

CYC-Online

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



The Narrative Fallacy

**Learning from the CYC
experience in South Africa,
a potential resource for
other places**

**Studying Child and Youth
Care is More Than Just Theory**

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

Issue 221 / July 2017



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Gaudeamus igitur

Mark Smith

I attended my son's graduation earlier this week. As an academic, I attend graduations fairly regularly. Aside from the endless clapping, I enjoy the pomp and ceremony and the symbolism of such occasions. The classic graduation anthem, *Gaudeamus igitur*, *therefore let us rejoice* and the lines that follow, *Juvenes dum sumus, while we are young* conveys something of the optimism of youth. I can be quite moved by, if it is well done, the charge given to new graduates, generally from one of the senior officers of a university. Essentially, a good charge celebrates the achievements of graduates, but also draws their attention to the privilege of gaining a university education and the responsibility that privilege brings with it – a responsibility to use that education towards a common good.

I guess that it isn't just in Scotland that graduation ceremonies are held at this time of year and that across the globe new graduates, including new social work and child and youth care graduates, will be making that transition from graduand to graduate, looking to the future with a mix of anticipation and trepidation. As the University Vice Principal at my son's graduation observed, picking up on a speech from Robert F Kennedy, this year's graduates move into the next phase of their lives 'in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also the most creative of any time in the history of mankind'.

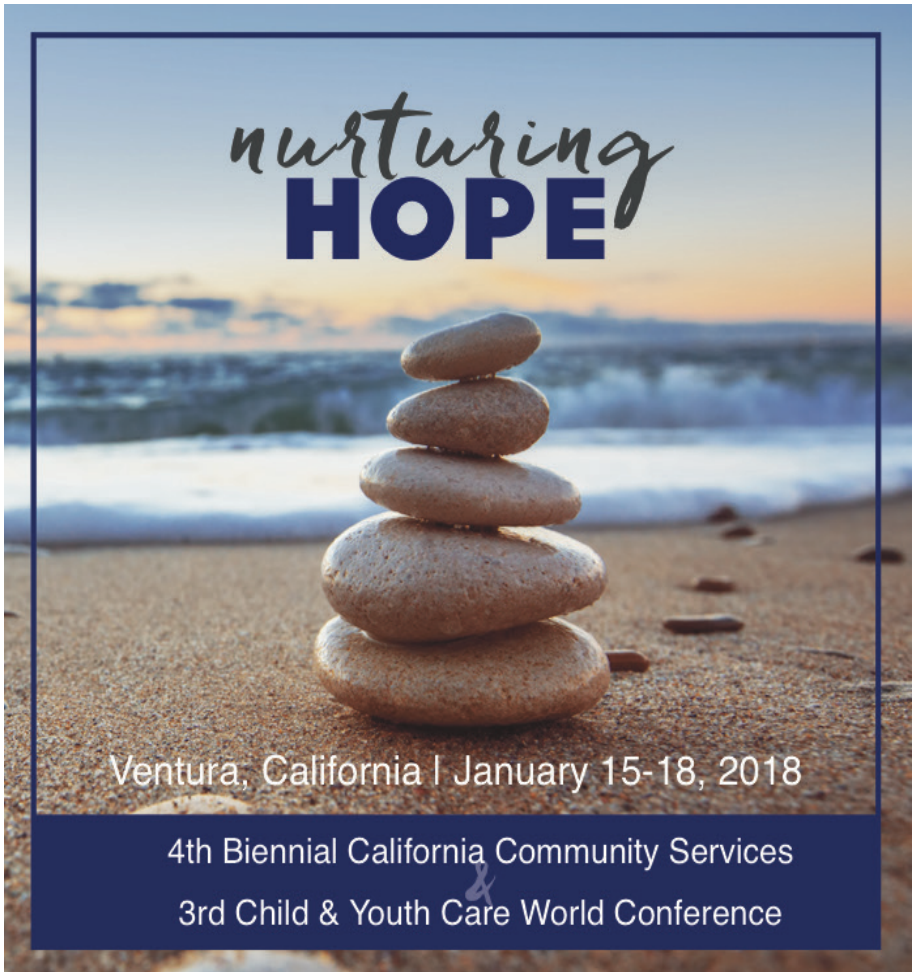
If graduates are not to be overwhelmed by the 'interesting times' we live in, if they are to respond to uncertainties creatively and courageously, will require particular intellectual qualities on their part. In addition to celebrating graduations, I was also, this week, finalising a book chapter on philosophical ideas as they relate



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to Scottish social work. Without going into the arguments too deeply here, philosophers offer some insight into the types of knowledge that might help students and workers respond to uncertainty. Essentially, they need to embrace a



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notion of knowledge as ever-changing and endlessly contested. Knowledge, and especially professional knowledge, doesn't exist in some rarefied and abstracted form but is honed in practice situations, amongst communities of practitioners.

Good practitioners are able to think on their feet and to tailor interventions according to the particular situations and circumstances in front of them. To do so requires that they maintain a vision of the purpose of their chosen profession and the values that underpin it, lest they become ground down or seduced by what Leon Fulcher calls the administrivia and the procedural fetishes that plague contemporary practice.

Such an ability to respond creatively in times of uncertainty requires, at a personal level, a capacity for reflection or reflexion. This, in turn, requires an institutional culture that supports such reflexion. Supervision, which acknowledges uncertainty, which supports fallibility and which encourages workers to hang onto the ideals that brought them into the profession in the first instance is essential.



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A Response to “Why Are We So White”: A West-Indian/Indo-Caribbean Canadian Practitioner

Saira Batasar-Johnie

As a West Indian/Indo-Caribbean Canadian practitioner, I have always found it extremely difficult to feel represented in the field I love of Child and Youth Care. I write this response article for many reasons, one of them being because I feel somewhat responsible for Kiaras Gharabaghi’s “Why Are We So White” column in the June 2017 edition of *CYC-Online*. In April 2017, I travelled to Victoria, British Columbia in Canada to present at the University of Victoria’s Child and Youth Care conference. While there, Kiaras and I had a conversation about the underrepresentation of racialized people in our field, specifically in positions of privilege and power such as educational settings, conferences, and overall academia. This is why I was shocked when I saw someone who I was able to identify with. This woman was recently hired as full-time faculty in the Child and Youth Care program at the University of Victoria, and I remember feeling elated because for the first time in my academic and professional career I did not feel like the “token brown girl” or the only “minority” in the room. This woman identified as a brown female who was a child and youth care practitioner. I remember thinking to myself “wow, we do exist”. Until that moment in my career as both an academic and practitioner, I had only ever come across white women and men, talking to me and teaching me from the perspective of a white person, but never from my own. This woman that I speak of was co-presenting a keynote speech and provided an opportunity for the audience to ask questions or share



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comments. I wanted to speak up and share my feelings of pure happiness to see and hear someone of colour, my colour, in the Child and Youth Care academic community. I wanted to share my new found beliefs that it is possible for a racialized person, like myself, to “make it”. I wanted to shout out “we do not just work on the front lines, but can make a real difference through sharing our perspectives at the macro level of an academic institution. As I was about to raise my hand to speak and share these happy feelings, my hand would not move. I could not bring myself to raise my hand. I found myself feeling guilty, guilty to finally confront the elephant in majority of academic rooms of power and privilege. I felt this way because I did not want to be the one who made an entire room of white people feel uncomfortable, feel embarrassed, and feel unwanted. I have never known such irony. I, a racialized person, did not want to make white people feel the way I have felt every day of my life. If it was not for Kiaras and my fellow peer Annu, I would not have had enough courage to stand up and share my feelings of happiness, of being proud, and of hope. I was seeing a woman of colour as a keynote speaker for the first time in my life and I could not be more grateful to be in her presence in that moment.

I find that within our field, we have begun to somewhat speak a little about racialized young people, but what about practitioners who are Indo-Canadian? Or Indo-Caribbean Canadian? Or Asian-Canadian? These communities of people, they exist too, we exist too. But where do we fit in Child and Youth Care? I have had people ask me questions related to the colour of my skin all my life, even by people who claim to be Child and Youth Care practitioners. These questions include:

1. Why are you here?
2. Should you not be in a business school?
3. Should you not be majoring in accounting or doing something “your people” do?
4. Are brown people not rich and privileged?



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5. Were you only on the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care (OACYC) board of directors because you are their “token brown girl”?

When I first became a part of our community, I thought that it was going to be an inclusive one. As Child and Youth Care practitioners, we do a lot of talking about inclusivity, diversity, and being a community where everyone belongs. I have never had enough courage to challenge this notion, until now that is. For those who think that racism and ignorance is not real in our field, I am here to tell you, unfortunately, it is. Whether we like or not, it exists. We have yet to find a way to acknowledge this, never mind doing something to combat it.

Until recently, I have never let any of these feelings bother me, in fact, I have turned these statements into my motivation for change. I will continue being an advocate for a shift in the “whiteness” that we often see in the academic settings of our field. The wicked problems of racism, assimilation, and marginalization that plague our field make me often wonder why. Why do we not find racialized frontline practitioners at conferences? At professional development opportunities? In all levels of management and supervision? Might it be that those individuals are working two to three jobs in the field in order to be able to provide basic needs for their family? The agencies, organizations, and academic institutions of our field have choice in who represents them at these events, and yet, majority of the time, agencies choose to send someone who is white. Some might say that this is a coincidence, that in a field like ours it is nearly impossible to be experiencing the same challenges that we, as practitioners, proclaim to advocate against in our work with young people in whatever capacity that may be. Well, Child and Youth Care, I am sorry to say that this is not a coincidence, or even a bad dream, this is our reality.

It was not until I began teaching earlier this year that I saw this as a problem plaguing our field. I was given an amazing opportunity to teach for the first time as a teaching assistant at Ryerson University this past semester. I had the privilege of spending two hours every week with 21 inspiring and passionate first year Child



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and Youth Care students. It became apparent to me that there is a real flaw in our system when four of my racialized female students disclosed that this was the first time they have ever had brown teachers. Their excitement and feelings of comfort were clear as they flourished and blossomed in my class. It blew me away that in 2017 young people are still surprised to feel represented in an educational institution. It greatly upset me that for 14 years, these students did not feel represented in their classrooms. As I have further explored these feelings within myself, I realize that I have felt this way before. I know exactly what it is like to feel alone, underrepresented, and unprofessional. While working in the field, I was once told by a white supervisor that if I did not speak with a “white accent”(not using my Caribbean accent in jokingly manners), I would not be understood. I was told to speak normally. I remember wondering why? Why can I not be myself? And perhaps most importantly, why was I so upset now? Why have I normalized these feelings of being underrepresentation for so long? I recently learned that I have suppressed these feelings in hopes that I would not have to face them and the pain that made the racism real. But because of these four students, these feelings have resurfaced, and here they are again.

I wonder how we are supposed to teach our future practitioners to be prepared for a field of diverse young people when they do not even feel represented in the educational institutions that are teaching them. I, like Kiaras, do not necessarily have a solution. But, I know and feel that having teams of full-time white staff and management, with “diverse” part-time staff groups is not helping address this wicked problem. I want to be clear that I have nothing against my white colleagues and have so much respect for everyone who I have worked with and encountered being on the OACYC board of directors. I see passionate white individuals volunteering their time and advocating for what we all want and need. But we need to be transparent around the fact that majority of those individuals are white, following white processes, and providing primarily white perspectives. My position is not one that suggests exclusion, but rather one that suggests equality. All individuals, regardless of their life contexts, should have the same

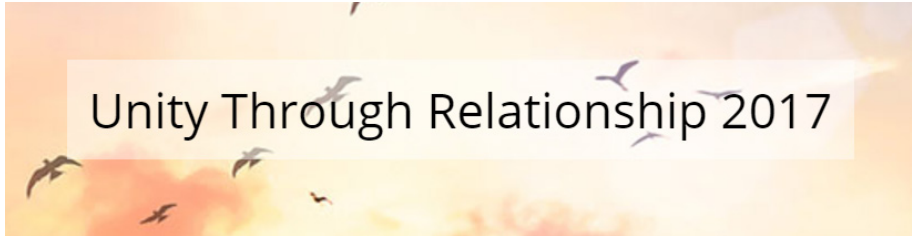


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opportunity for success, for voice, and for inclusion. I hope those who read this do not take it wrongfully as I am simply sharing my experience and wondering where I fit in a field that has not actively tried to bridge the racial gaps that oppress so many every day. I wonder for all racialized members of our community, where do racialized people fit in the field of Child and Youth Care? Do we continue to conform, ignore and assimilate to the “whiteness”, or do we begin to speak up and express that something is not how it should be?

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The Narrative Fallacy

Doug Magnuson

When we listen to parents, youthworkers, and educators talk about young people, we hear many explanatory and causal stories. They tell stories that that explain current behavior as the effect of a previous action or experience, retrospectively, and they make predictions of future behavior from some current experience of them, prospectively. What if their—and our—explanatory stories are less a reflection of our expertise about children and youth and more a reflection of our own need to to see narrative patterns? We might be committing a “narrative fallacy” or the “hot hand” fallacy or the “gambler’s fallacy” (see the bibliography of Colson & Fritz, 2017, for more information).

Gilovich, Vallone, and Tversky (1985) wrote about the “hot hand” in basketball, such as when a player makes several shots in a row (or misses several shots in a row). It appears to us that the player is “hot” and therefore more likely to make their next shot. Gilovich, et al, argued that if one looks at the statistical pattern, the idea of a “hot hand” is a myth. The idea is simple: If you are competent, and you shoot enough shots, it is likely that at some point you will make (or miss) 10 shots in a row. When these events occur, observers (like television commentators), often explain the event in terms of the player’s character, resilience, moral pluckiness, courage, composure under stress, or the lack of any of these qualities. What observers are doing in these cases is providing a narrative, a story, that seemingly explains the event. Of course, it is even more dramatic when the player has recently suffered some setback, so success is deemed resilience and courage.

Gilovich, et al suggested instead that making 10 shots in a row is actually a statistical probability—something that eventually is likely to happen given enough attempted shots. If you are competent, eventually you will make 10 shots in a row, and if you are really good, the probability is even higher. The problem is that when



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it happens is random rather than predictable. The narrative explanation fills a need, but the need belongs entirely to the observer, not the observed. If you listen to the commentary for almost any athletic event, you will hear the same desire to fill an empty space with a narrative story. Football commentators in the Europe are especially good at creating drama by attributing even small events to their place in some imagined, larger narrative and the perceived traits of teams and individual players.

Just as we do with athletes and athletic events, we explain the behavior of children and youth by filling in the context with a narrative, especially when their behavior is perceived as unusual. We are ready with causal narratives about their character, about the competence of their caregivers, about the effects of past setbacks and abuse, and so forth. But re-imagine their lives as a sports event, and our narratives as the colour commentary, and the validity of these narratives might not seem so expert. Instead, we might think of exceptional behavior—good, bad, or indifferent, as a statistical probability—not a narrative probability. Like athletes, when youth are exceptionally good or exceptionally bad it is probably random and not predictable. That it will happen is predictable, but when it will happen it is not. If this is true, it has some consequences for how we understand our work.

First, we might consider how we can avoid over-interpreting individual behaviors, attitudes, and events. One location where this is common is in programs that require extensive documentation, like case notes. Daily case notes based on impressionistic reactions of practitioners are ripe for misinterpretations and over-interpretations. Our interpretations of young people are often *ad hoc* and not disciplined, even when based on some theory. This is also true in my own field, in education; we teachers are also subject to over-interpretation of students.

Second, we want to avoid overreacting to unusual behavior, in any direction. According to our statistical logic, given enough behavior and enough time, rare events will happen. It is a bit of a mind twister. We can be certain that at some point in time extremely good things will happen and extremely bad things will



happen. Attributing a specific, local cause to these events is too often a mistake. And certainty about when they will occur is a mistake.

Third, there is some prestige in our collective fields attached to the ability to create narrative interpretations of youth behavior. This may not be justified by effectiveness and validity, even if these narratives are interesting. The narratives may be more literary than professional expertise. Vladimir Nabakov, the novelist, thought Freud was a fraud, and the visions of human behavior offered by Nabakov and Freud are compelling, charismatic, and great fun, but applied to individual people and events they are often fanciful. This does not mean human behavior theories are not useful or that the study of lives is not useful. Done properly, they are accounts based on long periods of time and a wide range of behaviors. The narrative fallacy is evident when these theories are used to interpret single events or events based on single causes.

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Olivia the Pigeon

Kiaras Gharabaghi

Garafat once wrote that ‘child and youth care is a way of being in this world’, and this is, without a doubt, my favourite phrase in our field. The problem is that I tend to take things much too literally, and so I apply my child and youth care identity to things I probably shouldn’t. And so it came about one day that I became deeply involved in a relational connection with Olivia, and this is, at the moment, the connection that rules my life.

Since early May I have been based in Germany, as a guest faculty at the University of Hildesheim. Hildesheim is a medieval town just south of Hannover; it is quite beautiful and certainly has a romantic charm. I live in a small apartment on the top floor of a typically German building in the city. My apartment is nestled right under the roof and has the slanted ceilings to go with that location. It also has a balcony. For reasons I would rather not get into, balconies are extremely important to me, whether I am staying in a hotel or an apartment; I tend to spend a lot of time on balconies. My balcony is very narrow but very long. There is nothing on the balcony except for a slightly damaged bench that is jammed into one end of the space. I usually sit on that bench with laptop in hand, coffee on the window ledge, writing away my loneliness. One day, for reasons unknown, I felt particular uneasy, and so I started pacing on my balcony. This brought me to the other end of the balcony, and for the first time, I saw the old bench from a distance. As a result, this was also the first time I was able to see under the bench. There, hidden in the farthest corner of the space under the bench, were two eggs. They were just lying there, with a few twigs around them but nothing I would characterize as a bird’s nest. I concluded that these eggs must have rolled off the roof of the building at



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some point and landed on my balcony, which, since it is carpeted, gave them a soft enough landing not to break. I thought nothing further of it.

The next day I felt compelled to look whether the eggs were still there. One of them was, the other had disappeared. A quick inspection resulted in the discovery of the second egg in the rain gutter just under the ledge of my balcony. The wind must have blown it there, I figured. As I stood on the balcony looking out onto the hillside of Hildesheim, I saw a pigeon flying about, then landing on a nearby roof. As I kept standing there, the pigeon flew off again and landed on another roof nearby. I don't know why, but this pigeon caught my attention. Something seemed strange; it was like the pigeon was flying in patterns and landing in places specifically designed



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to communicate something to me. Now I have to confess to my own biases here – I have lived much of my life believing that pigeons don't really communicate with people. And so it seemed unlikely to me that my feeling was valid. Perhaps another glass of wine would fix this strange moment, I thought.

I left the balcony for about five minutes and then stepped out again. As I stepped out, that very pigeon came flying out from under my bench and once again took aim at one roof, and then another. Ok, I thought, the egg under the bench belongs to the pigeon. I guess that's fine, I can share my balcony.

It turns out that sharing a space is not that easy. For the next few days, every time I went out on the balcony, the pigeon made a hasty escape. At first I was annoyed, because the flapping of the wings caught me by surprise every time and frankly scared the crap out of me. And then I even felt some resentment toward the pigeon for making my space less pleasant than it was before. But then I started seeing the situation through a child and youth care lens. My inner conversation went something like this:

If I am scared of this pigeon, the pigeon must be terrified of me. I am probably 80 times bigger than this pigeon, and the pigeon has no way of knowing when I might appear, seemingly out of nowhere. Furthermore, the pigeon has no way of learning anything about me, whereas I can just read up on pigeons on Wikipedia. I can find out how they live, how they breed, how they interact, what they eat, when they sleep and so much more. Frankly, I am pretty powerful compared to that pigeon. Maybe that's why the pigeon chose such a hidden spot on my balcony. Perhaps it was hoping that I wouldn't notice it at all.

As I was beginning to let go of my own needs and the impact on my Self, and started to consider this situation through the perspective of the pigeon, I started feeling shame. It occurred to me that by creating the conditions where the pigeon no longer felt safe, I was inadvertently creating potential multi-generational harm,



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because I was pretty sure that sitting on its egg was not a part time job for the pigeon. Perhaps the egg was suffering damage as a result of the constant interruptions in being sat on.

So, what's a guy to do under these circumstance? Well, my first instinct was to abandon my use of the space. I thought if I just not used the balcony, the situation was resolved. The problem was that going up and down four flights of stairs every hour or so gets to be a bit of a drag (no pun intended). Then I thought perhaps the pigeon was a message that I should just abandon my need for regular access to outside space. Well, turns out that addictions are not that easily convinced to just cease to exist because of some pigeon. Ok, I thought, I got this. I need to connect with this pigeon and earn its trust. We can share this space and both feel safe. It must be possible.

To make sure that my commitment to the mission of connecting with this pigeon was authentic and sustainable, I needed to name the pigeon. 'It' was not compelling enough. I thought long and hard about a name that made sense to me. *Olivia*. That was it! I met an Olivia some time ago, a wonderful young woman who is both determined and rebellious but also vulnerable and scared. For the next little while, I decided to give Olivia a heads up that I was about to come on the balcony. I opened the door to the balcony, but I would wait a couple of minutes before I actually stepped on the balcony, and when I did, I would immediately move to the far corner opposite her. This way, I would demonstrate to her that I respect her space, and that I will carve out my space in a way that it does not threaten her. Furthermore, I was conscious of our size difference, and so I would sit down on the floor at the other end of the balcony to appear a little smaller. This strategy seemed to work, at least enough to prevent Olivia from flying away. But I couldn't help but notice that she seemed fully prepared to fly off, just waiting for a reason. This, it seemed to me, would be a stressful thing to be. Readiness to take flight at the earliest hint of danger cannot be an easy way to be.

I decided that this initial stage of just being present together on the balcony was a move forward, but it wasn't enough. I needed to engage. Olivia did not seem to



have the same need as me to do that; although I had to remind myself that having her beak turned away from me at a right angle actually meant that she was staring right at me, watching closely my every move. Olivia, as you surely can imagine, has eyes at the side of her head – literally, as birds do. I felt like the next important step was for Olivia to get to know me a little. Since we don't speak the same language, direct communication seemed out of the question. Perhaps, I thought, this doesn't really matter. I will simply start talking, very gently in a low and calming voice, so that she can judge for herself what she might think of me. Since content didn't seem to matter, I started chatting aloud about things that I am glad no one overheard. I found myself speaking Farsi for much of the time, just in case the neighbours had their windows open. I had the sense that they wouldn't understand my relational practices at that particular moment and label me psychotic instead.

Speaking to Olivia helped a lot. She seemed to relax a little, and I noticed that her preparedness to take flight seemed to become less important. A few days went by, and one morning I noticed something that made me smile. Olivia had brought a few more twigs to put around the egg. Clearly she was moving in, feeling safe enough to continue on my balcony. That whole day I walked around with a stupid grin on my face, prompting some awkward comments from my German colleagues at the university. "I have this friend", I told them, "Olivia, who wasn't feeling very good but seems to be feeling a lot better now". This seemed to satisfy them.

Things were going really well in our connection. I am certain that at some point, Olivia actually was anticipating me coming on the balcony. I really had the sense that she felt safer when I was around. But eventually it occurred to me that with that added safety comes responsibility. It occurred to me that whereas my use of the balcony was somewhat trivial, her use of that space was enormously important. She was in the process of creating the next generation, after all. This, I thought, must not only be tiring, but perhaps also hunger-invoking. Perhaps she is thirty or hungry. So I filled a little dish with water, and I went to the store to buy some birdseed, and I put both these items on the balcony near the egg at a moment when Olivia 'was out' (she did fly off once in a while, but not because of me). And



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then I was reminded that even good intentions are not always the right thing when imposed on someone. Minutes after I had placed the water and food near the egg, I noticed a wide range of intruders showing up on my balcony. Other pigeons, sparrows, and jays. Panic set in immediately. How could I be so insensitive and careless. I had opened her space to strangers, and in the process put her egg in grave danger. I immediately went out on the balcony, removed the water and seeds, and resolved to never take 'helping action' again without first consulting with Olivia. Thankfully she had missed this whole fiasco, and although I still carry the guilt of not having told her of it, I feel she is probably happy to just focus on the task at hand.

And so Olivia and I continue our way of being in this world together. I hope she has gained something from learning to trust me. I know I have learned a lot from her. In her vulnerability she showed me a level of courage and strength that is far beyond what I could muster. She has responded rationally to my initially scary presence, she gave me a chance, she evaluated my every move, and eventually she allowed us to connect, but not without fiercely protecting her space on her terms. I also learned that sometimes vulnerability is a good thing; it gives signals about what level of risk is acceptable, and when it is smart to fly off. And finally, I learned that the power of connection transcends personality, differences, and any expectations of normalcy.

For now, as I am writing this, I like this way of being in the world. I am holding my breath for two more days, which will make it eighteen days of Olivia sitting on her egg. That's when I should meet my grand pigeon Sally. I googled that.



Unity Through Relationship 2017



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Learning from the CYC experience in South Africa, a potential resource for other places

Jack Phelan

I am heading to South Africa to visit for two weeks with my esteemed colleagues at the National Organization of Child Care Workers Association (NACCW). They are a collective of motivated, innovative and fun-loving people who brighten my perspective about what we are trying to create for children, youth and families, so even though they see me as someone who is bringing education to them, I get much more learning out of being with them than vice-versa.

I will be going to some Isibindi sites on my visit, which is the topic I would like to talk about this month. NACCW has developed the idea of this Isibindi model of CYC practice from the dire situation that faced so many communities, based on the AIDS epidemic. Families in every part of South Africa were devastated by AIDS, particularly rural villages and settlements that were far from services and lacking resources. The response by NACCW was creative, CYC based, and very successful. I believe that many areas in North America could benefit from learning more about this approach and adapting it to specific local conditions. There is a web-site <www.naccw.org.za/isibindi> which gives much more useful information, but I want to comment on some possible North American issues that Isibindi ideas could address.

I want to be clear that I am not an expert on Isibindi programming, but I have been witness to the implementation and training process as well as seen the well



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demonstrated and carefully documented results. This is one of those ideas that I wish I had thought of, but I didn't. I will leave the detailed explanation of how to achieve the results to the people at NACCW for now, but I do want to describe what I believe can be replicated in North America if we are willing to learn.

- Remote areas that must remove children and youth from their communities to get services will be able to maintain them in their homes.
- Local people will be employed, after training and with ongoing supervision and training, to deliver the services needed, keeping social and cultural needs protected and supported.
- CYC practitioners from non-mainstream populations will enrich the field and bring powerful voices to the table. (read last month's issue).
- Family-based CYC approaches will build capacity and support for the whole community.
- Children and youth will have a safe, public environment, run by trained professionals, to recreate, be supported in distress, assisted educationally and protected on a daily basis.
- Distrust of "outside help" which does not respect local realities, will be alleviated.
- Urban communities which are marginalized and lack resources can also be served by this model.

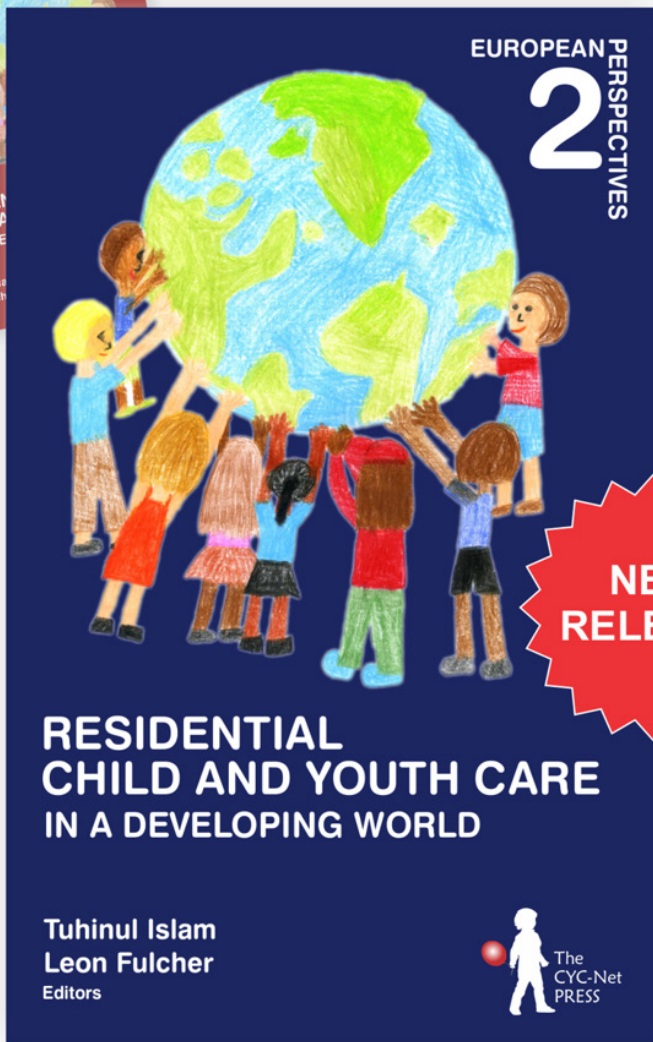
The interesting part is that, at least in South Africa, this is not a terribly expensive fix, although it requires buy-in and cooperation from funders and governments and a sharing of resources. Unfortunately, it is not a perfect solution, even though it is far more effective than existing programs. I believe that remote northern communities in Canada, Aboriginal communities across North America, and marginalized urban communities can be excellent sites for this type of CYC intervention.

The information is out there, the ball is in your court.



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Studying Child and Youth Care is More Than Just Theory

Larissa Doidge & Gabrielle Moreau-Robitaille

Abstract

The field of Child and Youth Care (CYC) focuses upon providing young persons, who are vulnerable, and their families with opportunities to reach optimal growth and development. To do this effectively, extensive emotional availability of the practitioner is required. The journey of an emerging CYC practitioner is thus one abundant with personal exploration and self-discovery. This article is a reflection on our own learning experience which we share to help future CYC students prepare to get the most of their educational journey,

After 94 assignments and 65 self-reflections over the course of three years, we finally made it to graduation. If you include all the professionalism, engagement and practicum debrief self-reflection rubrics we had to complete it totals 158 self-reflection assignments. We thought that after our final semester we would be done with these self-reflections. Yet, here we are two weeks out, this time of our own accord, feeling the need to write yet another self-reflection journal about our experience as emerging CYC practitioners. Our faculty were right when they said wondering, being curious, and sharing perspective is what this field is all about.

Learning to Care for Yourself

The three years you spend within a CYC diploma or degree program will be both the best and worst times of your life. You will be pushed to discover yourselves, what your boundaries consist of, along with understanding what your



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areas of strengths and development entail. Some of you will complete your CYC studies and assist in shaping the lives of young people, while others will switch into a program or field with a lower demand for self-awareness and self-reflection. Those with whom you will experience this journey, will one-day become not just your support system but also family. For many their education is a long and difficult journey but if you take risks and move outside your comfort zone it is one that will be self-rewarding. You will not only assist in supporting and understanding young people but also yourselves. If there is any advice to be given it is to listen well, write thoroughly but succinctly, and most importantly make sure to care for yourselves.

Learning to be Vulnerable

Have you ever looked into a mirror and wondered how you have become the person you are today? Has anyone ever asked you? If not, you will have the opportunity to figure it out throughout your time as an emerging CYC practitioner. This may make you feel overwhelmed. However, know that no one expects this to happen overnight but rather over time as you learn the art of self-reflection. The purpose of the coursework and assignments are for students to thoroughly examine their past and to discover what their boundaries, values, beliefs, and motivations consist of as well as how past experiences might impact our work with young people. These self-reflections may become irritating and difficult as the semesters go on, but delving into your lives will help you to better understand and connect the missing variables. Although we are not professors nor do we have a magic wand that will enable you to discover who you are and how you got here, know that you have a purpose and it will benefit you as a practitioner. In our opinion, this work helped guide us and continues to direct us in our practice and the creation of our professional identities. Therefore, if we were to give you any relevant advice it would be to allow yourself to be vulnerable by sharing your personal traits, which make you unique as an individual.



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Throughout our time as emerging CYC practitioners, our professors stated numerous times: “How do we expect a child to open up us, if we cannot open up ourselves?” This does not mean that you should disclose your own history to everyone you encounter but rather work to find and create individuals (peers, faculty, practicum supervisors, mentors, etc.) with whom it feel safe to do so. This aids in your ability to explore, be aware of and mindful of your boundaries, as well as triggers and limitations within your relationships.

Finding Hope and Strength in Your Own Story

Once you get out into practice, chances are that before working with a child you will be given a file full of information highlighting their life history. Mostly what others perceive to be the child’s deficits. Before this, why not turn the table and imagine what your binder of your mistakes, challenges, places of residence and more might look or feel like. The purpose is not to scare you. It’s to make you reflect on your hardships and how they have impacted who you are today. One could easily begin to think that the binder defines who they are. Such narratives are what Child and Youth Care wishes to re-construct. So, move away from the negative and see if you can uncover the strengths within your story – character traits, your own talents, community capacity, and personal connections that increased your ability to handle what came your way. Identifying small moments of success nurtures hope, encourages new dreams and visions (Sago & De Monte, 2015) for both yourself and those you will work with. Within our relationships we stand as individual emerging CYC practitioners to promote and foster hope for young people. We hope you are mindful of the many adversities that the young people you will encounter have experienced, and how they contributed to their overall development and sense of self-worth. How will you utilize your binder to create hope for young people within your future practice through your use of self?



Learning to Be Present

Being attuned is something that you will come to better understand in your final semesters and practicums as an emerging CYC practitioner. Being attuned is much more than just simply listening. It is being physically, and mentally present with young people and/or their families. This is when your skills from your counseling courses come into practice. You must show you are being attuned through your verbal and non-verbal communication, your paraphrasing and summarizing skills, and most importantly through your use of self.

The word redundant you will come to learn and despise however, it is a term used for encouragement and further learning by your professors. This word should be considered a stepping-stone to your overall growth and development within the field of CYC, as it will assist in your abilities to be attuned to others, to write thoroughly and most importantly succinctly. It can be challenging to be your own critic but as Garfat & Fulcher (2011) state, 'hanging in' means that a practitioner does not give up when times are tough. We learn the value of this characteristic by hanging in with ourselves when times are tough. When first trying the skill of 'hanging in' on yourself you may develop a greater understanding of how effective it can be within your practice.

Learning Rhythm

Rhythm is more than just the beat of a drum. It is how you approach, connect and engage with the young people you will encounter. Although the emerging CYC practitioners may have a more novice level of understanding regarding the core competencies of the field, the importance of integrating the themes within CYC will reflect in one's ability to engage in effective practice. Rhythmicity is tightly linked to attunement. In order to beat a drum, the drummer must be aware of how to mediate what they bring into practice, their milieu, and hand movements to be mindful of the next beat. CYC practitioners must acknowledge their own body language and stance, facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice - remembering everyone interprets situations differently through their own meaning-making lens.



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Relationship building in the field is known as building a ‘rapport’ with a child, youth, or family. Although this may seem like a simple task, it can be extremely difficult due to the vulnerability of the young person. You will learn that as a practitioner you will not be able to meet the needs of every young person. You may take this personally however, as a practitioner you cannot expect all young people to like you. As we as individuals do not always see eye-to-eye with those we personally interact with.

Meeting Needs

While working with vulnerable young people you will encounter behaviours that raise many questions. In our opinion it is important for you to know that there is a purpose to every behaviour, as the child or youth is meeting a need (Garfat, 2002). That being said CYC is a relational field. You will discover your own personal and professional needs and how not to let them over shadow the young persons. Are you here to make an impact? Do you have the need to be needed? Is it the need for money? Is it to be in control? By analyzing your motivations, it will allow you to find ways to meet your needs without losing focus of the young person’s needs. This will support the overall developmental capabilities of the young person. Although this can be difficult to acknowledge it will create for a more effective practice if learned earlier rather than later in your career.

Conclusion

Although the years you spend within the child and youth care program will be the best and worst times of your life, it is what you make of it. Do not be afraid to let your unique self shine! This is your time to be extraordinary so take every opportunity that comes your way both academically and personally. Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable when you are in a safe and caring environment with those whom you are building trust. Although, the breakdowns and challenges will be difficult, remember you are not alone. Your peers are going through it too and there will be faculty you can reach out to for guidance in these moments. At the end of our time



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studying CYC our peers and faculty felt like a second family. We hope you are lucky enough to have a similar experience.

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Valuing the Intuitive, Irrational and Ineffable

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Many years ago I worked in a Day Treatment Center with what we termed, first break young adults or non-chronic mental patients. These were young people who had only had one or maybe two admissions to the hospital for some type of behavior that was troubling to people around them or themselves. The thought at the time was that if we could integrate them back into the community and avoid any further hospitalization, we might be able to keep them from entering into a life-long engagement with the psychiatric/mental health system.

As part of our program, we had an art therapist who came in several times a week to work with us. She offered a couple of hours in which we could do art together. We mostly did drawing or painted in groups of ten or so, mixing staff and young people doing art together. I really enjoyed the process of all of us creating pieces of art. It was probably the only thing we did in the program that everyone participated in without any reservation or reluctance.

That is, until it came time to explain or interpret what we had done. The art therapist had been trained in what was then (and even now) a pretty common therapeutic set of ideas. The belief was that the most important aspect of any therapeutic encounter was to bring conscious awareness of underlying conflicts, traumas, and pathological modes of thinking to light. Art was considered an avenue to create representations of these deep unconscious dysfunctional patterns. To really get maximum benefit from art therapy, one needed the art therapist to assist



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the client in interpreting their own artwork by interpreting it. The act of interpretation was something most of our young people found disturbing and disruptive to the process of making art. As a result, the part of the art therapy session devoted to interpretation was filled with awkward silences and overt expressions of hostility, while the therapist tried to break through the “resistance.”

As someone not properly trained in the practice of conventional art therapy, I enjoyed doing the art and found it pretty useful in working some of my own issues. However, like the young people, I found the process of interpretation disruptive and I wasn't sure that what I was saying about my work really got at what had happened in the process of creation. The two processes seemed at odds with another.

When I expressed this



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concern to the family therapist, she became quite frustrated and essentially informed me that she had the training and expertise, so I should watch and learn. Although there was some part of me that felt I should bow to the greater training and expertise of an elder in the field, I also knew that I spent far more time engaged in direct interaction with the young people. I saw them five days a week for up to six hours a day in groups, activities, community meetings, family therapy sessions, individual meeting and informal conversations. I didn't have the language at that time, but in CYC terms, I was deeply engaged in the life world of our encounters. It troubled me to see the young people I engaged with on a daily basis so uncomfortable with being pushed into a way of expressing themselves that felt forced.

I had recently begun training in Ericksonian hypnosis and I wondered if doing art wasn't a form of very productive trance work. I noticed that when Milton Erickson did hypnotic work with people, he rather intentionally avoided interpretation. He relied on the unconscious to do its work outside the awareness of the conscious mind. In fact, he felt that conscious mind was the least effective aspect of ourselves in terms of creativity or problem solving. He suggested that the most efficient way to assist others with the problems in their lives was to structure an encounter in such a way as to open avenues to the unconscious, while distracting the conscious mind so as to keep it out of the way.

I was also reading a book called *Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness* (1971) by a woman named Mary Barnes and her psychiatrist Joseph Burke. They had both lived in the alternative anti-psychiatric community called Kingsley Hall run by R.D. Laing. Kingsley Hall was an experiment in having psychiatric patients and psychiatric professionals live together without rules or hierarchies. The idea was that if you created a space where everyone had full freedom of expression, including expressions of lunacy, there was the possibility of working through one's madness. Mary Barnes' book was an account of how she went through just such a process of disintegration and reintegration while at Kingsley Hall. While there was a great deal that interested me about her story, the fact that she used art as a tool



for working through her madness without using interpretation was evocative to me. I was fascinated by how she used the process of art itself as a way of working through her madness. I wondered what this might mean for our practices in the Day Treatment program.

I brought all of this to our team meeting one day. I suggested that we might experiment with using art as a process, not as a vehicle for interpretation. My colleagues were hesitant and cautioned against challenging the experience and expertise of the art therapist. At the same time, they were intrigued by the possibility of engaging madness to resolve madness. Working in the life world of young people experiencing radically alternate perceptions of the world had made us all wonder about what possible value such struggle might have? Was there something about madness that could be useful or was it just a biological/neurological malfunction? I think that spending deep relational time with young people at odds with the dominant psychological construction of sanity, made us wonder about the function of madness and the best ways to work respectfully with people diagnosed as mad.

As we worked through the conversation about how to best use art in our program, we began to wonder about the value of interpretation as a purely rational act that brought the hidden depths of the unconscious into the ostensible light of reason. Perhaps there was value in irrationality and the ineffable to be found in creative pursuits such as the arts. Was there something important that happens before we can articulate it? Does the process of transforming the psycho/emotive corporality of artistic creativity into language violate something important?

While we never were able to convince the art therapist that it would be worthwhile to experiment with art sans interpretation, the questions we raised have stuck with me over the years. In my own experience in working with young people and colleagues, I have noticed that often times the centrally important process of establishing relational rapport often happens extra-linguistically. What Mark Krueger often used to refer to as the dance of CYC work is composed largely in the life world of jointly producing the world through doing things



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together. I might even argue that our ability to fully engage the work with young people begins in our first encounter before any words are spoken. It is an inexpressible moment of encounter that exceeds our ability to consciously know what exactly is happening. It is where we find out if we are capable of arriving into the moment with the other person. In a sense, our initial encounters are intuitive and can't be scripted or learned through the conscious application of techniques. We can only learn this aspect of the work through paying attention to each element of the composition of ourselves and the other person.

Paying attention intuitively is neither trivial nor simple. It takes a lifetime of devoted practice. Certainly, like art, it is helpful to learn some technique. But I would argue that techniques like interviewing skills, group process training, solution focused templates of questions, or CBT are only training wheels for the real work. That work is supplemented by these techniques, while limited by them at the same time. They are like learning scales on the piano, certain brush techniques in painting, the centering of clay on a wheel or how to weld. These skills are, to some degree essential, but they don't at the end the day make art. And, in CYC work no amount of technique, theory, rules or program structure will produce relational CYC work. That takes a willingness to come to know the immense complexity that is human relationships.

When an artist faces a canvas, the musician the empty space before the first note, or the worker the young person who has just walked into their life, there is a moment before the act that cannot be perceived or understood consciously, but will have a profound effect on everything that will follow. That space is composed of everything that could happen. To the degree, the artist or the worker has spent a lifetime building a rich set of possibilities for action, the first move will be fluid and rich. It will also be tentative and experimental. It doesn't begin with the touch of the brush to the canvas or in the first words between the worker and the young person. It begins well before that in the way that the artist or the worker has prepared themselves by devoting their life to a certain kind of paying attention. This kind of paying attention requires a certain kind of devotion to a way of being in the



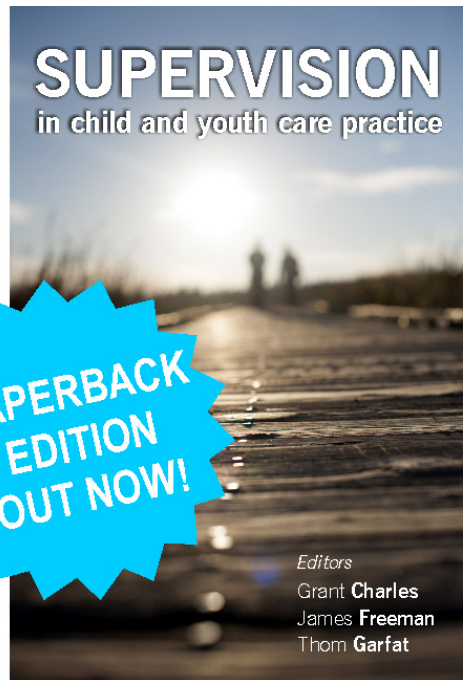
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world. For the artist, it is filling one's life with a certain way of seeing and perceiving the world as compositional elements in art to come. For those of us wishing to work with young people, it is the composition of a life that is lived relationally every moment of every day. It is to infuse our lived experience with a rich and deep pool of relational encounters, each of which adds to a field of possible resources for dancing with the other.

However, like dancing, the ability to put our lived experience to work in that first moment of encounter, requires the ability to sense the rhythm of the moment. That means learning to pay attention to the ways in which the moment is composed at a level of complexity that exceeds any conscious capacity we might have to apprehend it. There is simply too much happening within us, between us and within the young person, not to mention the complexities of the setting and so on. I sometimes think that it is because we find all of this too overwhelming that we fall back on structures, rules, clunky techniques and interpretations of the other. Doing this certainly reduces the complexity, but it also reduces the richness of relational possibility to be found in every moment of every lived encounter.

If we were to re-think our work and our identities as CYC workers outside the conventional understandings



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we have of ourselves as technicians of change, employees of agencies or belonging to a profession, we might begin to think of what we do as a life art. If this were to happen, I would suggest we might stand the possibility of drawing very close to the lived experience of the encounter that stands at the center of our field of practice. That would require a certain kind of devoted attention to the force of life in all its creative capacity. CYC as a practice of living art. Now that might be interesting indeed.

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Child and Youth Care Work as Dance

Mark Krueger

Ayouth waits, anticipates a youth worker's arrival. The worker enters the shelter facility, looks around, sees the youth. The youth approaches, begins to speak. The worker stops, listens, waits for the right moment to respond, then moves on to speak with two other youth. As she moves, listens and watches, she gets a feel for the tone and tempo of the day, and then she takes off her coat and starts her shift. She is present, aware of her own mood and feelings as she becomes engaged with youth in the activities of the day.

Child and youth care work is like modern dance. Workers bring themselves to the moment, practice, plan (choreograph), listen to the tempos of daily living, improvise, and adjust to and/or change the contexts within which their interactions occur.

Consider, for example, the worker above. She moves into her day the way a skillful dancer moves on the stage. She, the worker, has learned her craft and developed her technique. As she works, she improvises and moves, informed by her instincts and her head. She senses, in other words, as well as knows where to be and what to say or not say. She is in each moment, sensitive to the needs of the youth and the environment in which they are interacting.

I became fascinated with this notion of child and youth care work as dance, especially modern dance, which is improvised, several years ago. I was looking for way to describe my own experience as a child and youth care worker in a residential center for boys. For me, the work was mostly about motion. I remember running, playing, struggling. The work also had a quality that was difficult to explain, an existential hum perhaps, an energy, tone, tempo that seemed to permeate and influence my movement. As time passed, I learned to rely on my



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instincts and my ability to improvise. I developed a sense of where I should be in proximity to the youth in my group. If someone was too far away or out of sight, I moved or shifted my position. Gradually I became more conscious of how my presence influenced my interactions. I learned that my mood, my feelings, and the way I moved played a role my work. I sensed when I was in and out of synch.

My curiosity about child and youth care work as dance was affirmed recently when I learned more about the work of scholars who were exploring youth work from a postmodern perspective. In postmodern youth work, a competent worker is able to act and interact with sensitivity to the multiple contexts within which actions and interactions take place. The worker learns how to move, act, or not act, with the awareness that each youth and situation is unique. He or she, in other words, improvises to the tempos of daily living and the contexts within which an interaction occurs.

Currently I am working with eight youth workers on a study of youth work as dance. Together we are analyzing their stories of moments of connection, discovery and empowerment with youth, which we refer to as the creative works that emerge during the dance.

Read the original article post at <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-1200-krueger.html>



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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

The America's Cup Regatta in Bermuda

Greetings everyone! We've been staying warm by the fire here in the Wintery South, glued to the 35th America's Cup sailing in Bermuda, on the other side of the World, off the east coast of Florida. The world's oldest sporting trophy was contested between holders Oracle Team USA and 5 challengers. I grew up too far from the sea so never really learned to sail!

Oracle Team USA started the final with a bonus point after winning the Challenger Series that determined which teams would sail into the Louis Vuitton Cup final and claim the right to challenge Oracle Team USA for the America's Cup. New Zealand earned that right and then went on to reclaim the America's Cup 7-1 in a best of 13, David vs Goliath thumping!

New Zealand's decisive 7-1 victory in the 35th America's Cup laid to rest the bitter memory of its dramatic 8-9 loss to Oracle Team USA in 2013 after blowing a seemingly unassailable 8-1 lead.



Winners Team New Zealand Hoist the 35th America's Cup



Holders Team Oracle USA faces Winner of the Louis Vuitton Challenger Serie



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Led this time by 26-year-old Olympic gold medallist Peter Burling, victory in Bermuda offered redemption but gave further evidence to support New Zealand's reputation for producing outstanding sailors and world-leading boat-building and technological innovation. Burling is the youngest ever helmsman to lift the 'Auld Mug'.

The Louis Vuitton challenger series featured five challengers, including Emirates Team New Zealand and teams from the UK, Sweden, Switzerland and Japan – all in boats with the same configuration. Wingsails were reduced to 50 feet for this regatta but the smaller catamarans were capable of continuous foiling and speeds in excess of 40 knots in most wind conditions. Team New Zealand maintained its reputation for innovation by replacing the grinders who adjust sails with hand-operated winches with 4 'cyclors' on stationary bicycles.

The *Auld Mug* was originally awarded in 1851 by Britain's Royal Yacht Squadron for a race around England's Isle of Wight won by the schooner *America*. The trophy was re-named the America's Cup (after that original winning yacht) and was donated to the New York Yacht Club under a deed of gift that made the cup available for perpetual international competition.



Sailing in Bermuda off the Coast of Florida meant great USA Support



Emirates Team New Zealand introduced Revolutionary Cycling Approach to Grinding





All boats entering the regatta met strict technical standards



Composed New Zealand Support was very evident

From 1857 until 1983, the America’s Cup was held by the New York Yacht Club before losing it to the Royal Perth Yacht Club ending the longest winning streak in sporting history!

New Zealanders held their breath during each race, refusing to get their hopes up after that crushing 9-8 defeat in 2013. Everyone followed the races, not daring to talk about winning. A small nation consisting of two main islands, New Zealand is surrounded by water. Children learn to swim during primary school as part of the curriculum. Junior and youth sailing and surf life-saving are features during Summers. Sailing isn’t the same rich person’s sport in New Zealand as may be more commonly found elsewhere.



Team New Zealand Nearly Crashed Out of the Louis Vitton Challenger Series





Sailing into the Future with a Proud New Zealand Supporter!



A Junior and Youth Sailing Regatta with Competitors from 12 Countries

Everybody has had a go at sailing, starting with Maori sailors navigating sailing waka from Hawai'iki. The Junior and Youth Regatta that took place around the America's Cup Regatta was a very special event. New Zealand children and youths are flocking to the sport of sailing!

Have you ever had a go at sailing, considered a youth activity with a sailing club, or the awesome new sail karts?



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CYC-Online is a monthly journal which reflects the activities of the field of Child and Youth Care. We welcome articles, pieces, poetry, case examples and general reflections from everyone.

In general:

- Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
- We are willing to work with first-time authors to help them get published
- We accept previously published papers as long as copyright permission is assured
- We are open to alternative presentations such as poems, artwork, photography, etc.

Articles can be submitted to the email address below for consideration.

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