship. The supervisor will likely also stress the importance of the CYC worker role-modeling the behaviors the worker wants the child to develop.

I think we will all look back at the 2013 Child and Youth Care World Conference and refer to many life and practice changing “magic moments” that took place for us. One of those for me that just seemed to happen, without plan, in the moment took place in the workshop I facilitated on helping Child and Youth Care workers “Own Their Own Supervision”. I asked the group to write down responses to the



question “If I Could Supervise MY Supervisor I Would...” The responses were anonymous and only a few were read out in the class. The question is meant to get workers to reflect on what they need from their supervisors to grow and become more effective working with the children. Often there is a mixture of responses and sometimes people use it to gripe or complain about their supervisor. However, this time when I was able to look through and digest them later, I was taken by the quality and insightfulness of the responses and the way nearly all were positive and forward moving. There are many theories and thought out strategies for supervisors to determine how to best supervise the CYC Worker. Sometimes the “answers” are very complex and intricate, and sometimes they can be right before our eyes...or ears! When reading these I had a magic moment that said so many of the answers are right here in these responses. I also thought that it might be a magic moment for many CYC Supervisors to practice the role modeling skills they ask the workers they supervise to do with the children...to simply listen in the moment to hear the worker’s needs and to use this list as a framework for guiding their supervisory style.

Rather than try to paraphrase or summarize the comments I think it is most appropriate to simply list them raw and then summarize some thoughts after as to how many of these seem to reflect the basic qualities of excellent Child and Youth Care Practice. The direct listing also respects the value of letting our practice emanate from “just listening” to the needs of those we are working with.

If I Could Supervise My Supervisor I Would ...

- Set guidelines and rules that are clear and the same for everyone
- Listen to problems to make sure you have all the information
- Share info and ideas to make the business better for the people we help
- Make sure problems are heard, not assumed
- Help my supervisor to understand that even though I am struggling right now it doesn’t mean that I don’t have the ability to do a good job (even a great job) with the right support and supervision
- Set expectations, give weekly feedback
- Provide positive feedback often
- Weekly meetings, discussion, helping me critically think my job
- Provide meaningful encouragement
- Ask the two magic questions
- Be clear in feedback how I have done in specific situations
- Find solutions with me on issues presented by funders
- Ask him to just listen to me sometimes, that’s all
- Have supervision in a room, not in program space and without phone, disruptions, or computer
- Share my experiences/expectations
- Start with a check-in
- Ask me a question, listen for my response, be present
- Tell me constructively what I should be working on, give me examples...concretely and specifically
- Ask me about my goals and help me actualize them



- Give me air time
- Review expectations of my role and gently/respectfully challenge me
- Provide feedback on her experience with my work
- Help me navigate the politics of a large organization and keep focus on how to do the business of the program in spite of it
- Encourage more independent work and decision making
- Provide smaller roles to front line staff to empower them
- Ask him how he developed his critical thinking skills and knowledge
- How did he choose/process in selecting his mentors...which criteria did he use?
- Ask him how he determines short and long term goals
- Ask him if I could see his first developmental plan and then his plan now
- What information do they have that will help me see it their way?
- What information do I have that will help them see it my way?
- Provide more concrete feedback, either positive or what I need to improve on
- Possibly be clearer with expectations and at times job description
- More explanation as to why a decision is being made
- Have them ask questions and not make judgments on just what they think
- Be clear and concise
- Share info and ideas to keep staff informed
- Practice what you preach
- Have more uninterrupted time together to discuss supervision

- Complete your performance appraisals
Ask him to be clear on time frames and deadlines. Don't spring things on me because you "forgot to tell me" weeks ago
- Be "present" in our meetings. I know you have a lot to do but I need our time together to be focused
- Ask him/her to be sure I have the necessary information to make an informed decision
- Give me enough rope to hang myself...but interview me before the lynching...give me space to do my job
- Set aside more time for supervision sessions and schedule on a regular basis
- Ask them not to "beat around the bush" when addressing issues/concerns
Be present...genuinely present...active listening, non-judgmental and respectful
- Challenge and accept feedback in the spirit of helpfulness
- Avoid passive-aggressive actions and deflection with sarcasm or false humor
- Reflect on the goals and leave "ego"/taking things personally out of the equation
- Setting appropriate boundaries
- Being clear on relationship expectations and tone
- Create a safe environment

Once again in looking at the last comment I am struck by the parallel process here. "Create a safe environment" would likely be the exact phrase a supervisor would use to orient a new worker to the most crucial things in helping a child develop in a healthy manner. In "Characteristics of a Child and Youth Care



Approach” (Garfat and Fulcher, 2011)
Thom Garfat and Leon Fulcher laid out a number of core components for quality Child and Youth Care practice and many are reflected clearly right here in this list. “Find solutions with me” clearly reflects doing ‘with’, not ‘for’ or ‘to’. Simply reflecting on this list as a foundation to guide their practice involves the supervisor exhibiting a needs-based focus. Having the suggested regular supervisory sessions with agendas demonstrates purposeful use of activities. Being the “skilled hunter” Garfat and Fulcher (2011) talk about might help the supervisor use the strengths based and resiliency focus necessary to identify the core strength in the CYC worker above who says “even though I am struggling it doesn’t mean I can’t do a good (or even a great) job”. The poignant references to the need for the supervisor to be “present” suggest the importance of working in the now.

The 2013 Child and Youth Care World Conference provided a number of “magic moments” for me that I am sure will change my life and my practice for the better. Many thanks to the participants in my workshop for this list that opened my eyes so much wider to how much the crucial qualities of the supervisory relationship reflect the same core qualities of a quality CYC worker/child relationship. Sometimes it is simple as creating a forum, and, if you just listen, that magic moment that helps you frame and improve your practice with someone you are working with may just appear. So, if you are a CYC supervisor, as you read this list digest it and think about similar forums you can create ... then “Take heed, CYC supervisors ... take heed”!

References

- Delano, F. and Shah, J. (2009). Defining supervision in a professionally packaged way. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 22(1), pp.49-57.
- Garfat, T. and Fulcher, L. (2011). Characteristics of a Child and Youth Care approach. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 24 (1-2), pp. 7-19



Starting off on the right foot

What Do We Think of the Children?

John Stein

I've been thinking recently about the first social worker I ever knew, Dick Cass. Dick was the director of a community center in our city's most notorious public housing project. I, with my undergraduate education and a little experience, was the know-it-all director of two other community centers serving the city's other four public housing projects, three of them adjacent to each other (hence only two community centers). One of Dick's objectives was to organize tenant councils in each of the city's public housing projects to negotiate for tenants' rights. It seems the leases for their apartments were, well, pretty draconian. So, Dick, an experienced community organizer with an MSW, needed me to help organize the other four projects. Dick and I worked together for about two years on the tenant councils and a few other of his initiatives. I learned a lot from Dick. The first thing I learned was that I didn't know as much as I at first thought I did.

Dick talked about 'his people' a lot during our many meetings to plan, coordinate, and evaluate our efforts to bring our people together. One of the most amazing things about Dick was that I never, ever, heard him say anything nega-

tive about his people during our many meetings. Not even once. All he talked about were their strengths and accomplishment, the challenges they faced and how they overcame them. In fact, he was bragging about them.

This made me think of an article I wrote several years ago about a team building exercise (Stein, 2011). A consultant psychologist for the staff and administrators in a secure residential program for the treatment of hard core juvenile offenders offered training for staff development. He opened the first session with, "Tell me about the kids you work with." The responses came rapidly. Lie. Steal. Aggressive. Unmotivated. Can't delay gratification. Disobedient. Defiant. Disrespectful. The list grew rapidly to perhaps twenty items, with not one positive quality mentioned. When staff began to repeat themselves, he ended it saying, "No wonder you are all so depressed, working with kids like this all day." And then he launched into a talk about self care.

I have used the same approach in parent education classes. "Tell me about your children." Again, the negative list. Only once did a parent offer a positive. No one followed her lead.

I realized that I did not do much about offering any solutions in my earlier article, or in my work with parents, other than to suggest that people spend a little more time thinking about the *positive* qualities of the children with whom we work, or that parents take some time to think about what they *like* about their children. It's natural, whether in residential or other settings, to focus on the problems, the



negatives. After all, problems are what bring children and families to our attention, and problems with their children is what drives parents to seek professional help. Our goal very often has to do with helping children and families to resolve problems. But when everyone is focused on problems, what do the children think of themselves? Do they see themselves as problems? As disappointments? As failures? Or worse, as worthless or unloved? And what do we think of the children?

It got me to wondering, what would have happened if that psychologist had first asked our group, "Tell me what you *like* about the kids you work with." What would the staff come up with. The kids were fun. Most of the time. There were those who were funny, intelligent, helpful, cooperative, non-violent, honest, hard working, playful, competitive, curious, eager to learn. Most of the time. The list would probably have been much longer than the list of problems staff had come up with.

Or what would have happened if I had asked the parents to tell me what they liked about their kids instead of the open-ended "Tell me about your kids." My guess is that once a parent started, there would have been competition among the parents to make their kids sound better than those of others, or at least just as good.

Suppose when parents came to us for help the first time, instead of asking parents "Why are you here?" or "How can we help you?" or perhaps "Tell me about your child," how would they respond if the first thing we asked them to do was to "Tell me what you like about your child.?"

My guess is that many parents in that situation would have trouble with this, that we might even see some jaws drop. Frustrated, angry parents are so often focused on the negatives that they no longer see the positives. We would have to sit there patiently as they struggled to think of the good things they like (love?) about their children. I suspect the list might not be too long or impressive for some. But at least it would be a start, and perhaps get them to thinking more positively.

Then I began wondering what would happen if we began staff meetings in residential programs with the good things the kids had done that week or month. Eventually, I think staff would start coming prepared to focus on the positives, looking for them throughout the week or month and making notes, either mentally or on paper.

In spite of all the problems troubled children can present, I never knew a child who didn't have more good qualities than bad, or who didn't do more good things than bad most days.

Just wondering. I've been retired for over ten years. I no longer have the opportunity to find out. Do you?

Reference

Stein, J. (2011). A team building exercise: A teachable moment missed. *CYC-Online*. 143. <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-jan2011-stein.html>



A Glimpse into a Life You've Never Lived

Using motion pictures as a training tool for Child & Youth Care Workers

Louisa M. Riccobono

Introduction

The world today is media saturated, with television and movies, internet, music and more. According to the Nielsen Company, the average American watches more than 151 hours per month of television alone. It is, perhaps, that film is a modern-day vehicle for storytelling that is able to reach a massive audience. It is also a way to illustrate one's story and allow others to visualize, feel and understand their story. "Movies have much to offer the profession of psychology, teaching the viewer about what it means to suffer, to succeed, to express strength, and to rise above challenges," (Niemiec, 2012). Take for example, the Hollywood film, *White Oleander*. While watching the story unfold, the audience is able to comprehend the confusion of a foster youth moving from placement to placement. Although the film is enhanced with drama, special effects and music, the audience is still moved by the story.

The purpose of this article is to discuss how the integration of major motion pictures and documentaries in training Child and Youth Care workers and volunteers

might help to strengthen their understanding of both the work they do and the lives of the youth and families they serve.

Most films and/or documentaries have an underlying theme that can be used to generate an organic discussion on how it can relate to youth care work. Some examples of themes include dynamics of relationships, engagement, modeling values, separation and loss, attachment, sibling bonds, connecting and creating experiences, multiple transitions, etc. From these themes youth care workers and even volunteers can pull out learning tools that both give insight into youth's lives as well as pave a foundation on to how to interact with the youth (both good and bad).

For Child and Youth Care workers of all experience levels, watching movies can help to make us think in a different way or to view situations through a different lens. One staff commented after watching and discussing film with peers:

"Watching movies helps to view other aspects of life that we might not have focused on before (i.e. the



power of positive relationships, the difference one person/interaction can make, the influence of both positive and negative environments, and the need for respect and empathy,”

There are a growing number of major motion pictures and documentaries that have the potential to expose stories of all different walks of life and allow us to get an in-depth view on the hardships some youth experience, and how life is perceived in their eyes. Seeing this allows us to gain a much deeper understanding for certain reactions and behaviors. In each film, a Child and Youth Care worker can ask themselves, how does this apply to my position? What did I gain from this film that will directly impact the work that I do?

An Agency Example of the Use of Film in Staff Development

Movies can be used as a powerful tool to teach. They are “truly modern-day storytelling instruments. They have the power to reach massive audiences which is why they should, and do, matter so much to society. Whether they are stories of afar or just everyday existence, good movies are a way for people, particularly youth, to understand and relate to the world in constructive ways,” (The F.I.L.M. Project). For example, for all of the staff at

Casa Pacifica (especially the Child and Youth Care workers), training is essential to paving the foundation for success for both the staff and the youth that Casa Pacifica serves.¹ Providing an in-depth and comprehensive training to all staff on an incoming and on-going basis allows the organization to feel confident with the youth’s lives being in the hand of its staff. To further that same ideology, the training allows the staff to be confident, motivated and passionate in the work they do. As part of the Casa Pacifica training, all new hires watch a movie off a pre-selected list that of films that are applicable to their positions and/or the kids they serve.² One child and youth care worker reflected on his experience by saying, “movies cover so much. They show how others (staff and kids) may deal with similar situations. Movies are good for reminding us what is going on with our kid’s lives.”

The resource of movies has been proven to be effective in hooking an audience and relaying a message to the masses. The film industry has the financial means to perform empirical studies such as focus groups, test audiences, surveys, etc. in order to maximize their number of viewers. The film industry cannot afford to fully rely of hypothetical theories. However, this is not a resource that the non-profit organization world can create internally. Therefore, we can rely on the

- 1 Casa Pacifica, Centers for Children and Families is a crisis care and residential treatment facility for abused, neglected and at risk youth (ages 0-18) in Camarillo, CA.
- 2 When using movies for a public viewing such as a training, be sure to have all of your copyright procedures available. All of the proper information can be found through the MPLC (Motion Picture Licensing Corporation) or at <http://www.mplc.org/>



utilization of their research by viewing movies internally.

Examples of Movies Used

White Oleander. *White Oleander* is a story about a child named Astrid (played by Alison Lohman) who is struggling to find her place in life as she moved from placement to placement. Her mother, Ingrid (played by Michelle Pfeiffer), has been put in jail for murdering her boyfriend via a poisonous flower, white Oleander. Between the combination of her mother being so manipulative and the multiple foster homes, Astrid has a hard time defining who she is and who she wants to be.

The very loud theme in this movie is the multiple transitions. Due to the mother's actions and poor decisions, the daughter is removed from the home and placed into multiple placements. As she moves from place to place you can track her growth and how she changes in each different placement (both physically and mentally). One staff explained after discussing the film that "the movie was very realistic in terms of adaptive and maladaptive relationships/behaviors portrayed. This film gives insight into the struggle and journey of the at-risk youth and how their family/friends/environment can impact their development as well as how they act in response to their experiences."

Sample discussion questions for *White Oleander*

- What drives the daughter to still want to be with her mom in spite of their difference?
- What were the effects of multiple placements (both positive and negative)?

The Blind Side (2009). This is a real-life story about a high school aged homeless boy, Michael Oher (played by Quinton Aaron), who ends up meeting a wealthy family (the Tuohy's) who knows little about the life that Michael has lived. However, after giving Michael a home, the Tuohy's learn so much from him, and he learns so much from them.

There are a variety of dynamics of relationships in this movie: the relationship between the boy and his mother, the boy and the adoptive family, the boy and his brother. It is often hard for a Child and Youth Care worker to understand each layer and dynamic. For example, in the scene where the boy sees his brother for first time in years, they immediately embrace each other. Although they had not had contact in awhile, you can still see the deep connection they had just in their embrace.

The Blind Side is a reminder of how hard it can be for a youth who has had multiple placements to acclimate to new environments (families, group homes, etc). Since some of these new placements can be a different culture, race and ethnicity than what they are used to, making it difficult for youth to find their ethnic identity. In reaction to this film and ideology, an anonymous staff at Casa Pacifica said that "my first reaction was sadness and a realization of the kinds of backgrounds I'm going to be around. It was an eye opener and brought awareness and reinforced a great amount of empathy for each and every kid we serve."

Sample discussion questions for *The Blind Side*:



- What factors made it difficult for the boy to accept love and generosity from the family?
- What about the mother's approach could be integrated into your role?

Conviction (2007). *Conviction* is a real-life story about a brother (Kenny Waters-played by Sam Rockwell) and sister (Betty- Anne Waters-played by Hilary Swank) who would do anything for each other. When Kenny is wrongfully convicted of a murder and sentenced to prison, Betty Anne decides to dedicate herself to proving his innocence.

This movie clearly exemplifies the strength and power of sibling bonds. Kenny and Betty Anne had a rough life growing-up and no one else was there for them other than each other. They relied on each other, laughed with each other, got into trouble with each other, cried with each other and so much more. Viewers in the child and youth care work field are able to see just how strong and relevant that connection can be within siblings. What happens if siblings are torn apart while they are in the system?

Sample discussion questions for *Conviction*

- What factors made the relationship between the brother and the sister so strong?
- What made the sister stick with her brother even when everything seemed against her?

Freedom Writers (2007). Hillary Swank plays a teacher named Erin Gruwell, who gets a teaching position in a school filled with inner-city kids, violence, racial ten-

sion and attitude problems. Although it seems as though Erin is set up to fail in teaching the kids in her classroom, she completely changes their worlds. She gives each of them a voice, which is something they feel like they've never had before. Erin also instills, in each student, tolerance as well as the motivation to succeed despite the odds against them.

The theme in *Freedom Writers* is engagement and empowerment. All youth want their voices to be heard. This movie is great for anyone working with youth, especially teachers. There is a lot to be learned from each story and from each of the different students as well as Erin's unconventional teaching style. One staff shared that *Freedom Writers* "showed how individualized teaching and techniques help to motivate and empower the students. There is no one way to do something and when you empower a child, it opens up their world to new solutions to problems."

Sample discussion questions for *Freedom Writers*:

- What challenges did the teacher face as she entered the student's environment?
- What strengths did each of the students have?

American Experience: Orphan Trains (1995). This documentary provides a glimpse into the early workings (mid 1800s) of the foster care system. During this time, around 10,000 homeless children flooded the streets of New York City until a young minister, Charles Loring Brace, came up with the Children's Aid Society. Between the years of 1854 and



1929, the Children's Aid Society transported more than 150,000 children by train to Christian homes.

Although the foster care system has progressed and transformed, the theme of the documentary and its historical context still applies to the current youth in the foster care system which is separation and loss. In this documentary you will hear first hand stories from former foster youth of this time.

Sample discussion questions for *Orphan Trains*:

- In what ways did early life experiences impact those interviewed?
- Was the Orphan Train movement successful? How has the system changed?

Green Chimneys (1997). This documentary shows the compelling stories of three boys (Anthony, Eddie and Mike) and their time at *Green Chimneys*, a residential treatment center on a farm in Brewster, NY. The film highlights the hardships of low-income and/or drug addicted families and their struggle in life to find both self-respect and self confidence.

While watching this film, anyone working with youth can tap into the underlying theme of modeling values. Child and Youth Care workers or volunteers new to the field can watch this film to gain insight on the life inside of a residential treatment facility and the hardships that the youth experience. However, they can also use this documentary to help provide both positive and negative examples on how to successfully interact with the youth.

Sample discussion questions for *Green Chimneys*:

- What were some positive examples of adult-child relationships?
- What were some poor examples?
- What would you have done differently?

From Place to Place (2011). The documentary, *From Place to Place*, follows three youth who have recently aged out of the foster care system: Micah, Many and Raif. While all three have different stories and are at different places in life after the foster care system, it seems as though one of their common denominators is the support of their social worker, Matt. The movie follows their paths after the foster care system, while reflecting on their time in the system. Mandy and Raif travel to Capitol Hill to try to change the broken pieces of the system that they were raised in.

This is a great film for all workers in the foster care system, especially those working with transitional age youth as the theme is multiple placements, transition into adulthood, and life in and out of the foster care system. The documentary reminded one staff that "each individual in foster care is unique and has different backgrounds that we must adapt to. The transition from youth to adult for foster children is difficult and more attention is needed,"

Sample discussion questions for *From Place to Place*:

- Do you feel like the system has given these three youth enough tools to survive in the real world?
- If so, what were they? If not, as a child and youth care worker, what tools do you feel like you could give a youth who is about to transition into adulthood?



Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how powerful of a tool that the use of film can be when working with youth and families from all walks of life as a Child and Youth Care Worker. Through the examples of the motion pictures and documentaries mentioned throughout this article, you can see how film can give many youth a voice and can allow audiences to visualize, feel and understand their story. For Child and Youth Care workers of all experience levels, using motion pictures and documentaries as a lens for training, can help to make us think outside the box for ways of understanding and working with the youth and families we serve.

References

- Bandura, Albert, (2002). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant and D. Zillman, editors. Media effects: Advances in theory and research (2nd ed.), Pages 265-299.
- Goldwyn, T. (Director). (2010). Conviction [motion picture]. United States:
- Graham, J. (Director). (1995). American Experience: Orphan Trains [motion picture].
- Hancock, J. (Director). (2009). The Blind Side [motion picture].
- Kosminsky, P. (Director) (2002). White Oleander [motion picture].
- LaGravenese, R. (Director). (2007). Freedom Writers [motion picture].
- Marks, C. (Director) & Eisenhart, B. (Director). (1997). Green Chimneys [motion picture].
- Niemiec, Ryan M. Psy.D , (2010-2012 Degree Prospects, LLC). Top 10 Movies Every Aspiring Psychologist Should See, (<http://www.onlinepsychologydegrees.com/articles/top-ten-movies/>) .
- The Nielsen Company, (2009). A2/M2 Three Screen Report: 4th Quarter 2008, (<http://i.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2009/images/02/24/screen.press.b.pdf>)
- The F.I.L.M. Project, Teaching with Movies: A Guide for Parents and Educators, (<http://www.trulymovingpictures.org>)
- Williams, P. (Director). (2011). From Place to Place [motion picture]. United States: United States.



Developing inclusive ecological assessments

Chris Walter and Manuela Costa

Lives cannot be fixed from the outside; they can only be recreated from the inside.

— G. Fewster

Camphill's work has been developed for the last seventy years out of the conviction that everybody is a unique spiritual individual without whose contribution the world would not be the same. This is fundamentally a belief in people and their capacity to change. Based on these values St. Andrews Project (part of Camphill School, Aberdeen, an independent school for children and young people with a wide range of needs) began work four years ago with youngsters on the margins of care and education

We first became aware of the need for a more holistic assessment when we were asked to become involved in supporting someone who was not attending school. This was a situation where everyone was at loggerheads with each other and little or no communication was happening. It was as though everyone had become frozen into a particular position, emotions were running high and no move-

ment appeared to be possible. Hearing all the different opinions of those involved we realized that we needed to get a sense of the whole picture if we were to be able to work positively. Often when we are asked to form a picture of a situation we are struck by its complexity as the issues become increasingly intractable. This complexity is partly due to the sheer number of people involved in someone's life: on attending one review we realized that there were seventeen different people who had had contact at some stage! Although this is done with best of intentions it can add to the fragmented and confusing nature of the situation.

This was also very clear with regard to another young person we worked with. He had been excluded from school on a number of occasions and relations between the teachers and his mother had deteriorated to such an extent that she had been banned from the school pre-



mises. In turn she had contacted lawyers with the intention of suing the school. As we talked with everyone involved a picture began to emerge of mutual criticism and antagonism: everyone felt blocked and disempowered, seemingly unable to do anything to change the situation. When we went to the school and spoke with the teachers we could feel the anxiety that lived in the room. They were clearly trying their best in extremely difficult circumstances yet felt caught between the school's expectations and the family's criticisms.

It was tempting to think at this point that perhaps there really was nothing we could achieve in such a complex and conflicted situation. However as the conversation developed we began to see that the teachers were open to a different way of seeing the issue although they felt constrained by a lack of time and resources. Whilst there would be no 'quick fixes', we might be able to offer something precisely because we were coming with fresh eyes and weren't centrally involved. We have experienced that professional assessments can form a negative view of the young person and we saw the need for a more strengths based approach. If we really believe in the agency of everyone involved and take a positive view of their abilities then people can start to open up and to contribute positively to change. In adopting this strengths based approach we draw on a range of approaches including positive psychology, Bronfenbrenner and Circle of Courage amongst others.

In order to build this holistic picture when writing ecological assessments we

aim to speak with as many family members as possible and crucially with the young person themselves as well as with teachers, social workers and any other professionals involved. We also gather background information from previous reports and assessments. In doing so we try to gain a wider perspective on a very complex situation, to trace the common features in the different 'stories' that we hear. We aim to connect the different narratives based on the view that there is not just one truth but rather a spectrum of varied understandings and interpretations. In doing so we try to validate and recognise the different stories. For example, we have recently completed an assessment of a thirteen year old teenager diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome who was struggling at school. We noticed contrasting views about the extent to which this diagnosis explained her situation. While most accounts stressed her vulnerability to peer pressure and high levels of anxiety, there were equally strong accounts of her assertiveness and ability to work with others. Our conclusion was that she was clearly under a great amount of stress in trying to come to terms with her Asperger identity whilst at the same time trying to be a "normal" teenager.

We tried to ensure that when we talked with her we gained a sense of what she wanted, her hopes and concerns. Visiting her at home with her mother was a reminder that it can be hard to hear the individual's own voice amongst all the adults' assessments and opinions about their 'problems'. Our first impression was of a typical teenager who chatted about hairstyles, pop bands and wanted to show



us photos she had taken on her iPhone. Whilst she certainly appeared strong willed we did not meet the picture of a dependent and helpless child that some of the reports had painted. Although she seemed initially hesitant about our involvement she said she would think about the idea and seemed to visibly brighten when we reassured her about the change. It seemed that she needed to be met with confidence and certainty and that her struggles were made worse by the conflicting messages she was receiving from those around her.

Ultimately this is the core value of such an assessment, that it enables those involved with a young person to draw closer to the way they see themselves and their world. We do this by considering all the contextual aspects that influence their meaning making, including key events in their biography. An example of this was when we were asked to form an assessment of a young person diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome who was presenting challenging behaviour at school. In talking with him and his family we realized that he had received messages of rejection throughout his life and consequently he easily felt inadequate and lacked self-confidence. These negative emotions then influenced the way he responded to the world around him.

As mentioned earlier, professional narratives can easily contribute to the negative story that can build up around an individual. For example one young man had experienced a range of different professional assessments in his short life. These had all focused on how to manage his challenging behaviour and emphasised

his impulsiveness, poor self-control and distractibility. Various diagnoses had been proposed, culminating in the recent conclusion that he had a conduct disorder. Most of these assessments had only focused on limited aspects of his identity, telling a story of deficits and behavioural problems and reinforcing his lack of confidence. In listening to everyone involved we began to form a different picture that included these aspects but also recognised the impact of numerous transitions in his childhood and the way in which he felt devalued and misunderstood. His challenging behaviour could begin to be reframed as an understandable reaction to a stressful environment rather than as a fixed dimension of his pathology.

One of the fundamental principles underpinning all of our work is that we cannot change people, only ourselves and that true change only happens when everyone — including ourselves — is willing to adjust and shift their attitudes and points of view. It has been challenging to apply this principle to all aspects of our work, including the ecological assessments we write. It is a struggle to maintain a strengths based focus throughout each aspect of the assessment process (gathering information, analysing and drawing conclusions and then formulating a potential programme). It can be tempting to slip back into default ways of thinking which are deficit based and are intended somehow to 'manage' the situation and 'fix' the problem. When writing we need to constantly bear in mind the people who will be reading the assessment, in particular the person themselves and their family, and think about the messages they will



take from what we write. Here it is a help that we write the assessments together and then can give each other feedback and offer different perspectives. In this way each assessment we write is a learning process for us and provides a good reflective foundation for when we start to work with the individual.

We are clearly learning all the time about how to form these assessments in a truly inclusive manner but have experienced that they are well received. For instance one parent told us that she felt what we had written had really captured her child's experience. We have also had positive feedback from a local authority

with whom we are developing a positive working relationship. They have expressed their appreciation of the strengths based, inclusive nature of our assessments and the fact that we try to gain a whole picture of complex situations. However the true measure of what we write is the reaction of the individuals themselves. Fundamentally, we need to ensure that each person's story sounds out in what we write, that they can recognise themselves and their experiences in it. The young people we work with have all previously felt silenced in one way or another – hopefully our assessment can give a chance for their voice to be heard again.



Director of a Youth Centre for young offenders in Kansas, USA, **Robert Heintzelman** considers ecological factors in juvenile rehabilitation work.

The Dolphin Story: Four complexities in residential treatment of juvenile offenders

One evening I found myself watching a television documentary about a project which was preparing trained dolphins for release into the ocean. As the show progressed, I became aware of four fundamental parallels between the dolphin project and my own struggles as the administrator of a residential facility for juvenile offenders.

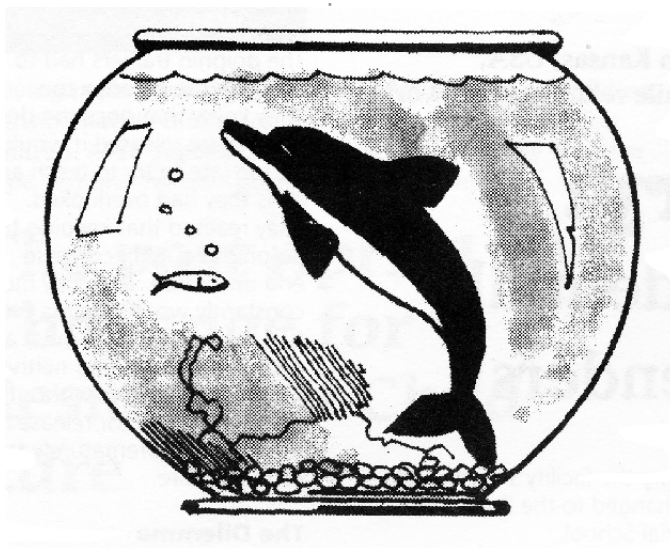
The documentary was about a group of skilled and knowledgeable people who were trying to retrain the dolphins so that they could survive in the wild. The dolphins either had been raised in captivity or

had been in captivity for a long time. The project was on a modest scale, it was marginally funded, and the work was arduous and complex. For example, each day fish had to be captured and then released into the dolphin pen so that the dolphins could learn to catch the fish for food. This habit of catching their own food was just one of the behaviours that had been altered while they were in captivity. As the documentary progressed, parallels to four components of residential treatment became clear.

The Paradox

The first parallel is the paradox. *The paradox is that we must prevent those we are restraining from escaping in order to get them ready for release.* This is a subtle complexity that opens the way for uncertainty of purpose and confused identity. Since we are detaining them, doesn't it make sense to say we are doing so for the obvious reasons? It is easy

to understand that we are keeping dolphins so that they can perform at Sea World, and it is easy to understand that we are keeping juvenile offenders as retribution for the crimes they have committed. Mulley and Phelps (1988) ad-



dress the issue of programme duality:

Despite its rhetoric regarding the importance of rehabilitation and prevention, the juvenile justice system must still respond to serious crime committed by individuals under 18. It cannot escape its function of punishment, incapacitation and deterrence. Although prevention and treatment are the primary goals it is extremely naive to think that these activities can be pursued without regard for the heavy obligation for public safety. These two sets of demands (despite their seemingly opposed nature) often become entwined and sometimes nearly indistinguishable in practice.

Are we attempting to provide services for the youths in our care, or apply consequences to them? What is a youth centre anyway? Are we to operate as a prison concerned primarily with security, a hospital prescribing treatment, or a school concerned with education and training?

What should we call these places? What should we call people who work in them? What should we call the people who live in them?

In 1879, when the facility where I work was established, it was called the State Reform School. The young men were called inmates and the philosophy was that they needed to learn the work ethic. Around the turn of the century the facility's name was changed to the Boys' Industrial School.

In essence, it was a military school; the youths were called cadets. The philosophy of the time was discipline. After a day of work on a farm or in a workshop, the ca-

dets dressed in military uniforms and marched in formation.

This military model gave way to the family approach. The youths were now called boys. The living units went from companies to cottages, and the staff, who had been called officers, became cottage parents. The family model in turn gave way to behavioural modification, and we began calling the boys students. The current influence is career education; we call the boys youths and the staff youth service workers. The struggle with the issue of punishment and deterrents, or education and treatment is long-standing.

In the first issue of the student newspaper, the author of an essay entitled *Education and Delinquency* (1905) says:

The deterrent and repressive measures of the earliest reformatories have been superseded by the more rational methods in line with the educational progress made in public schools. The bad boy will become good when the evil tendencies of his nature, inherent or acquired, are replaced with new motives, new desires and new ambitions.

Over the next eighty years, this theme is repeated again and again in editorials and biannual reports of the institution. The authors repeatedly declared they have risen above the repressive harsh practices of the past to a more productive enlightened approach .

The dolphin trainers had to live with the paradox too. They knew that once the dolphins were released it would be too late to try to teach any skills they had



overlooked. They realised that keeping the dolphins could become an end unto itself, and they must constantly work towards eventual release. We also must accept the paradox and neither keep young people without preparing them for release nor release them prematurely to certain failure.

The Dilemma

Another parallel with the dolphin project is the basic dilemma. How can we prepare an animal, or a person, to function in one environment while forcing them to adapt to another? It is like taking a person to a football field to teach them to play basketball. This is the challenge for any residential programme. Dolphins in captivity learn to live in captivity and people in institutions learn to live in institutions. There is no guaranteed carry-over to the real world. This leads to the conclusion that the dilemma is irreconcilable, that an institution cannot accomplish much beyond institutionalisation.

Any desired changes that occur in the people can be attributed to a phenomenon called the 'suppression effect'. Suppression effect predicts that changes seen in people leaving an institution are simply due to the passage of time.

If you simply allow an adolescent to grow older, criminal behaviour will decline. Romig (1979) described a variety of programmes and concluded that nothing was particularly effective. This opinion, particularly in regard to institutions, is widely accepted. It is similar to what Alan Breed (1986) has called pluralistic ignorance:

“It is the systematic inaccuracy in the assessment of group opinions by members of the group. Pluralistic ignorance is caused by two unfounded and conflicting assumptions: first, that one’s beliefs are uniformly shared; second, that one’s attitudes and expectations are unshared by others. This erroneous assumption discourages the expression of controversial opinion.”

The controversial opinion that juvenile offenders can be influenced significantly to change for the better by placing them in a residential setting has been defended. Murry and Cox (1979) propose that institutions not only worked, but worked much better than people were willing to admit.

But the dilemma is also necessary.

Of course the institutional environment is different from the community — that’s the reason people are sent there. Hirschberg (1957) said,

“The basic meaning and purpose (of the institution) is to arrange life sensibly for those children whose life has not been sensible; to bring order to those children whose life has not had order; to bring organisation, form, meaning, and some clear identity to those children whose lives have not been organised in steady, stable, consistent patterns.”

Dr Hirschberg makes it sound fairly simple. But the dolphin trainers in the documentary knew it was not. The dol-



phins were well trained and functioned well in the contrived world of tanks and controlled conditions. They knew their dolphins were far from prepared for the complexity of the open sea. Residential treatment must provide structure to remove the destructive chaos that has maligned these young people, yet, somehow, keep them from becoming totally dependent upon that structure. We must maximise the stability that we can bring to their lives and minimise the dependency it can encourage.

Bad News Syndrome

Once the dolphins were released into the open sea there would be no way of knowing what happened to them. They might be eaten by sharks within hours, they might starve to death within days, or they might live long, fairly normal dolphin lives. The nature of the endeavour dictates that confirmed feedback will usually be negative. Dolphins that are reluctant to swim away and that beg for food, or those that wash up on shore, are evidence of failure. Children who are returned to our facility or who are caught in criminal behaviour are confirmed failures. Conversely, the ones who are never seen again cannot necessarily be counted as successes. By definition, success is very hard to confirm. This can lead to a fatalistic form of pluralistic ignorance. We may start to believe that every youth we release is going to commit grievous crimes. And our assumption that most of them do not commit further crimes, we assume, is unshared by others. After a while, we might become part of the problem and lose faith in ourselves, our colleagues, and

our work.

How long would the dolphin trainers work and struggle if they were convinced that the dolphins died shortly after release? Follow-up could help us know more from one environment to another.

Altruistic Conflict

As I watched the documentary, I began to wonder what was driving these people? It is fairly obvious that training dolphins to perform tricks for large audiences at Sea World

is interesting, somewhat glamorous, and probably lucrative. But why were these people working so hard for so little reward? The dolphins seemed perfectly happy doing the tricks, being hand fed, and free from predators. So what urged these people to persist in this project? The producers of the documentary asked the same question. The people said that dolphins do not belong in captivity. They said they cared about the animals and they were driven to attempt to return them to their natural habitat.

Yet they had to have experience with them in captivity in order to have the expertise to prepare them for freedom. This is similar to the balance required of the worker involved in residential treatment of youths. The person must care about children and want them to be free to live their own lives, but not to the extent that they reject the residential setting.

They have experience and skill in residential treatment, but realise it is not an end itself. Working with troubled children may be interesting, but it certainly isn't glamorous or lucrative. And this brings us back to the paradox: *if you care about chil-*



dren, how can you be a party to keeping them in captivity? The documentary revealed the answer. Skilled, knowledgeable people convinced that children do not belong in captivity, are the people who strive to care for children in captivity.

* * *

These four parallels accentuate some of the complexities of residential treatment that are particularly helpful to new employees. Including these concepts in an orientation programme for new employees can help people confront their ambivalence about the work, and help them see some of the subtle ambiguities of treatment for youths in a residential setting. In a sense, these are the vital signs of a programme.

Like the dolphin trainers, we must keep our students from escaping so that we can get them ready for release. We must accommodate our students in our environment so that we can prepare them for another.

There must be ignorance about results to obtain results, and there must be dynamic conflict within the workers to keep them on track. And like the trainers when they lower the barriers letting the dolphins swim away, our programmes only matter when the youth have gone and we are not there to guide them.

References

- Breed, A. (1986). *The State of Corrections Today: A Triumph of Pluralistic Ignorance*. (Available from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 250 Park Avenue, New York, NY10017)
- Education and Delinquency. (1905, July). *The Boys Chronicle*, 7 (1) , 9 .
- Hirschberg, C. (1957). Working with Children in an Institution. Unpublished Manuscript
- Muley, E.P & Phelps, P. (1988). Ethical Balances in juvenile justice: Research and Practice. *American Psychologist*, pp. 65- 69.
- Murry, C.V., & Co, L.A. (1979). *Beyond Probation: Juvenile Corrections and the Chronic Delinquent*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Romig, D. (1979). *Justice for Our Children*. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books.

Reprinted in *The Child Care Worker* with permission: *The Child and Youth Care Administrator* (Nova University).





Post Card from Leon Fulcher



Postcard from the St. John's Conference

July, 2013

Hi everyone. We did a 20-hour stopover in Colorado on the way home from the CYC World Conference. That gave us a brief family visit and opportunity to re-pack bags before flying out of Denver to Los Angeles and then Auckland. Our United flight was 3 hours late arriving from Washington DC, so we missed our NZ 1 Flight to Auckland. Fortunately, Air New Zealand re-booked us on to NZ 5 and we arrived



Waiting in Airports and watching Airplanes

only 45 minutes later than expected, complete with bags!

Kararaina and Tamati were delayed leaving St John's and missed their Toronto flight to Vancouver and their Air New Zealand flight to Auckland. Both were re-routed through Australia. Kararaina arrived home with 40 hours of travelling fatigue! Hanging around in airports offered time to reflect on the successful CYC-Net Clan Gathering and CYC World Conference in Newfoundland.



Historic St John's Harbour

I'll not soon forget that view of St John's Harbour from my hotel window! Always changing, like the Newfoundland weather. We went out through those headlands to go whale watching! Bernie and other 'partners' at the World managed to view Puffins. Thanks Bernie for sharing this pic for my Postcard!





Bernie's 'For Real' Puffins!

Kim Snow and the Puffin Poker had to be experienced to be believed. Such seriously good poker players those women whose name shall forever appear on the Puffin Poker Quach purchased especially for that occasion!



Puffin Poker Tournament at The CYC World

Then there was the whale watching tour group. Thanks Ali, Mark, Deb, Bernie and Heather for making the evening so memorable! The sky was blue, with warm light winds from the south and 3 pods of Humpback Whales! So sorry

that six registered whalers had to be turned away.



The Sunday Night Whale Watching Tour

Thanks to the Capelin running very close in to the Newfoundland coast, there were plenty of Minke and Humpback Whales motoring about feeding on these small, smelt-like fish. Whales feeding on them from below, and birds dive-bombing them from the sky. Even I had a Whale Tale pic to share!



A Whale Tale!

Our whale watching highlight were that we saw whales feeding. Few rolls and no leaps. Nice weather and good people to hang out with! Newfoundland can be proud!



Historic Quidi Vidi Harbour

We sailed in to historic Quidi Vidi Harbour where some beer-fuelled young men were thrilling some of our whale tour group with skinny dipping escapades off the dock on one side of the harbour. When asked if this would be considered 'funny' in his country, Ali explained briefly that the young men would be put in jail. There is so much to learn when child and youth care people from different parts of the world get together! Those relational elements were what made the Newfoundland CYC World Conference so special for me. Thank you James Freeman for making this so real.



Start Saving and Fund-Raising Now for Vienna in 2016!

Planning has already begun for the next Child and Youth Care World Conference with FICE and hopefully others in Vienna in 2016! Start saving comrades! Don't miss it!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Leon".



EndNotes



Real time

The photograph afterwards
Is not as much fun
as the time
we were there!

America believes in education: the average professor earns more money in a year than a professional athlete earns in a whole week.

— Evan Esar

“It’s a funny thing about mothers and fathers. Even when their own child is the most disgusting little blister you could ever imagine, they still think that he or she is wonderful.”

— Roald Dahl, *Matilda*

“There’s a lot of talk these days about giving children self-esteem. It’s not something you can give; it’s something they have to build. Coach Graham worked in a no-coddling zone. Self-esteem? He knew there was really only one way to teach kids how to develop it: You give them something they can’t do, they work hard until they find they can do it, and you just keep repeating the process.”

— Randy Pausch, *The Last Lecture*

“All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was this.

One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, ‘Oh, why can’t you remain like this for ever!’ This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up.

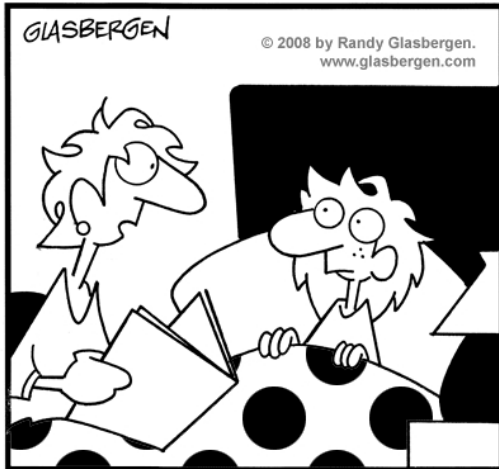
You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end.”

— J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*



“I can point you in the direction of some siblings of interest.”





Cinderella got married and lived happily ever after ... until she got back from her honeymoon and stepped on the scale!

"Whenever I feel the need to exercise, I lie down until it goes away."

— Robert Maynard Hutchins

"Women and cats will do as they please, and men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea."

— Robert A. Heinlein

"There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable.

There is another theory which states that this has already happened."

— Douglas Adams
(The Restaurant at the
End of the Universe)

Words of Wisdom



Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.

"Art, like morality, consists of drawing the line somewhere."

"Don't ever take a fence down until you know the reason it was put up."

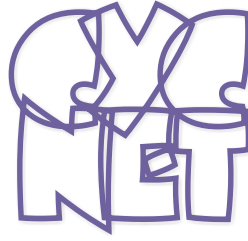
"The most astonishing thing about miracles is that they happen."

To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless.

— Gilbert K. Chesterton

Not a shred
of evidence
exists
in favor of the idea
that life
is serious.

— Brendan Gill



THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

CYC-Online Direct Advertising Rates

Size	Standard	x3 insertions	x6 insertions	x12 insertions
Full page	\$250.00	\$200.00	\$150.00	\$100.00
1/2 page	\$187.50	\$150.00	\$112.50	\$ 85.00
1/4 page	\$125.00	\$100.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00
1/8 page	\$100.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 30.00

Price is per monthly issue, per insertion. Full amount payable at first insertion. Deadline - 7 days before monthend.

MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

Please send all relevant artwork to admin@cyc-net.org

Files: Only TIFF, PDF, EPS or high resolution JPG will be accepted. All images should be CMYK.
Image resolution 300 dpi at 100%
Fonts: If using PDF, either embed fonts or please supply ALL fonts with the documents, or convert fonts to paths.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Size	Layout	Width	Height
Full page	Portrait (5mm bleed)	200mm	260mm
1/2 page	Portrait	95mm	260mm
	Landscape	200mm	125mm
1/4 page	Portrait	95mm	125mm
	Landscape	200mm	60mm
1/8 page	Portrait	40mm	125mm
	Landscape	95mm	60mm



information

CYC-Online is a web-based e-publication and therefore not available in printed form. However, readers are always welcome to print out pages or chapters as desired.

Editors

Thom Garfat (Canada) / thom@cyc-net.org

Brian Gannon (South Africa) / brian@cyc-net.org

Correspondence

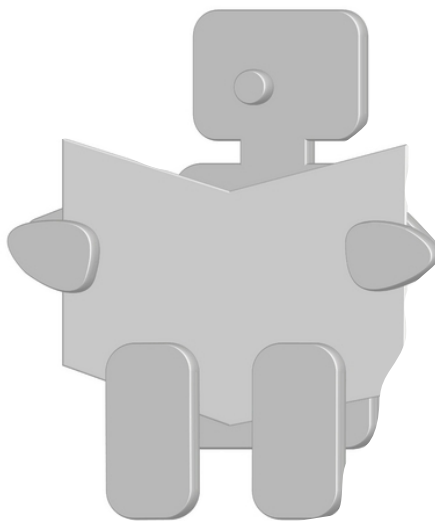
The Editors welcome your input, comment, requests, etc.

Write to cyconline@cyc-net.org

Advertising

Only advertising related to the profession, programs, courses, books, conferences etc. will be accepted. Rates and specifications are listed over the page, or email

advertising@cyc-net.org





ONLINE JOURNAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK (CYC-NET)

www.cyc-net.org

ISSN 1605-7406