CYC-Online

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

The
CYC-Net
PRESS

Contents

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Fusing horizons of past and present

Mark Smith

I am delighted to be writing the editorial for this issue of *CYC-Online*. This is where I found my 'voice' as an academic in the field, writing a just about monthly column over several years. This instilled in me the discipline of regular writing and of putting my ideas out to public scrutiny.

It is this idea of 'voice' that I want to pick up on. It has taken on a particular significance in Scotland over the past month with the launch of an *Independent Care Review*, which, over the course of its deliberations listened to 5500 voices, over half of whom were care experienced. The Care Review was commissioned by Scotland's First Minister and a head of steam has built up behind it. Rather than make recommendations as other reviews might restrict themselves to, this has made 'promises'.

Much of what the Review says, I agree with. One of the reasons I left practice was frustration at how procedural and risk averse it had become. The Review identifies some of these frustrations. It also challenges what have become orthodoxies in so-called professional practice over the years such as not maintaining contact with youngsters after they have left care. Indeed, it goes so far as to countenance and to encourage loving relationships between children and staff members, something that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

I might claim some credit for the recognition of the possibility of something that might approximate to 'love' in child and youth care – if you were to look back in the annals of *CYC-Online* and *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* (www.rcycp.com), you would find that I was an early voice over the years in suggesting that love might enter into CYC practice. I even edited a couple of journal special issues on a theme of love, which offer some very thoughtful perspectives on the place of love in child care.

Since beginning to talk about it, though, I have fallen out of love with love somewhat – so I was pleased to see that, sensibly, the Review holds back from 'promising' or mandating love. That would be to misunderstand love altogether. Unfortunately, the way that talk of love has taken off in policy discourse has become mawkish and, demanding. Those same advocacy groups who once asserted children's rights now assert their right to be loved. Yet it was, I would argue, these very demands for rights, with little understanding of what these might be or how they might be achieved, that were so damaging of adult child relationships in the first place. They created a contractual and antagonistic approach to relationships with resultant mutual suspicion and, funnily enough, a reluctance of staff to engage in the kind of warm and spontaneous relationships that former children in care now say they needed and wanted. Many staff would also have wanted such relationships had they not been led to believe that these were 'unprofessional'.

There are, though, aspects to this Review that worry me. While few would disagree that care experienced adults have something to say which might helpfully inform how we think about care, we should not give prominence to their views over others, such as those of staff or of academics, who might actually know something about care. Indeed, what has become something of a fetish across a range of fields in demanding

that we listen to the voices of lived experience betrays a very narrow understanding of knowledge and of expertise.

When I started putting my voice forward in writing columns for *CYC-Online* and subsequently in a range of academic outlets, my years of experience as a practitioner was undoubtedly an advantage and gave me some tacit, experiential knowledge on which to draw but it was not sufficient. I couldn't and wouldn't expect to be able to say 'Hey, I have years of experience working in care – listen to me!' No, I was always aware that I also had to draw on other knowledges and especially academic knowledge for my views to be given credence and to have the kind of substance that might allow them to be helpful in taking practice forward. My views and arguments also had to be tested in conversation and debate with others who might not share my views and that's not always a comfortable place to be – but actually, we all have to learn that not everyone shares our view of the world. To suggest that lived experience alone, or even primarily, can offer the one true way forward for the care system, reflects a state of solipsism, whereby one begins to see the world only through the lens of personal experience. That's a very narrow view.

Furthermore, when we talk about voice, I wonder just whose voices are actually being listened to. Not those of the men and women I keep in contact with, yes, even through the years when this was deemed unprofessional. Not Jamie, who used to be in care and who appeared in the local newspaper recently who had spent most of his subsequent life in the jail and was considered so violent and dangerous that he could only move from place to place within the jail if manacled. Sad though this is, this is the reality for some of the care experienced population. We cannot wish away these very real social and personal tragedies and their genesis in complex individual, social and structural issues by merely saying we will

listen in future to the voices of experience. Are we really going to listen to Jamie now, or is it only certain care experienced voices that are to be listened to?

This demand for certain voices to be heard and for certain identities to be given 'voice' and, concomitantly, for other voices to be pushed aside is apparent far more broadly in contemporary social and even, ironically, academic life – and its manifestations are rarely pretty. We live in conflictual times in which legitimate debates are often couched in the language of war; we have wars on poverty, wars on climate change, culture wars more generally. Bruno Latour, doyen of Science and Technology Studies, bewails the current rush to see those with whom we don't agree as the enemy. He asks, 'What has become of the critical spirit? Has it run out of steam? (2004, p.225). It seems it has. It has been shackled by those with a particular cause to champion, who don't need to engage with others' views but believe they possess the full truth already. Those of us who ask questions of what can feel at times like a religious revivalist movement (without the religion, that's so unwoke) are cast as regressive or of having something to hide.

Fair enough perhaps – you actually do get to a stage in your life, quite suddenly, where you shift from being the new kid on the block to being yesterday's news, as the policy wonks seek shiny new ideas. My concern is, who picks up the pieces when the brave new worlds they envisage come falling down because it isn't built on solid foundations – when something that is a presented as a promise has to be broken because things are just a bit more complicated than was imagined in the first flush of youth (or adulthood that wants to get down with the youth)?

And I'm left wondering, who on earth looks after the kids when all anyone seems to be interested in is their own personal or group identity demands? It won't be me and it won't be my kids who, having been brought up living and breathing CYC, would be great in the field. They have been well and truly steered away from making a career in it by my wife and me. It is no place for anyone with any sense of self-respect or notion that they might possess the kind of intellectual and personal virtues that would allow them to make a difference in kids' lives. Perhaps some of the 5500 voices and those who have been quick to fall in behind them in saying how wonderful this all is, might do more than speak their words but could put those words into action through doing a few backshifts.

I am perfectly serious in this; it draws on my current writing on the nature of practice. Good child and youth care requires more than voices; it requires action practised not from some moral high ground but on what Donald Schon (1983) calls the swampy lowlands, where things are messy and ambiguous. To become at all expert in this requires that we have spent a lot of time getting our hands dirty among that messiness. But experience on its own isn't enough – we need knowledge, partly theoretical, partly phenomenological but partly that which comes from being part of an occupational field that has developed, over time and through tradition, its own internal standards of excellence of what it is to be a good, an excellent even, child and youth care worker.

If we are really concerned to make CYC a better place, if we want excellent child and youth care and child care workers, we can't shortcut this process – we need not merely to look to and profess what is shiny and new but also to locate ourselves within the field's canons and traditions. This requires that we read and dialogue widely, that we reflect on what it is to be a good child and youth care worker, that we stay unfinished,

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comfortable in strangeness and open to the possibility that we may be wrong (which is more likely when you read and realise how little you know) and that we engage respectfully with those whose voices may not accord with our own. We need to fuse the horizons of past and present so that these mutually inform each other, providing the friction that is needed for forward movement. When everything is shiny and new we don't have that necessary friction so we end up with a lot of activity but little propulsion.

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Writing for *CYC-Online*

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 as close as possible to 2 500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
- We are willing to help first-time authors to get published
- We accept previously published papers as long as copyright permission is assured
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The Good Life

Kiaras Gharabaghi

L ast month, I wrote about the good practitioner; this month, I want to wonder about what exactly it is that we, as child and youth care practitioners, are aiming for in our involvement with young people. Whether we frame that involvement as helping, coaching, guiding, joining, supporting, encouraging or simply being (present), to what end? Is it to create opportunity for young people as they approach adulthood? Is it to reinforce their agency? Their rights and entitlements? Their responsibilities to others? The range of possible responses is nearly limitless, but each response in and of itself can easily be situated in very particular and rather limited articulations of value, success, positivity or normative compliance. It seems that we have already determined what the good life is; its central characteristics, its defining elements, its operating dynamics. And it's hard to make a list of such characteristics and elements that would not include items such as health, education, social connection, family connection, housing and employment, mental health and well being, and a strong sense of identity(ies). Is this the good life? Is the goal of our practice to ensure young people achieve these things?

Perhaps there is more to it, but surely, our practice set in opposition to these things would be troublesome. Working to dissuade young people from education, from caring for their physical and mental well being, or encouraging them to consider forgoing housing and employment, would all be seen as problematic. On the other hand, the 'good life' often seems rather mediocre; employment turns out to be subsistence-wage activities;

housing often involves cockroaches; well-being doesn't seem to mitigate the kind of pain that leads to suicide, self harm, or self-destruction, and opportunity of any kind, sadly, comes with the opportunity to fail, which is something young people experience all too often after we lose touch with them. The negative prognosis for many young people we encounter is not a function of their deficits, or their decision-making, or even their choices. In many ways, we may not even characterize their life beyond us as problematic, given that social norms largely embrace the problematic, or at the very least, normalize it. Unemployment, homelessness or under-housing, mental health fragility, and indeed, the kind of disorientation that comes with social exclusion and alienation leading to self destruction are common place, expected, and characteristic of class-based societies, even when we politely try to avoid class analysis and render it passé.

What, then, is the 'good life'? Is it an aspiration that remains unachievable for those burdened with personal and social disadvantages? Can it only be achieved by measuring up with a series of metrics defining achievement in the predetermined indicators of the holders of middle-class wisdom? Perhaps it is simply survival, one day at a time, regardless of the quality of life – material, empirical, resilient. Yes, resilient – that slightly oppressive, undignified and always conservative innovation in which we seek to identify the strengths young people have to fight the adversity we intentionally or inadvertently place in their way. There is, as we all know, nothing wrong with racism, ableism, transphobia, or, in a more material context, a lack of accessible housing, meaningful work, and social inclusion so long as we can strengthen young people's capacity to get by in spite of these.

I wonder about these things because I think they directly and very concretely impact how we think about our practice, its purpose and its

implementation. The idea of relational practices as an instrument of the pursuit of the good life, defined thus, becomes slightly banal. It centers not the young person's experience of themselves in context, as we often have said it does, but rather imposes on the young person's experience a little piece of us; our practice centers how *we* are together, as if our being together in any form or shape responds to the experience of life, or the experiences of multiple lives lived by any one young person in both real and material ecologies (housing and employment) and virtual and spiritual ecologies (the imagination, hope, dreams, faith, connections beyond those to people in interpersonal dyads).

At some point, we have to get passed the limited conceptualization of 'so long as young people continue to live another day to pursue the 'good life', the tools we are using in our practice are sufficient'. What exactly is the connection between relational practice and the good life so long as that practice is contained within the time-limited interpersonal relationship dyad? At my most arrogant, I might have suggested that my relational practice ultimately becomes a resource young people can draw on long after I am gone (or we are not together anymore). But humility, as Jack Phelan has rightly said, is an essential part of child and youth care practice, and a humbler positioning quickly exposes the parallels to colonial posturing embedded in my arrogance. It seems to me that the good life requires at the very least an acknowledgement of our failure to substantially engage the life of young people post-relational practice. That life unfolds in social contexts that are characterized by many dimensions, some of which are material and others not, but all of which revolve around a timeline that is quite different than our interpersonal encounter with any one young person. Pain, which Jim Anglin has argued is a core element of the lives lived by the young people we encounter, has histories that

transcend the material life of any one person; and it has futures that are not about resilience in tolerating such pain, but instead overcoming the pain-makers and their social structures. Child and youth care practice, as argued long ago by those we often designate as pioneers in our field – Redl, Bettelheim, Maier – unfolds in the here and now, but it unfolds in the name of a future. It cannot limit itself to a particular present without declining into irrelevance.

And this brings me back to the good life. From a child and youth care perspective, the good life is the engagement of past and future by using the present, instrumentally and perhaps even by revolutionary means, to shape a future in which young people are not limited to mediocrity. Relational practice, in its interpersonal context, is one of many necessary elements in seeking the good life. But it can never be enough by itself. At a minimum, we must expand relational practice beyond its interpersonal context to include a relational engagement with pain – past and future. But perhaps more importantly, our practice has to ultimately shape the future *with* young people rather than prepare young people for a future of cockroaches, subsistence work, and never-ending temptations to engage in self-destructive activity. A fight lost *with* a young person is far better than an indicator achieved followed by the long goodbye (hope it works out for you). The good life, I think, is not about the material context of achievement, although no one will blame a young person for celebrating material progress in their life (as we all do). For many young people, however, a good job, a nice apartment and a 50-inch TV doesn't make the pain go away; it is merely a new present awaiting a future built on a disconnected past.

In brief, then, the point I am trying to convey is simply this: Child and youth care practice cannot be an interpersonal endeavour only. It must be

a political endeavour, or struggle, because child and youth care practice ought to be the link between past and future mediating pain, which is something all other professional fields have abandoned as a goal.

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Supporting Disagreeable Team Members

Jack Phelan

When things are not working well, CYC teams often have frustrating discussions about what to do to correct things, because the present situation is uncomfortable. The issue may be a young person who is not responding well to the existing program, a family which does not seem to be moving forward, or a group dynamic which is challenging the authority of adult control.

Unfortunately, we sometimes must remind ourselves that the definition of mental illness is doing the same thing over and over (often more loudly and more forcefully) and expecting a different result. The best advice to a CYC team confronted with such dilemmas is to begin by admitting that whatever is being presently tried is not working and needs to change. Yet we all know from too many experiences that we tend to attempt to change the other people before we try to change ourselves.

We can become too comfortable with the program expectations and approaches that have worked in the past and expect that new people or groups will adapt to our situation rather than our program changing. The struggle becomes based on control and power rather than anything else, which generally ends badly for at least some of the people involved. CYC team meetings usually have some time allocated to discussing problems, whether it is problem dynamics that affect the program or a specific person who is creating problems. There can be a powerful focus on

creating a united front to deal with this situation, typically resulting in the whole group agreeing to view and deal with the problem in the same way. The result of this need to appear supportive and cooperative is that at least some of the team are reluctant participants in a power/control response where it may not be the best way forward.

Other situations arise as the team is looking to create consensus where there is an assumed need for a united response, and can result in a simplified understanding of a complex situation when the obvious or most straightforward response may be less desirable, but is one that everyone can support. The desire to cooperate and avoid conflict can limit the potential of team members to fully contribute their expertise and unique perspective in these discussions.

Socialized thinkers are prone to do this because disagreements among colleagues cannot be tolerated since it means that we don't like each other and that is bad, because someone is at fault. Self-authoring thinkers are more comfortable with posing alternative opinions because this is a useful way to expand the understanding of the issue.

New, inexperienced CYC staff are very anxious when people they respect disagree, because they want to believe that there is a correct answer to every situation, and teams with too many new staff will have a very difficult time dealing with conflict. Yet, if a team contains experienced practitioners, for example a team of supervisors, there should be strong support for professional disagreement and opposing points of view as difficult decisions are considered.

A good example of this dynamic is a team composed of Level 3 staff, who typically try to challenge the existing situation whenever there is a need for program review. Managers and supervisors of experienced teams should expect each member to bring a unique point of view into meetings

that will expand the discussion and challenge the team to consider uncomfortable ideas. Some teams have a predictable "devil's advocate" which may be useful sometimes but makes it too easy for everyone else to sit back and not fully contribute. Leaders need to support disagreement and useful conflict among team members and create an expectation that each member has a responsibility to suggest changes when things are not working.

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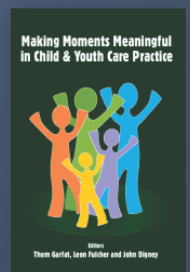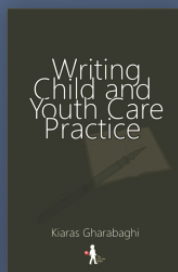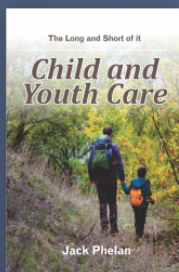
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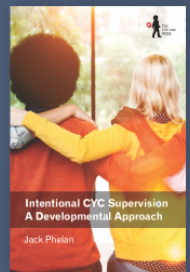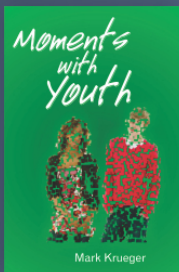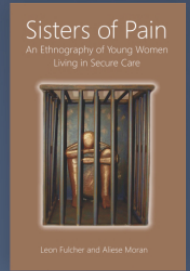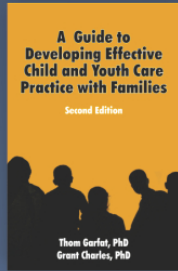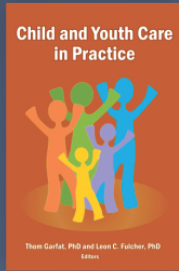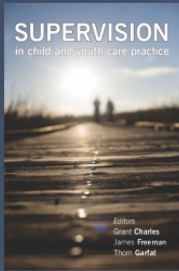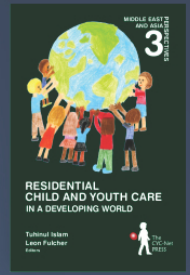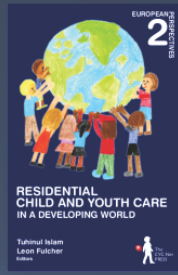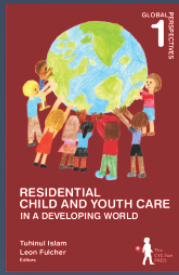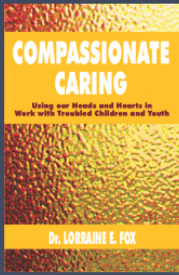
Beyond Rainbow Flag Stickers & Safe Space Signs: Exploring Gender and Sexual Identity within the 'Here and Now' of Child and Youth Care Practice

Griffin Taylor

This past December, Merriam-Webster named "they" as its 2019 word of the year, following the revision of the dictionary term to include its use as a singular pronoun three months prior. This four-letter word—the use of which as a singular pronoun can be traced back as far as the late 1300s (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019)—even came in above other aptly searched terms including "impeach". Following the revision, the American Psychological Association followed suit in October, announcing that they would be officially endorsing the use of "they" as a singular pronoun in the 7th Edition of their manual of style, to be released in 2020.

Beyond the English language quite literally changing as we speak, the past decade has marked many other momentous steps forward for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Questioning (LGBTQ) community throughout many areas of the world. In 2011, the United

Nations Human Rights Council passed the UN's first-ever motion condemning discrimination against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. 2015 marked the year that Ireland became the first nation to legalize same-sex marriage, and a US Supreme Court ruling made same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states later that same year. In the years since this time, LGBTQ youth have started to come out at younger ages, and in larger numbers (Dunlap, 2016).

In an increasingly internet-dominated world, where many of life's questions can be answered by entering a few key words into the almighty Google search bar, I think about the implications of these social changes on CYC practice. The individuals that we work with, in particular those in their late childhood and adolescence, are privy to a vast database of knowledge that only continues to expand. Online resources facilitate independent self-exploration from an earlier age, and new self-discoveries can be broadcast to peers through social media and online forums with just a few simple clicks. Surely, even those of us who are most committed to incorporating principles of social justice into the work of our unique and dynamic field must sometimes struggle to keep up with a seemingly ever-changing lexicon of identity-related terminology. Through the following strategies, I hope to highlight some of the ways that I believe CYC Practitioners have unique opportunities to contribute to improving developmental outcomes for Gender and Sexually Diverse (GSD) children and youth.

Understanding the Out Self in Practice as a Tool for Vicarious Resilience

As practitioners, we understand that the self in relationship is at the core of all interventions (Mattingly, Stuart & VanderVen, 2010). In the case

of GSD populations, this issue becomes even more nuanced. Unlike other identity markers and characteristics, GSD status may not always be quite as obvious until it is personally articulated by a given individual. Because of this, creating visibility in practice often comes about through intentional and meaningful self-disclosure. Through simple relational gestures, a self-identified GSD practitioner normalizes the not-so-singular process of 'Coming Out' to the young person, regardless of whether or not they also self-identify. Beyond this, the Out practitioner also creates opportunities for young GSD people (or those who may simply be questioning their identity) to comfortably speak about their feelings and experiences with less of the so-called "stereotype threat" (Steele, 1997) that occurs when a young person perceives that they may be viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype.

Additionally, because the majority of LGBTQ individuals are not born into families of LGBTQ parents, the Out practitioner may actually be the first adult in a young person's life to embody this openness in a healthy way, creating the same dynamics of role modelling and motivational increase that have been shown to be a developmental asset for other marginalized populations (Egalite, Kisiba & Winters, 2015). In this way, it can be argued that by being present and consistent in the lifespace, the Out practitioner has the unique ability to utilize these aspects of Self in order to promote vicarious resilience and tolerance in young people.

It is for this reason that I believe it is important for policies at both the level of agencies and beyond to support GSD practitioners who choose to disclose these aspects of their identity with therapeutic intent. In my personal experience as an early-career practitioner, I have occasionally felt conflicted in situations regarding whether or not it was appropriate to discuss my own identity with young people. So often in our education and

field preparation we are taught to be mindful of boundaries and cautiously avoid any self-disclosure that could unintentionally lead to enmeshment. In many cases, CYC pedagogy, along with many other "people work" careers, posits that as Practitioners, we must Other the client in order to construct our professional identity.

This advice, although sound and very applicable, served to reinforce an early-career internal conflict that represented an interesting duality, whereby I have feared the potential repercussions from a parent, supervisor, or even a young person questioning or misinterpreting my motives in disclosing my identity, while also recalling the many situations where I am certain that having one consistent, overtly Queer or Trans adult in my life would have been incredibly beneficial as I was coming to terms with my own identity. This internal struggle was only exacerbated by policies which did not clearly address the nuances of self-disclosure of gender and sexual identity, within a greater political climate which still remains heavily divided on these issues.

Creating Opportunities for Pronoun-Talk and Chosen Name Sharing

As I have continued to intentionally move into work spaces where my own identity has become more overtly important to the work that I do, I have also been fortunate to meet many incredible young people who have taught me that there is power in the narratives we choose to share. In one significant interaction while completing my student placement hours at a Drop-in Centre, a young person who was new to the space approached a table where I had been playing Skip-bo (a card game and a powerful relationship-building tool) with two other Drop-in participants. I noticed that this young person was dressed fairly androgynously, with a short

haircut and a nose piercing. With the best of intentions and with the spirit of Queer Liberation, I asked the young person for their name and pronouns while drawing a hand of cards. They shared their name—we'll call them Rae—and then paused. "She/her," Rae eventually added. We continued to play cards for a while, and Rae eventually joined in. Some time after the other two youth had left the area, Rae decided to share that they actually only identify using they/them pronouns, but that they chose not to share this when first asked, out of fear of having to explain the concept of they/them pronouns to the others at the table within their very first encounter with others in the space.

I have spent a considerable amount of time reflecting on this well-intentioned but potentially damaging inquiry. This is not to say that I believe it is wrong to ask a young person about their pronouns or preferred name outright, but I have come to understand that there are more creative, considerate, and elegant ways to do this than in the way I did on the day that I met Rae. The first realization I made was that the first time I ask a young person about their pronouns should be in a relatively discreet space—away from others who may inadvertently cause feelings of uncomfortable visibility. The second was that my choice of whether or not to ask someone about their pronouns should not rely at all on assumptions about how I recognize their appearance as androgynous or "trans-looking"—whatever that means. And third, that if I should expect a young person to be at all comfortable sharing their pronouns with me, I need to take a personal initiative to establish my pronouns to them first.

The approach I now take most often when meeting others for the first time is to introduce myself (and in certain instances, my role), followed by the pronouns I use. More often than not, I do find that young people will recognize this as an invitation, and share the name they go by along with

their pronouns. On other occasions, an honest inquiry may lead to interesting discussions about pronouns and their significance to how we all navigate the world. And on some occasions, the young person may choose not to share their pronouns at all, and I have come to accept that this is completely OK too. In these instances, I have found it helpful to use the name the young person chooses to use as much as possible, and find creative ways to phrase sentences without needing to use third-person pronouns. Interestingly, chosen name usage has actually been linked to reduced depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation and behaviour in Trans youth (Russel et al., 2018; Vance, 2018).

Finding creative ways to invite pronoun and chosen name sharing can also be done in other types of communication, and in other social settings where CYC practice happens. Agency-level policies can normalize pronoun-talk by including space for pronouns underneath the names of employees on business cards and in e-mail signatures, and by using client tracking forms which allow entry of preferred name as well as a legal name, in cases where they may differ. Group-based programs can make name and pronoun sharing a norm upon beginning a session, or use name tags that encourage inclusion of both name and pronouns. In all of these situations, what I believe is most important is that the name and pronouns that someone identifies themselves with are the ones that are used to refer to them, even in private conversations and in written case development or note taking. In this way, we give ourselves opportunities to practice new patterns of speech that honour and affirm the young person's identity.

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Becoming the Adult that Gender and Sexually Diverse Young People Need

An increasingly large body of research demonstrates that LGBTQ youth are at an increased susceptibility to mental health challenges as well as death by suicide compared to the general population (Aranmolate et al., 2017; Benibgui, 2010; Birkett, Newcomb & Mustanski, 2015; The Trevor Project, 2019b). This past June, The Trevor Project (2019a) released a Research Brief which draws in part from the organization's own U.S. National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health (2019b) among several other sources. From this research, perhaps the most significant finding is as follows: "LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year" (The Trevor Project, 2019a). This data expands upon previous research that focused specifically on parental acceptance, instead demonstrating that any consistent, supportive adult can have a positive impact on this demographic.

Child and Youth Care Practitioners, then, have a somewhat unique opportunity to be a non-parental source of acceptance and support by being present and consistent within the lifespace of young people, often in ways that are unrealistic for other professional roles such as clinicians or educators. If we can concede that even a single individual's genuine acceptance can truly save young lives, it is pertinent that the practitioner approaches any novel situation or discussion with genuine curiosity and open-mindedness. Beyond just listening and asking the right questions when young people do choose to share, we must also aim to do the self-work of actively identifying and challenging our biases and gaps in our own knowledge that hinder our ability to recognize and affirm young people for who they truly are.

If we allow ourselves the opportunity to go through these processes of self-exploration and critical reflection as we encounter new experiences in practice, I believe we can work towards accepting, with some grace, that we may not ever know all there is to know about any one particular identifier that a youth may use to describe themselves, but that we can also commit to not allowing these unknowns to create distance within the therapeutic relationships that are so pertinent to the work we do as CYCs. Perhaps what truly separates the work process of Child and Youth Care from other professional-client dynamics is exactly this: a relational approach based on reciprocity, wherein it is okay for us to acknowledge that young people can be experts of their own experiences, and as we work in allyship with them, they are teaching us too.

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The Growth of Love

Keith J White

Abstract

This article explores how and why child care theory and practice has been separated from the idea and concept of love since Dr John Bowlby used the word in his book, Child Care and the Growth of Love (1953). The author attempted to reconnect child care theory and love in his book, The Growth of Love (2008) the title of which was deliberately chosen to reflect the debt owed to John Bowlby, and his son, Sir Richard Bowlby contributed the Foreword. Some of the challenges and implications of this approach are described, before reference to the writings and work of others that he discovered in the process. Three mentioned are Janusz Korczak, Paulo Friere and Friedrich Froebel. Recent research on cognitive development creates space for thinking about love, for example Sue Gerhardt, Why Love Matters (2004). The article concludes with reference to children in hospital and love in religious traditions, with a final mention of how Johannes Brahms saw love as the key to all of his music.

Keywords
Love, child development, education, philosophy of history

Introduction

In 1952 Dr John Bowlby produced his report for the World Health Organisation, Maternal Care and Mental Health (Bowlby, 1952). This monograph found its way to a global professional audience through the

version published by Penguin, Child Care and the Growth of Love (Bowlby, 1953). In time the principles stemming from this research came to be known universally as 'attachment theory'. And in this theory the word love came to be dropped. It figured (as a noun or participle) in the text of the Geneva Monograph (for example, pages 11, 12 and 13), but in time more specific words and concepts were used and developed.

The reason for this is given by John Bowlby's son Sir Richard Bowlby in one of his videos describing his father's work:

> The science of family bonds, which researchers call attachment theory, was started in the 1950s by my father John Bowlby who died in 1990. He was a child psychiatrist who was also a scientist and in 1952 he wrote a book called Child Care and the Growth of Love. But love had too many different meanings for a scientist and later he called the kind of love that children feel for their parents, attachment: children's attachment to their parents. *(Bowlby, R., 2010).*

This might seem like a rather arcane point to raise, more related to etymology and vocabulary than the stuff of child care, but it may have a greater significance in the field of child care and child development than has hitherto been acknowledged. I first began to explore this in an article in *Childrenwebmag* in July 2015 (White, 2015). My argument was that whatever the good reasons for Bowlby's chosen change in terminology, it has had the unintended consequence of cutting off the discipline of child development (psychiatry, psychology, social work, education) from poetry, literature, religion, music, imagination, nature and the many aspects of

children's lives, experience and feelings where love is a commonly used word.

In this current paper I describe a few of the discoveries in my journey guided by the question, 'Where is love in child care, child development and education?'

Stages of Child Development

Several years before writing the *Childrenwebmag* article (and making this 'discovery') I had written a book on child development in which I sought to distil a lifetime's experience of residential child care, and the guiding principles that had emerged from my studies in child development theory. The title I chose for this book was *The Growth of Love* (White, 2008). Of course this was a deliberate echo of Bowlby's Penguin book, and his son Richard kindly agreed to write a Foreword. In my introduction I spell out the debt that I owed to John Bowlby (White, 2008, p.14-15), whom I had the privilege to meet when doing post-graduate research at Edinburgh University. Attachment theory is integral to the whole book.

The choice of title was anything but an exercise in hair-splitting. It represented a conscious attempt to present a radical alternative to prevailing theory, concepts and vocabulary. Put simply the dominant discourse in human development theory (spread across a number of differing theorists from Freud and Erikson to Piaget) revolves around what are usually called 'stages of development'. These are given a range of names and cover different ages and aspects of growth (physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive...). They have in common the assumption that development involves a progression through a series of definable and observable phases. If there is any doubt about the

pervasiveness of this paradigm, a brief google search using the phrase 'stages of child development' and filtering out images will provide compelling evidence that this is a default mode in the field.

When teaching child development, I am constantly reminded by students just how popular and attractive this approach is (Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' is perhaps the most popular of all – which of course was originally a framework for understanding motivation!). I have tried to explain elsewhere why this is (White, 2012 [2016]). The essence of the argument is that this notion of child development as a progression through stages fits neatly within a liberal western meta-narrative of human civilisation. They reinforce each other. Of course, I am not the first to observe and critique this assumption. Two of my predecessors in this are Professors Karl Barth (1886-1968) and James E. Loder (1931-2002).

We who are engaged alongside children in whatever particular roles tend to be immersed in both of these ways of seeing children and the world, that rather like fish in water, or birds in the air, we take them for granted. They seem like common-sense and therefore un-problematical.

In fact they are anything but. The idea that actual human biographies sit neatly within a theory of upward mobility (of whatever type) needs very serious testing. Living among children and young people in a residential setting for most of my life, I found that such theoretical frameworks did not do justice to the daily encounters I have had with children and young people in my care. Some seem stuck in a 'stage of development'; some regress; most oscillate. And I never ceased to be surprised by the exceptions to any rule.

And in my reading of human history right up to the present day I find it impossible to trace the universal development of human civilisation of which some speak. It is far more messy and complicated than that. Any

who wish to make a special case for 'western civilisation' seem to be suffering from severe amnesia, and deafness to the critiques of the west from other parts of the world (cf. Mishra, 2012.)

What is more surely the fact is that because both individual human lives, and the life of the planet on which we live, are finite, and will end in death or extinction, there should be at least a cautionary note to any who describe human life or human history simply in terms of ascent or growth. To present a human life or human civilisation as a story of ascent seems either a wilful act of negligence, or a triumph of hope over experience.

The Growth of Love

In short there has to be another way of framing and understanding what is going on in the lives of children, that can draw from the many insights of theorists such as Bowlby, Erikson and Piaget (for example) without being constrained by them at the expense of inaccuracy or superficiality. I am conscious here that one of the many influences on my thinking has been the work of Alistair Macintyre (1981). He argues that it had become difficult in recent decades for reasons he puts forward to have coherent and informed moral conversations. I am arguing that there is a similar lack of coherence when it comes to child care and child development. This is where I believe the neglect or abandonment of the vocabulary of love (not only in human development but also in the emerging language of human rights) meant that it has become increasingly difficult to do justice to the richness and depths of the realities of human experience, longings, fears, dreams whether personal or in relationship.

For this reason, I attempted to approach human development in the light of my experience and reading from a different, though time-

honoured perspective, which gives a rightful place to love. That this is difficult if not impossible to describe scientifically may be one of its greatest merits. It is manifestly valued throughout human history and across all cultures, and there is a rich store of tradition and writing (wisdom) from which to draw. And ordinary people seem to know what they mean when they use it.

It is vital to repeat that in The Growth of Love I draw heavily from the standard child development literature, but the stages of development no longer provide the framework (or 'meta-narrative'). Instead there are agreed aspects or elements of human life and experience that in combination facilitate the growth of love. Far from being a wholly definable or predictable process, it is rather full of surprises, oscillations, creative regressions and upheavals. The five key elements that I identify are Security, Boundaries, Significance, Community and Creativity (White, 2008, Chapters 3-7). The two key points to note here are that they are not stages of growth, and that they only make sense within the wider context of the concept of love.

Since writing the book it has been my privilege to explore its ideas and content in very different cultural contexts across the world, and there have been those sufficiently convinced by it to produce a Study Guide (White, 2014) and to organise courses based on it, such as the Holistic Child Development Masters Programme in Penang, Malaysia. It seems to be the case that there is a growing recognition worldwide of the desirability of seeking to incorporate what love means into our understanding of child development and our practice of child care and education (in the context of writing this paper, I have become aware of the work of Dr Jools Page, of Sheffield University for example).

But the challenges of staying with the word 'love' should not be underestimated. The Growth of Love was launched at the annual forum of the Christian Child Care Forum on the 29ᵗʰ April 2008. The title of the event was 'Love is a Four Letter Word'. Several individuals and organisations had warned beforehand against such a title. Their argument was that it could easily be linked with paedophiles and paedophilia. This reminds us of another unintended side-effect of avoiding the word love in child care and child development: it can leave a vacuum all too easily filled by those who distort the whole notion of love, and those who abuse the very ones we seek to safeguard, nurture and love. The conference went on with its original title, because the stakes were judged to be too high for there to be a defensible retreat. Someone must use the word love responsibly and healthily in relation to children.

Discovering Others on the Same Journey

For me the journey exploring how love relates to child care and child development has been a rich and rewarding one. I reconnected with the world of literature and discovered and rediscovered beautifully apt insights into how love can appear in the unlikeliest of situations, and its transforming power. It is often poets and novelists who provide some of the best descriptions of the lives, experiences, and growth of children.

And it was a joy to discover that all those child care and educational pioneers on whose shoulders I have been standing never faltered in using the word love when it was appropriate.

Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), for example, spoke of it always in the farewell speech he gave to orphans leaving his orphanage: 'I can give you but one thing only- a longing for a better life, a life of truth and justice...perhaps this longing will lead you to God, Homeland and Love.

Goodbye. Do not forget' (Josephs, 1999, p.144). It is difficult to conceive of his own final act of sacrifice as he gave his own life in order to be alongside the orphans on their way to the gas chambers as anything other than an act of love. It remains a formidable test for all of us who say we are committed to the care of children to ask what we would have done in the circumstances.

Over recent years it has been my privilege to discover many others who have been actively thinking along similar lines, not least in what is known as Social Pedagogy. Slowly it is becoming apparent that the word 'love' is beginning to make a come-back in professional child care and child development. It should not be surprising that any attempt to be 'holistic' when coming alongside and relating to children (for example in foster care, residential care or adoption) will eventually find the question emerging (even if unspoken) 'Do you love me?' The Fostering Network's programme, Head, Heart, Hands is a good example Fostering Network, www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/head-heart- hands) Once the word 'heart' is in the frame then surely love cannot be far away.

Re-Connecting Education and Care

As the journey of discovery continued one of the most important connections that was re-forged was that between child care and education. How could they ever have come apart so clinically given that Paulo Freire wrote, 'It is impossible to teach without the courage to love' (2005, p.5).

Two of my main mentors in this field and on this journey have been Friedrich Froebel and Paulo Freire. What follows is a summary of some of their philosophy that relates specifically to this connection. As we listen to what they are saying it becomes apparent that we have boxed in

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'education' in a way that prevents us seeing the rich interplay between head, heart and hands in every aspect and every part of a child's life and learning and love. It is still possible to conceive of education as something that happens away from home and everyday life in purpose-built places labelled schools! When we all know that learning knows no bounds. How is it that the philosophies and theories of these great pioneers have not influenced child care and child development? Surely one reason, at least in part, is that we had forgotten the vocabulary of love that can form a bridge.

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852): Froebel first came into teaching through a school run along Pestalozzian lines. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was a pioneer of educational philosophy in Trogen, Switzerland. His motto was 'Learning by head, hand and heart'. Although Froebel eventually parted company from Pestalozzi over some differences of emphasis, he, like Pestalozzi believed that humans are essentially productive and creative, and that fulfilment comes through developing these in harmony with God and the world. His vision was to stimulate an appreciation and love for children, to provide a new but small world where children could play with their age group and experience their first gentle taste of independence. His kindergarten system consisted of games and songs, construction, and gifts and occupations. The play materials were what he called gifts and the activities were occupations. His system allowed children to compare, test, and explore. His philosophy also consisted of four basic components which were: free self-activity; creativity; social participation; and motor expression.

Froebel's songs, plays, games, Gifts (his word for materials), Occupations (his word for activities or experiments) and educational theories were invented, tried and tried again. Froebel was destined to teach the child. Love was the keystone, and joy, unselfishness and

unswerving faith in the natural impulses of humanity underlined his philosophy. Significantly his kindergartens were closed in some parts of the world for being too free and therefore subversive. But his philosophy of education continues to inspire people and institutions worldwide. Among his many legacies are these two works:

The Mother Love and Nursery Songs. These remind us of the place of love in education: Froebel believed that in general it is mothers who should teach during the first seven years of a child's life because they know, understand and love the child (something that Froebel never experienced because his own mother died when he was very young, and his step-mother did not show love to him). It was from his love of nature, particularly trees that Froebel came to recognise the uniquely loving mother-child bond and relationship.

The Education of Man. Here are just two quotations from this major work by Froebel. He writes that a primary purpose of education is: 'to call forth the love within [the child]' (p.8). And also that: 'Every human being must be recognised and fostered in accordance with his eternal, immortal nature as the divine shown in human form, as a pledge of the love, the nearness, the favour of God, as a gift of God' (p.10).

Paulo Freire (1921-1997): was one of the great philosophers of education. The foundation of his theory was a belief in the fundamental importance, the primacy of love in every area of life. He talked of love in relation to everything including his marriage, family, childhood; neighbourhood, language, soccer, wine… (for further reading developing on Freire's work see Darder, 1998 and 2002; Allman, 1998).

In the light of this it is as instructive as it is encouraging that there is a doctoral thesis by Edward Schoder (2010), on the theme of love in Freire's pedagogy. In this thesis Schoder identifies three main elements (virtues) of

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love: fairness, respect and gratitude (p.7). To these he adds caring and faithfulness (p.8).

Love will include love of peers, love of nation, love of humanity… (p.9). He argues that love is both a means and an end in Freire's educational philosophy and project (p. 15).

I have traced many, but not all of Freire's references to and development of this theme. Here are some indicative examples.

> Education is an act of love (1965, p.38);
>
> 'From these pages I hope at least the following will endure: my trust in the people, and my faith in men and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love' (1970, p.24). Education takes place 'when (the teacher) stopes making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love' (1970, p.35). 'Dialogue cannot exist however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and men. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself…it cannot exist in a relation of domination.
> Domination reveals the pathology of love…Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other men (sic) … If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love men – I cannot enter into dialogue' *(1970, pp.77-78).*

And from the book, Teachers as Cultural workers (2005), he makes a specific case for love in a context and climate that sees the word as too imprecise to be of descriptive value. 'It is impossible to teach without the courage to love, without the courage to try a thousand times before giving up ...We must dare, in the full sense of the word, to speak of love without the fear of being called ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific, if not antiscientific' *(p.5).*

Research into Cognitive Development

Meanwhile research into neural networks and the functioning of the brain also saw a place for love in child development. An example of this is the book by Sue Gerhardt, Why Love Matters (2004). She argues that science was finding consistent and cogent evidence that affection (that was the word she used inside the book much of the time when referring to the word, love that was on the cover) could alter both the biochemistry and the structures of the brains of young children. This should not be too much of a surprise to those familiar with the work of the Hungarian philosopher Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) who argued that 'All knowledge is personal' (1958).

Now I do not believe that aspects and dimensions of our lives such as love, empathy, compassion, the sublime, loyalty, devotion, need to wait for science to give them its imprimatur, but in the case of child development we do need to begin to re-align our perspective and models so that they resonate better with human affection, feelings, longings and desires. The development of children's rights and the understanding of children as social actors or agents can be seen in this light, but there are dangers that such discourses see children in the image of adults. They have merit, but

are not appropriate as meta-narratives within which to understand and relate fully to children.

Children in Hospital

One of my long-standing friends and colleagues is a chaplain in a children's hospital. Perhaps it is unsurprising that when faced with inexplicable suffering and often the inevitability of death, the children, parents and chaplains find that love is a word that recurs in many contexts (Nash, Darby & Nash, 2015).

Significantly of course the role of many types of stages of development is often completely irrelevant in such a setting. Life and death have interrupted any such notions. What matters is not reaching further standards of achievement, but identifying and valuing what really matters. It is hard to see how anything ultimately can be a substitute for love.

Love in Religious Traditions

Of course in religions in general and in Judaeo-Christian writings in particular love has the central place that reflects the belief that God is love, and that humans are to respond to that love by loving God with heart soul mind and strength, and their neighbours as themselves. And it does not require much imagination to see that the decline in the use of the word love in child care has taken place over a period with features consistent with some form of secularisation (certainly in the sense of belonging to communities of faith). That these traditions have helped in the formation and transmission of understandings of love does not mean that others cannot adopt and develop them. Indeed, love has been much in evidence outside traditional Christianity over the centuries.

Conclusion

Most of my life has been lived within a residential community caring for children. In relating to many children from very different backgrounds and cultures I have sought to develop my understanding of them in any and every way possible. I am grateful, as I hope is now apparent, for the pioneering work of the likes of Dr John Bowlby and many others. But in the end as my search for insight and understanding continued, (always challenged and critiqued by the real life stories of the children and young people), and the puzzling historical context in which we found ourselves, it became apparent that there had to be something more. In this paper I have described the importance of love. It is such a many- faceted word that its meanings are inexhaustible. But without it, as Brahms was determined to underline in his very last work (and effectively, testament): the fourth of the songs in his final work, Vier Ernste Gesange, is a setting of these words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13., all our activity however well- intentioned is sadly inadequate: 'If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love I would be like sounding brass or a tinkling symbol' (Swafford, 1999, p.610-611.) As a musician Brahms was a perfectionist and he chose the final subject with typically meticulous care. Perhaps it could be said that child care and child development without recourse to the language and practice of love are not very different: the notes, the themes, the harmonies, the rhythms may be there, but the heart is missing.

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ASPECTS OF RELATIONAL PRACTICE

Emergency Rooms and Open Air Prisons: Conversations with Reggie Harris

Hans Skott-Myhre

I recently had a visit from an old colleague who I hadn't seen in quite a number of years. Reggie Harris and I first met over 20 years ago when he applied for a job in the emergency shelter for runaway and homeless youth where I was the clinical director. I hired him and we worked together in that program and other projects for several years before I moved to Canada and we drifted apart, although we stayed in touch on and off. Reggie was one of the people who was profoundly influential in the development of the ideas and practices associated with what became Radical Youth Work. The conceptual frameworks for politicizing youth work/CYC were forged in the high intensity environment of emergency care for street involved young people, their families, and communities. It was in the contradictions and antagonisms of the struggle to offer at least the minimum level of adequate care to marginalized and disenfranchised young people, that it began to dawn on us that simply providing interpersonal developmentally appropriate relational care was not enough. We needed some kind of political analysis that would help us make sense of the savage and brutal applications of power we both

witnessed and participated in through our work. It wasn't enough to have good intentions or noble aspirations to being just and equitable. As workers, our own levels of privilege and positionality too often obscured our own complicity in increasing the levels of suffering experienced by the young people we were so desperately trying to "help."

Perhaps, the one thing that sets the world of emergency shelters apart from other institutional engagements with young people, is the porous nature of the emergency shelter's relationship with the community. At the agency where Reggie and I worked, young people accessed the program 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. There was an emergency phone line where the phone rang day and night, there was an open door where young people could just show up and be with us for a few minutes, an hour, a day, or weeks at a time. The level of emotional intensity and transient nature of the work was similar to an emergency room at a hospital that serves large numbers of those suffering the physical effects of violence and physical trauma. While our program seldom dealt with the immediate physical effects of violence, we saw our fair share of young people just discharged from being treated for sexual or physical assaults.

More often, however, we were the first line response for those young people who had not yet entered the system ostensibly designed to respond to community or family dissolution. These were young people whose network of support had collapsed or was collapsing in such a way that they had no longer had access to basic survival needs such as food and shelter. They were on the street and had not yet been picked up for assessment by social service agencies such as foster care, residential care, juvenile justice, transitional living and so on.

Like a hospital emergency room, the issues of referral and follow through were complex and at times extremely frustrating. It was not unusual to have a street involved 16-year-old who suffered physical violence at home turned down for an assessment by social services. I can remember a case worker telling me that their caseloads were full of infants and toddlers who needed services and that "they can't run away," but a 16-year-old has the option of leaving home. The state workers felt forced to deploy a brutal calculus that gave those who were too young to flee priority over those who could run away.

Of course, we also saw those young people who failed out of placement after placement. In that sense, we were the first resort and the last resort. We saw over a thousand young people every year, and a certain percentage were familiar to us as either having relatively continuous street involvement or intermittent homelessness when they failed out of a program or foster home. These young people saw the emergency shelter as a safe space where they would always be welcome and to a large degree that was true. We would take any young person in off the street and do the best we could to provide a harbor in the storm of their life. Regrettably, we also discharged young people back on to the streets for a range of reasons. But, being discharged didn't mean you couldn't come back. The door was always open, and we had street outreach workers who would do their best to catch those who fell back into the street. They would provide survival resources to the best of their ability, sometimes for years at a time.

Working at the edge of continual social collapse can have a tendency to shape the way you see the work of CYC. In emergency shelter work, there is very little distance between the literal violence of the street/family/community and the world of work. In fact, there is an ongoing flow between the inside of the building where the program is housed and the

world outside it. This is an engagement that is not moderated by referral and refusal of services based on the appropriateness of fit between the program and the young person. There is no clean delineation between the day to day programming and the outside. Young people and their families come and go over varying intervals. It is harder than one might imagine to think "clinically" or within abstract frameworks such as "trauma based care" or "developmentally appropriate care" or even "developmentally." What strikes you in the gut day after day is the massive injustice of it all. It is a painful daily realization that we could participate in a society that treats its children with such callous disregard.

We could, of course, take the position of an emergency room physician, that our job is to do our best to patch them up and send them out with the hope they with time they will heal. Or we could hope that they will be referred to other programs that will work with them in safe spaces in ways that will promote their best interests. We could take the position that some will make it and others won't and that is just the way of the world, "life isn't fair." All of these positions, however, focus on the immediacy of the one child in front of us. And, without a doubt we are called to serve in the best interests of each young person we encounter.

But what, if any, accountability do we have to the broader political questions of social care? When we focus only on doing our best with each young person, are we missing something important? When we seek justice and equitable care for a young person embedded in an inherently and quite intentionally unjust and inequitable system, are we unconsciously complicit in the ongoing suffering of even those we manage to "save?" Who and what are we saving them from? Is it, at some level, us?

Ian Parker, in his critique of psychology as complicit in the ongoing practices of capitalist appropriation and exploitation, cites the continuing

production of the alienated individual as a central problem. He argues that when psychology frames its theories and clinical practices around the individual, as the site of pathology and complaint, it hides from view any ability to understand the ways in which capitalism works across individuals to oppress and exploit us collectively. That is to say, that when we come to believe that each of us is individually responsible for our level of suffering, we lose track of the fact we all suffer in many of the same ways. In CYC, the ability to focus our attention on each individual young person is often portrayed as both ethical and compassionate. Much of writing in the field takes this approach. The multiple stories of relational care between one worker and one young person are the bread and butter of our training and inclination. And to some degree, there is something to be said for the care offered in a binary relation where a young person experiences the lived experience of being cared about and cared for.

Without a doubt, there is value in such care. But if that is our sole focus and we lose track of the ways in which that single young person is symptomatic of a multitude of other young people suffering similarly from alienation and disenfranchisement without access to us, then a very important aspect of our work is obscured from our view. This was the heart of what became clear to us as we worked at the front lines of emergency care. We could no longer see the one young person without seeing the many. We could see the ways in which the young people we encountered were chewed up, wounded, traumatized, brutalized, and discounted by the system of care we participated in on a daily basis. It seemed increasingly clear, that we needed to think about what we did differently and so we engaged our colleagues in explorations of how power and privilege worked within our agency and the community in which it was embedded. For some of us this became our life's work; to continue to think and work in

ways that acknowledge concretely the insights about the applications of capitalist logic on young people and workers in CYC and beyond.

Reggie and I had a number of conversations during his visit about what had happened all those years ago. It was very interesting to see the different ways in which we saw the legacy of our work. I was far more skeptical about the impacts of what we had done. For me the experiments in reconfiguring the agency to work in more just and equitable ways had ended in failure and a return to far more conventional organizational imperatives. I was pretty sure that it was an attempted political project that had run its course. To a large degree, it was because of my sense of having failed that led me to academia to try and re-think it all. To work with my students and academic colleagues to find new and more effective ways to shift the field towards justice and equity for all young people, not just the one in front of us. That project has also had its up and downs. It is still a bit sad that I have to warn my students that if the focus of their work is truly just and equitable practice they will place their careers in jeopardy on an ongoing basis.

Reggie had a different take on the legacy of what had happened those many years ago. He felt that those of us who took the project of just and equitable CYC seriously had gone on to take the work with them and to spread it everywhere they went. He told me about this colleague and that colleague who had taken the principles of radical youthwork and put into practice at all levels of the world of care for young people. He is convinced that this work is ongoing and evolving all the time and that there are those who carry the experience of the work we did together with intentionality and determination.

In his own work, on the streets of North St Louis (an area with the highest murder rate in the U.S.), Reggie still brings an intentionality of

analysis that tries to comprehend the political dimension of what he is seeing. He isn't satisfied with the common handed down wisdom of "trauma-based care" or "evidenced based programming." Enterprise zones and the importation of entrepreneurial logics make him think of the ongoing exploitation of this predominantly black community that is now seemingly at war with itself.

As we talked, we began to describe North St Louis as an open-air prison in which the young people are serving life sentences without any chance of parole. We pondered the way that brutal institutional prisons such as Parchman Prison in Mississippi also have high rates of violence and suicide. It seemed to us that if we are to deal with the kind of despair inherent in an open-air prison, existing models of CYC/youth work don't begin to address the scope of the problem. If we don't begin to understand the effects on young people of living in an active war zone, such as North St Louis, in more collectively profound ways than "trauma" or developmentally appropriate relational care," we will not be able to collaborate with the young people we most need to reach.

As Reggie walks those streets day after day and the death count rises, what can he hope for in terms of support from those of us who claim to be "caring" for young people. For me it is an open question. There are young people in open air prisons around the world with little chance of parole. As a member of the CYC community, I wonder, what do we have to offer them?

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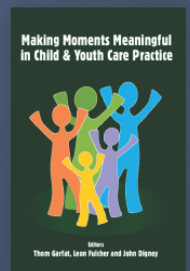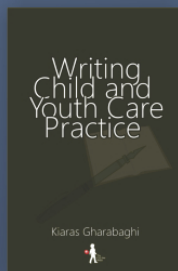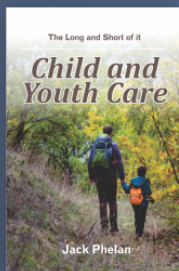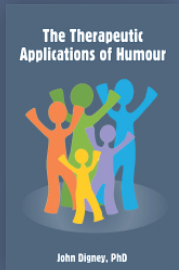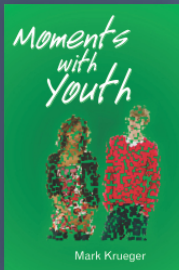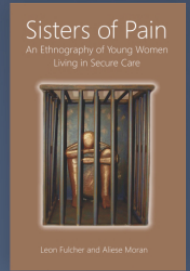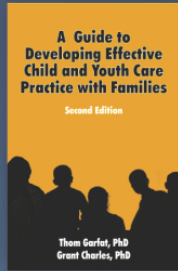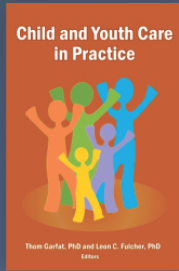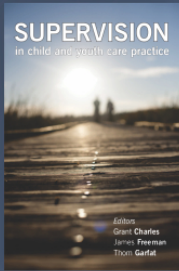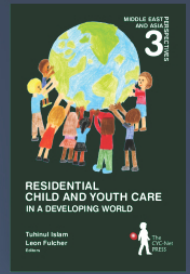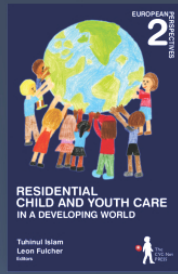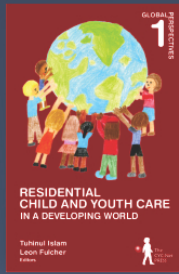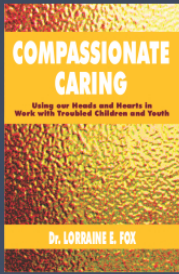
Autism and Therapies

Nancy Getty

"Your child is autistic."

As a parent, you are now on a journey of mixed emotions as you enter into a foreign world which can be both confusing and intimidating. A world of proven and unproven therapeutic direction, documentation, paperwork, studies and a language washed in acronyms.

As an autistic person who has raised twins on the autism spectrum, I understand how difficult and lonely it can be while searching for the best direction for your child as you maneuver the systems.

Where to begin? The more you learn, the more knowledgeable you will become to guide and advocate for your child but always allow yourself time to step back and process the information taking into account to refocus on the child and who they are. Autism rarely stands alone for any ASD person as co-existing factors and health issues play deeply on the perspective, interactions, quirks and behaviors that are apparent in each ASD person. Any one therapy rarely takes into account the co-existing struggles such as: sensory processing disorder (SPD), generalize anxiety disorder (GAD), sensory dysregulation/integration, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and many other co-existing conditions. Most of these do not include the physical health problems such as epilepsy, gastrointestinal issues and sleep disorders. These factors and others are many times ignored in therapies yet they are just as important in evaluating the person as a whole. Not having the message transmitted

that you need to empty your bowels or your mind cannot stop processing information so you can sleep will have detrimental consequences for the person's health and well-being.

Most autistic people will have additional conditions, differences and challenges. Some are medical issues as describe above but other times, the anxiety and social challenges can be attributed to experiencing social and environmental factors. Societal expectations do not generally allow room for what is misunderstood and perceived as being different within the social standards thus creating or escalating pre-existing mental and physical health problems.

The prominent areas that are focused on in implementing therapy for an ASD person are social, communication and behavioral. Early intervention is key to success since all human brains are better able to be programmed and reprogrammed as we learn new skills and experience the environment we live in. Understanding the ASD person's strengths and struggles will better allow for the implementing of multiple therapies that are individually directed to not only target where the ASD person is struggling but to also use their strengths to direct the outcome. The different styles of learning must play a factor into choosing a therapeutic direction since not everyone learns the same. People generally fit into one or more of these categories: visual (Spatial), aural (Auditory-Musical), verbal (Linguistic), physical (Kinesthetic), logical (Mathematical), Social (Interpersonal) or solitary (Intrapersonal).

"Thinking outside of the box" style therapies will look at personal areas that will allow the ASD person to express themselves can also be a direction that although unproven and again with only individual success, may be the direction that unlocks the potential of the ASD person being focused on. Equine therapies, music therapies, dance/floor movement,

skate therapy, touch therapy, animal therapy, all connect the mind to the body through movement or target distinctive senses. For most ASD persons, the body is but a vessel that carries who we are, the mind. The hypo or hyper sensations that bombard our bodies can be very confusing to calculate and understand when you have limited awareness of your body and where you are in space. (Proprioception). Many children thrive when their focus is placed on one area of their body or senses individually. Take away unnecessary stimuli and focus on one area such as hearing or sight then slowly move to other senses. Humans have over thirty-one senses although we generally only recognize five. Environmental factors that most people may not experience as a bombardment on their senses may be intercepted and experienced by the ASD person's receptors and create a reaction. Typically, even when people are affected by fluctuations in experiences such as, air pressure, time, equilibrium, hunger, pain; just to name a few, they understand what is going on and can justify their reaction to these experiences. For the ASD person, the sensations are multiplied in their effects on the body and mind and since there is generally a disassociation between the body and mind, this can be very confusing and lead to a behavioral reaction.

It's important to remember that autistic people are people with personalities and unique individual needs that should be recognized and acknowledged. The therapeutic processes do not always allow for these personalities to remain intact and can create further stress on the ASD person if not implemented with the whole person in mind.

The prominent areas to focus on when looking into creating a therapeutic direction for an ASD person are the areas of social, communication and life skills but always taking into account the coexisting issues of each individual. The behaviors are a 'voice' to guide the course for

therapies since the behaviors are there for a reason. To use a course of therapy that only addresses the DSM guidelines of what autism is would not fully recognize the areas that would be the most helpful and assist the ASD person to advance their potential. See the ASD person as a whole not just autistic and the trial and error in seeking a blend of therapies for the person will be better geared towards individual success.

Family, caregivers and professionals that allow the ASD person to express who they are and guide them to know they matter, are the roots to success in any therapy.

"Your child is autistic but they are still a child."

NANCY GETTY *of Ontario Canada is an international speaker and published author on the subject of Autism (ASD). Nancy was diagnosed as an adult with Asperger Syndrome complicated with an anxiety disorder and is the single mother of adult twins, both diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum.*

A Day in the Life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner

Madison Awender

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner is getting up and putting on casual work clothes that aren't a uniform, which makes it hard for people to recognize what career I am in.

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner is going shopping and using my own hard-earned money to make sure there are enough art supplies for the program tonight.

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner is constantly getting asked what my role is, what my job title actually means.

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner is sometimes working a 6-hour shift along with an 8-hour overnight following because of instability of full-time positions.

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner is putting aside your own biases and beliefs to advocate for children and youth.

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Care practitioner is simply changing a youth's day from a bad one to a good one by just asking them how their day is.

A day in the life of a Child and Youth Practitioner starts by advocating for your own self-care and the social and emotional needs of children and youth.

On Conferencing

Garth Goodwin

I t is that time again when this columnist promotes the upcoming Canadian National Child and Youth Care Conference. Considering I have attended each one since 1986 and worked on several, this is almost baked in at a genetic level. This also fits as lately requests having me taking the long view on things having to do with the association movement. Growing that movement had been a career long preoccupation. Being involved at the national conference level became a blend of respite from the stops and starts of a career and of celebration of child and youth care practice. I was drawn to child and youth care work as it had to do with caring and having experienced vulnerability, I wanted to be around people who cared. This has never changed although at times it became very precarious indeed as one is exposed to what can politely be called individual differences. Conferencing was the antidote, the boost and the pick-me-up. It was quite a shock then the 2020 conference fees were announced. They were, relative to the past and convention, inflated beyond the comfort level. Soon, the sticker shock registered on social media with regrets being issued under the circumstances. So, this column reflects upon conferencing.

It is all about the venue. The ultimate must be the University of Victoria and its school of Child and Youth Care. When the sun shines there is nothing finer with facilities that take advantage of patio living and a resident experience with townhomes and bunnies. Mount Saint Vincent in Nova Scotia balanced this on the eastern end of the country. Campus

facilities, usually over student breaks offer the best with facilities and residences. Ontario has a system of these at its colleges and universities offering great value. Unfortunately, similar situations do not exist in each province and planners must turn to hotels as venues.

To the uninitiated diving into the world of hotel facilities and booking was an eyeopener. There is a charge for everything. Silly things often, like the use of mirrors for the presentation of food or a centerpiece at each banquet table. This forced the use of a spreadsheet approach by this treasurer in the run up to *Committed to the Challenge* conference. I highly recommend this approach as you can list actual and potential costs as they come up and have them automatically tally. A sales or income page can record each registrant and for each service or status. The obvious goal is to come up with a package attractive to child and youth public. If you can hold off setting rates until your expenses are known it helps. The range of rates tend to balance out to an average amount for each registrant. With Committed, the Opening Reception was almost over with the conference still in the red or underwater, as they say. Anxious moments which relaxed by the end of the evening at the gate went into the black. One wee detail was overlooked. The hotel charged a 15% across the board gratuity which was missed at the signing of the contract. Any profit was suddenly threatened.

Fundraising is the ultimate source of success for a conference. All conferences are local while some claim a national and now even a world status. Each offers a step-in fund-raising targeting. Once child and youth care became established things operated routinely until a decade or so ago. The prevailing state of the care system is cautious with the governments involved limiting and even cutting back rates across the board. Agencies, at one time eager sponsors of delegations to conferences;

now find themselves keen of fund raising and using conferencing as a means of fund raising. Great for presenters, convenient return on profession development allowances but fatal to sponsorship of employees. Some form relationships with the superstars of the era for annual conferences to guaranteed full houses. A few high-profile agencies of substantial reputation have emerged to support local conferences. This should be encouraged as the local audience is the majority of registrants. Corporate sponsors to the association could easily become conference sponsors as maintaining profile for social agencies in now the norm. I never understood how neighborhood newsletters were advertised in while conference programs with captive eyeballs went begging. Imaginative fundraising ideas are open to imagination. Selling display tables to venders has long been the norm. Separating out the banquet fee is also helpful. Typically, this is built in for every full registrant and increasingly registrants are ducking out or pulling a grab and go to take advantage of the local night scene. By having the banquet being an option allows those who must attend to check in, spouses and possibly families to join in and walk-ups to purchase at the door. Typically, hotels allow several plates for this. One of the best ideas was used in Canmore, Alberta with a volunteer fee. For a substantial cut in fees, the registrant worked the conference as a volunteer attending workshops and such where they could after completing their task. This could be a part of a local sales campaign that should be aggressive and persistent. Over the years, I noted 80-100 registrants came from away, perhaps a quarter, perhaps a third of the registration total. For a national or world, the conference needs to put its best face forward to attract the tourist registrant. This attracts to national corporate and government funders. This is where your reputation as an association with extensive networking can pay off so make those

introductions following a change in government or appeals for corporate support. As my kids would often remind me, you just have to ask. Often, your keynote speakers can be very helpful offering their services in kind or greatly reduced due to past hospitality at trainings. Sometimes, they can also be a pain wanting the first-class experience all the way from the flight to the suite to the room service. Sometimes, you just get lucky. For Committed the estimates for media support which now includes notebooks, led projectors and such were through the roof, well into 5 figures. Fortunately, a start-up was found which did it all for the experience for a fraction of the market value. Keynotes and local entertainers often donate their fees for the cause or exposure. Hotel venues often have whole departments to catering to conferences which make this planning a breeze. Regretfully you must have served on a conference committee to see the value they offer.

   In the end it all comes down to a decision on value. *Connecting Through Culture* has released it program and it is incredible. [1] With the centralization of care systems to each province across the country Canada enjoys a leg up relative to many countries when it comes to organization. I recall with *Together 2000* learning to rein in my expectations as in the United States there was a combination of state, insured, non-profit and private employers in a care system that stymied such organization. You could have a major agency down the street and never know it. This is similar in Canada with the bulk of employers rarely looking beyond their specific situation. Educators work at networking and have for decades. They also populate conference programs to reach their preferred audience

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[1] http://www.cvent.com/events/national-child-and-youth-care-conference-2020-connecting-through-culture/event-summary-a670776420744f2ba7e4d935ba3bee64.aspx?lang=en&sms=1&cn=yXGcO_620Eqq07blE82X5A&fbclid=IwAR2HPmxA3Nxw_OlMR-D6Xif1oDikFKrpZY-fk4esa8luxlcpGEQomeNMp8s

on a biannual basis. The vibrancy of Canadian educators who have so much diversity to draw from is amazing as three packed days of workshops illustrates. All that and St. Johns. What more could one ask for?

GARTH GOODWIN *spent his 41-year career in both practice and as a database designer and administrator. In over 30 years of frontline practice he worked for both public/board and private agencies. He was the first recipient of the National Child and Youth Care Award in 1986. He nurtured the Child and Youth Care Workers Association of Manitoba through its formative years and became its representative to the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations. He has been privileged to be the witness and participant in significant events in CYC history and remains an active observer in the field of CYC.*
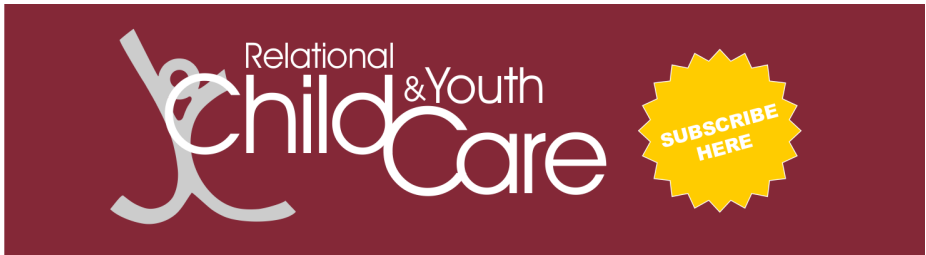
Who Wins When Nobody Wins? Exploring Ethics Surrounding Competition for Children in Recreation

Nicole Land

Abstract

The notion of competition for children, and more specifically creating winners and losers in recreation is a topic of much debate. This article will invite Child and Youth Care (CYC) practitioners to attend to the ethical complexities of children's games, an under examined facet of CYC practice. By framing competition as an ethical dilemma, this article aims to problematize conceptions practitioners may hold about competition for children. This article will explore the ethical values at stake when competition for children is considered, how these ethical values may play out within possible courses of action, and will conclude with an examination of competition for children as it relates specifically to CYC practice.

Keywords

child and youth care, recreation, competition, games, sport, recreation leader

It's faceoff time. Volcanoes and Craters, 7-year-old kid style. The floor of the community centre gym is littered with dozens of multicolored dome pylons. When they are flipped upright, they are volcanoes. When plopped belly up, they are known as craters. Ready for action, standing crouched with their hands on their thighs and one foot in front of the other, half the kids are team volcano while the other half are team crater. The game is simple — after 4 minutes of frantic pylon flipping, from volcano to crater and back zillions of times over, the goal is to have as many pylons representing your team as possible. Their recreation leader shouts "go", and it's a tsunami of brightly colored T-shirts and light-up shoes as eager kids race around the gym in a pylon flipping frenzy. In no time at all, 4 minutes are up. Red in the face, both teams turn to their recreation leader. The outcome of the game rests with her, and she has many choices. Does she pick kids to count how many craters and how many volcanoes lie on the gym floor and then compare to declare a winner? Does she offer the kids a trip to the water fountain and have a new game for them on their return? Or does she declare them all winners for working really hard and exercising their bodies?

Results and participation or the process of contesting come to form a meaningful whole... Excellence can be appreciated in results but it is lived out, felt, embodied through the contest radically connected with them... This whole, this interconnectedness between one's own and one's opponents' performances, that entails the complexity and nuances of sport competition, is what makes it a project worth pursuing.
(Torres, 2006, p. 250).

Recreation, sport, and leisure experiences are an essential part of the childhood experience and can "help equip youth [and children] with attributes, skills, competencies, and values that will contribute to their role as productive, socially conscious, and healthy citizens" (Weiss, 2011, p. 55). The notion of competition for children, and more specifically keeping score and creating winners and losers in sport and recreation has become a topic of much debate. The importance of evaluating inclusion of competition in recreation for children is paramount, since as Cook (2007) describes competition for children is not a "neatly bounded" activity (p. 227) and we understand the scope of recreation "to be quite permeable. Winning and losing extend beyond the person" (p. 227). This means that what happens in a recreation context has wide reaching implications for all children involved. As Cook (2007) further elaborates, the examination of competition for children is particularly sensitive for many individuals as "competitiveness negates/challenges notions of innocence, unselfconsciousness, and the immanent, sentimental value of children that remain central to contemporary constructions of childhood" (p. 227).

Much has been written about the efficacy and appropriateness of competition in recreation for children. An overwhelming reactionary voice, perhaps stemming from a "contemporary life [which] is governed by fears and anxieties" (Piper, Powell & Smith, 2006, p. 155) has "generated a massive wave of criticism against competition" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 194). Those who advocate against competition for children wish to "reprioritize the values inspiring participation" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 194) by emphasizing skill acquisition, mastery, fair play, sportspersonship, and fun over winning and performance. They wish to reframe recreation experiences as an opportunity for pleasure and enjoyment, and not focus on the functional aspects of such experiences (Shannon, 2006). Further,

supporters of non-competitive recreation believe that these approaches are better at addressing "long term, lifestyle, behavioral changes" (Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008, p. 61). Opponents of competition for children argue further that "one [child's] win makes the rest of the kids losers" (Black, 2005, p. 33).

In contrast, proponents of competition for children urge a "rethinking of the F word" where we frame failure and losing not as negative, but as motivation to perform at a higher standard (Peters, 2008, p. 128). They argue that risk, such as the risk of losing, enables children to be challenged, explore their limits, learn new skills, and learn to assess future risk based on experience (Mitchell, Cavanagh, & Eager, 2006). Supporters of competition for children also purport that not keeping score in activities children believe to be competitive constitutes lying, and that this dishonesty deludes children about the value of their participation in such an activity. They believe that as a result of being misled, children cannot make sense of their involvement in competition and cannot learn from their recreation experiences (Torres & Hager, 2007).

Throughout this paper I aim to bring attention to the issue of competition among children by framing it as an ethical dilemma, made more complex by the developmental considerations necessary for appropriate decision making when working with children and youth. Specifically I am interested in inviting Child and Youth Care (CYC) practitioners and recreation leaders to attend to the ethical complexities of children's games and to recognize their responsibility to be reflexive, and to open any ethical dilemma to careful critical evaluation (Taylor & White, 2000). While perhaps not as overtly morally perplexing as many commonly explored dilemmas within CYC, I wish to problematize conceptions practitioners may hold about competition for children, add a

developmental frame, and challenge them to delve further into an issue easily passed over within the chaos of daily practice. Competition for children is a relatively unexplored area within CYC practice, with academic searches for "child and youth care" with various combinations of "sport", "recreation" and "competition" yielding between 0 to 6 results. As such, this article invites practitioners to reflect upon a unique facet of their practice and interactions with children. Following a brief review of relevant terminology, I will explore the ethical values at stake when competition for children is examined, and how these ethical values may play out when the developmental status of children is acknowledged while considering possible courses of action. I will then provide a concrete example of one possible method of conceptualizing and approaching competition for children in recreational settings. Finally, I will return to competition for children in recreation as it applies to CYC; how competition might function within CYC practice to form the "meaningful whole" (p.250) described by Torres (2006) at the outset of this article, making the pursuit of winners and losers "a project worth pursuing" (p. 250), or at a minimum deserving of attention by all practitioners working with children and youth.

Recreation, Competition, and CYC Recreation

Recreation, which in this paper is synonymous with leisure, is distinct from competitive sport and organized sport and is defined as a pleasurable activity that may involve moving one's physical body (Mobily, 1989). In contrast, competitive sport or organized sports are activities where the goal upon enrolment is to participate in contests of athletic achievement (Back, 2009). Within the context of this discussion, recreation might entail games, activities, or sport, as long as such sport involvement does not occur in a formalized environment, such as a soccer league. Rather,

recreational activities might include a game of "Go Fish", tag, or pickup basketball.

Recreation becomes a moral consideration in that recreation and "leisure [are] best considered as another life domain and in this way experiences that occur during leisure can have an impact on health and well-being" (Trenberth, 2005, p. 3). As Trenberth (2005) goes on to explain, there is a strong association between leisure and health, and recreation can contribute to "physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health through prevention, coping, and transcendence" (p. 2). Recreation may also be an important way to "widen and strengthen the range of relationships [a] young person can access in their social networks" (Gilligan, 2008, p. 41). Many sport theorists believe that character development in sport and recreation comes from placing oneself in a position where we participate in unnecessary rule defined tasks that increase the level of difficulty we face for no purpose other than engaging in the activity (Fraleigh, 2003).

Speaking from a CYC perspective, Steckley (2011) explicates the ways in which recreation can function within a CYC practice framework, illustrating how school based soccer "was a vehicle for the development of relationships, promotion of resilience, and positive experiences of self" (p. 119) among young boys in Scotland. Steckley (2011) found that "it is the sense of belonging that emerges as the most powerful and overarching benefit for young people" (p. 119) from their participation in recreation. This is consistent with Dixon (2011) who found that through recreation-focused activities which reflect a CYC approach, children and youth who have a parent with mental illness were able to build "resiliency through connections" (p. 106) fostered through the building of meaningful relationships.

Competition

A contest or competition is "a specified task that allows for a winner to be determined based on luck, superior performance, or a combination of extrinsic factors and performance" (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 27). Shields and Bredemeier (2011) illustrate two fundamentally different ways to conceptualize competition, in that competition can be a metaphor for "war" where "the contest embodies a conflictual goal structure that renders some winners and others losers" (p. 32), or "partnership" where "the opponent is not an enemy to be conquered but rather someone who can push the [competitor] to the limits of [their] capabilities" (p. 32). Torres and Hager (2007) outline two types of competition: "zero sum" which "focuses on establishing winners and losers" (p. 195), similar to the war metaphor, and "mutualist" which "focuses on the determination and construction of excellence" (p. 195) and is most similar to the partnership metaphor. Torres and Hager (2007) go on to discuss true competition as a mutualist or partnership metaphor and decompetition as perverted competition, most like the zero sum or war metaphor.

For now, competition will be understood as an activity where a winner is determined, and there are one or more non-winners.

CYC Practitioners as Recreation Leaders

Recreation leaders are "the front line providers of leisure experiences for a vast range of participants and activities" (Little & Watkins, 2004, p. 75). CYC practitioners may function as recreation leaders in numerous capacities including within community centres, group homes, outdoor programming, or during informal leisure and game provision. Practitioners need "to be able to teach basic skills, encourage and maintain group interactions, and supervise for health, safety and discipline" (p. 76), as well

as bring their knowledge of developmental considerations to facilitate young people's engagement in recreational pursuits. Recreation leaders hold great moral responsibility when they are trusted to create recreation environments for children, as when an appropriate activity environment, developmental considerations, and quality social supports are in place children are more motivated to participate in and able to learn from a recreation experience (West & Shores, 2008).

An Ethical Dilemma: Winners and Losers

Banks (2010), who has written extensively about ethics in youth work, defines an ethical dilemma as a situation where an individual is "confronted with a choice between two ... courses of action, all of which may entail breaching some ethical principle or causing some potential harm" (p. 12). When faced with the issue of competition for children in recreation, it seems there are numerous courses of action: do we create winners and losers, do we avoid creating winners and losers altogether, or do we engineer a solution to fall between? Further, what are the moral and developmental grounds for these various choices? It is evident that there are numerous courses of action that may be "potentially right" (Hill et al., 1998, p. 112) and appropriate to the developmental needs of a particular child. The question of competition in children's recreation is being framed here as an ethical dilemma. This is because every action one takes which is "about the care of and responsibility for the Other" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 73) when "matters of rights, duties, needs, interests, relationships, motives and the maintenance or transgression of prevailing norms" (Banks, 2010, p. 12) are at stake is deserving of moral deliberation. Ethical questions surround the potential competitive nature of a recreational activity and

extend beyond the guidance available to practitioners in their ethical codes.

Guidance from the CYC Code of Ethics

The CYC Code of Ethics (Association for Child and Youth Care Practice [ACYCP], 1995) outlines ethical practices and principles which are "intended to serve as guidelines for conduct and assist in resolving ethical questions" (p. 1) faced by CYC practitioners.

In considering the responsibility a practitioner holds surrounding their own well-being and development, the CYC Code of Ethics (ACYCP, 1995) states that practitioners must "[take] responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge and abilities for professional practice" (p. 2), which is consistent with engaging in a reflexive process surrounding the place of competition in their own practice. Further, the CYC Code of Ethics calls for practitioners to be "aware of their own values and their implication for practice" (p. 2). As such, practitioners must engage with the debate surrounding competition in recreation for children while constantly examining their own conceptions of, and past experiences with, competition and how this history might influence their decision to accept or dismiss competition.

Further, the CYC Code of Ethics (ACYCP, 1995) states that, "above all, [a practitioner] shall not harm the child, youth, or family" (p. 2). Such a call is relevant when considering competition for children in recreation, as a practitioner must debate if either the inclusion or exclusion of competition constitutes harm. Additionally, CYC practitioners must "[recognize] that there are differences in the needs of children, youth and families" (p. 3) and "[design] individualized programs of child, youth and family care" (p. 2) which best meet the needs of a child. As such, practitioners must revisit the

question of including competition in recreation for each child with which they work, and examine how competition might be employed in a moral way with this young person. Finally, an ethical CYC practitioner "recognizes, respects, and advocates for the rights of the child, youth, and family" (p. 2) and "fosters client self-determination" (p. 3). It is therefore up to CYC practitioners to examine if competition, or the desire not to experience competition, is a right afforded to children, youth, and families. A practitioner must also reconcile how the inclusion, exclusion, or provision of competition in recreation might respect the autonomy of children and their families.

Ethical Values Surrounding Competition

There are at least two layers of ethical questions practitioners must grapple with as they consider competition for children within recreation; what is my role as a recreation provider and therefore what values are in potential conflict within my role, and what are the values in conflict when I focus solely on competition for children? While the following discussion will explicate ethical values as though they are in opposition to each other, it is crucial for CYC practitioners to appreciate such ethical values as though they exist on a fluid spectrum. Ethical decisions surrounding competition are not dichotomized, either/or choices, but rather electing to include, or dismiss, competition within one's practice instead temporarily foregrounds some ethical values while diminishing the emphasis on others. It remains the responsibility of a practitioner to employ competition in such a way that the following ethical quandaries are reconciled to meet the demands of their own moral framework.

Little and Watkins (2004) state that a recreation leader must foster self-confidence and knowledge development for the individuals they work

with. Consequently, the first conflict within this layer of this ethical dilemma is beneficence (promote the best interests of the child) vs. non-maleficence (do no harm). Do we wish to create an environment where kids can potentially learn lessons for the future, even if these lessons may come through some challenge, or do we wish to create a risk free environment where children feel consistently safe and are in no way harmed? This conflict could also be reframed as health vs. safety. Is a practitioner's obligation to foster potentially emotionally and physically healthy children with vibrant skills, or is it to keep them emotionally and physically safe at all costs? Questions of benevolence vs. power also emerge. Do we want to foster benevolence in children and teach them the virtues of cooperation, or do we want them to be able to work within power dynamics in the real world and learn to work within competitive environments? There are also questions of honesty vs. a "practical charade" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 203) in that we must choose if we wish to make children aware they are engaging in activities that are competitive and that competition is present in our world, or do we pretend that competition is not important in our Euro-Western world.

Perhaps the overarching principles in conflict in examining the moral dilemma facing a recreation leader are those of autonomy vs. paternalism or citizenship vs. fairness. In other words, when we show up to work with these children each day, do we do so to foster independent, dynamic, self-confident, and capable kids who are able to make decisions on what they want in their recreation programs, or do we want to create an environment where these children feel comfortable and protected, are unaware that competition has been intentionally removed from such activities, and can perhaps begin to develop skills through less risky, cooperative activities?

When considering some of the values in conflict within the question of competition for children, even more questions emerge. Many of these values are outlined by Sagiv, Sverdlik and Schwarz (2011); achievement vs. universalism, adaptation vs. security, results vs. intrinsic motivation, mastery vs. equality, sportsmanship vs. defeat, tradition vs. conscientiousness. Do we want our children to face risk and either persevere or face potentially devastating consequences, or do we have an obligation to protect them from harm and teach skills in other ways? All the above value conflicts can be designated as sub conflicts to the overarching ethical dilemma, which seems to be centrally concerned with whether competition "[promotes] more vices than virtues" (Back, 2009, p. 217). Is there something to be gained for children by falling on the competition side of the above sub conflicts (achievement, adaptation, mastery), or is there more to be gained by supporting the non-competition/cooperative position (universalism, security, equality)?

Exploring Potential Courses of Action

There are essentially two courses of action when faced with this dilemma. We can choose either to include competition in recreation activities for children, creating winners and losers, or we can choose to leave it out.

If we choose to leave competition out of recreation for children, non-maleficence prevails over beneficence. We choose to protect children from the potential harms of competition, such as cheating, viewing others as opposition, superiority, or individualism (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011) over allowing them to face these potential harms. In removing competition, we can eliminate children from the "moment of negativity" (Hyland, 1995, p. 179) in which competition "has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up

with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard... and sadistic pleasure...in other words it is war minus the shooting" (Orwell, 1970, p. 64). In doing this, one is understanding that value in contesting "does not lie so much in winning the game or in stressing the competition but rather in other extrinsic features of the game: the effort in winning; the beauty of the performance" (Back, 2009, p. 232).

If one chooses to remove competition from recreation for children, there are also some potentially negative consequences to consider. The "practical charade" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 203) dominates over honesty, in that we choose to mislead children into understanding that competition is unnecessary and not something they will face throughout their life. This may be troubling, as "the ways in which our children approach challenges and overcome failure determine how successful they will become later on in life" (Peters, 2008, p. 128).

In selecting to remove competition from children's recreational experiences, we are resolving the ethical role of a recreation leader to be one who does not subject children to harm resulting from the risk of competition. We are further resolving the question of competition to a practice where paternalist protection and universalistic ideas of equality and cooperation persist.

On the other hand, if one chooses to include competition in recreation for children beneficence might prevail over non-maleficence. While one will be opening children up to risk from competition and they may face many of the potential negativities of competition, removing these potential struggles of competition "takes away valuable, if sometimes difficult and painful, experiences from such a crucial quest" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 204). Children will then not be led to form "unwarranted conclusions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding a social practice [competition] with

enormous significance and value in contemporary life" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 202).

Including competition in recreation for children places autonomy and citizenship ahead of paternalism and fairness. Since "the challenge to outperform opponents on a designated test provides a more complex and meaningful challenge" (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 33) than noncompetitive tasks, children may be better able to understand the social comparisons they are sure to experience throughout their life (Heyman & Compton, 2006). Children will be enabled to experience the "consequential nature of some contests, emphasizing their seriousness" (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 34). This position sides with much of the literature that purports that competition can teach children risk assessment, consequentialism, focus, intrinsic motivation, social comparison, prosocial behavior, self-confidence, self-esteem, resiliency, coping, and how to reframe failure as positive motivation (Torres & Hager, 2006; Weiss, 2011; Gilligan, 2008; Trenberth, 2005; Jamieson & Ross, 2007; Peters, 2008; Heyman & Compton, 2006).

In selecting this position, one is resolving the ethical role of a recreation leader to be one who challenges children to develop knowledge and skills through calculated risk. They are understanding competition as valuable in that competition can be a medium through which children can learn to compete and subsequently come to experience interdependence as present in Euro-Western culture.

Finally, if one chooses to include competition within children's recreational experiences using the ethical values competition is purported to privilege as outlined above, it is evident that practitioners must only facilitate true competition and remove any decompetition (zero sum or war metaphor as outlined previously) from the experiences of these

children. True competition allows the oppositional relationship within a contest to be "seen as serving further ends (excellence and enjoyment) that are mutually beneficial for all" (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 35). This understanding of competition as mutual and symbiotic enhances internal motivation, mastery, and excellence and protects against the negative aspects of competition (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011; Torres & Hager, 2007).

True Competition: An Example from Practice

I will now outline two ways in which I facilitate true competition for children in recreation within my own practice. My aim in doing this is solely to provide practitioners with more material to consider in their evaluation of including competition in their practice.

While I find that I feel a moral tug to incorporate competition into the recreation experience of children I work with, I do not mean to say I should make competition the foundation of all recreational programs or make recreational programs akin to competitive sport. Through the intentional and skillful use of competition, I can teach children to contest and to "learn the fundamental goals, purposes, motives, values, and perspectives of true competition" (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 37). This way, they can apply true competition to their "interpretations of contesting in other domains" (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 37), and be better equipped to deal with failure, the valuable social information stemming from competition, and a Euro-Western society in which achievement in emphasized (Peters, 2008; Torres & Hager, 2007; Heyman & Compton, 2006).

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Professional athletes are able to resonate with their young fans even outside of formal sport, and I am able to leverage their understandings of

contesting in educating children. Turning to the Edmonton Oilers National Hockey League Twitter (NHL_Oilers), I find a variety of quotes easily used as educational tools: "Our work habits have to be exemplary. If we're going to grow as a team, we have to accept these [opponent] challenges- Tom Renney" (2012, January 24), and "They're a great hockey team, they move the puck well, they shoot lots. We seem to step up to challenges, I expect the same tonight- Devan Dubnyk" (2012, January 24). These quotes serve as relevant illustrations for young people of the ways in which a team can only improve if they play skillful opponents who challenge them to be better. This approach reflects true competition as children "comprehend the important role that the opponents play in making winning not only possible but also meaningful" (Torres & McLaughlin, 2003, p.149)

A Shared "Space Station" Responsibility for Contesting

Often when engaging children in tasks where winners and losers will be created, I strive to find ways to conjure feelings of ownership and interconnection within the contest for all participants. If I return to the game of Volcanoes and Craters, I might split players into three groups- volcanoes, craters, and space stations. Volcanoes are still volcanoes, craters are still craters, but space stations float around in orbit and keep an eye on everything that happens on Earth. This means space stations keep track of time, watch for any rules violations, and count how many volcanoes and craters there are at the end of a match. Each group of kids takes a turn in every position, and following the game we would discuss the importance of being accountable and respecting each team to help participants appreciate how each position plays a central role within the competition. A shared responsibility reflects true competition in that a contest

"inextricably binds contestants together…. contestants fuse into a collective that strives to achieve excellence" (Torres & Hager, 2007, p. 198).

This "space station" approach allows me to create a situation where for one third of the games, each participant does not have a chance to be either a winner or a loser. This helps to diminish the stark distinction between winners and losers for participants, as not only are they held mutually accountable to their peers within the match, but this also eliminates the possibility of a child being on a winning or losing team for all of the games. Children still get to experience winning and losing, but they also are enabled to practice being neutral and observing their peers.

"A Meaningful Whole"

CYC literature speaks often of the complex, interconnected nature of adopting a relational stance in working with children, whereby all "engagements are powerful when one is connected in relationship with another" (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011, p. 10). Practice beliefs surrounding "the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments" (Mattingly, Stuart, & VanderVen, 2010, p.2) or those purporting an approach in which "strengths are often thought of as interconnected in the same way a holistic approach takes into account the ecology of relationships that interconnect to support the healthy development of the child" (MacArthur, Rawana, & Brownlee, 2011, p. 7) are common within CYC discourse. Such relational complexity parallels the quote by Torres (2006) at the outset of this paper, in that "this interconnectedness between one's own and one's opponent's performance… makes it a project worth pursuing" (p. 250). Practitioners may wish to consider if true competition is a venue through which children we work with may learn to interact with the many people comprising their holistic environment in new ways, or through which fresh

and productive relationships, understandings, and interconnections might be fostered.

Competition may factor into CYC practice in many different ways, such as card games, races to "sit shotgun" in a car, or discussing professional sporting events with children we may work with. Regardless of where a CYC practitioner places themselves within the debate surrounding competition for children, a thoughtful consideration of including competition in their practice is important. If a practitioner aims to "support [children] to develop their skills and competencies; provide [children] with opportunities to practice new behaviors and take on challenging roles....[and] provide opportunities for [children] to feel connected and valued" (Martin & Tennant, 2008, p. 23), they may wish to draw upon the CYC Code of Ethics and examine the literature surrounding competition for children, in order to assess the moral efficacy of employing competition as a careful practice tool.

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