Contents

Editorial: A New Role ................................................................. 2
   Mark Smith

Deepening a child and youth care understanding of presence:
   Engaging living-dying dialectical moments ............................ 4
   Patti Ranahan

Talking About Evidence in Child and Youth Care Practice......... 13
   Kiaras Gharabaghi

A Tribute to Dr. Carol Kelly ....................................................... 19
   Varda Mann-Feder and Sister Madeleine Rybicki

We the people .............................................................................. 21
   Hans Skott-Myhre

Understanding the Fear of Connecting .................................. 27
   Jack Phelan

Why You Should Worry about Clinical Judgment and
   Interviews ................................................................................ 31
   Doug Magnuson

Coming back ................................................................................ 34
   Laura Steckley

A New Conceptualization of Development in Child and Youth
   Care .......................................................................................... 39
   Thais Costa Rabelo Amorim

I AM a Child and Youth Care Practitioner ............................. 47
   Heather Sago

Women’s Lives: SOS Mothers tell their stories ...................... 50

Postcard from Leon Fulcher ...................................................... 73

Information .................................................................................... 77
A New Role

Mark Smith

It must be around 15 years ago, not long after I started working in higher education, when I received an unsolicited e-mail from some guy called Thom Garfat, asking if I would consider writing something for CYC-Online. While I had come across some material from CYC-Net, the internet was, at that point, pretty new to me and I hadn’t really given much thought to how this material appeared on my computer screen or that there might be real human beings behind it. And, besides, I was also a bit suspicious of anyone who spelt Tom with an ‘h’ and who claimed to have a Scottish granny. But he mentioned Leon Fulcher, who he said had suggested he contact me. Leon had taught me social work at the University of Stirling, so I started to think that this guy Thom might be for real after all. So, I agreed to write something and the rest, as they say, is history. Prompted by regular nags, which Thom always dressed up as something other than a nag, I wrote a just about regular monthly column for CYC-Online for around five years, until what Leon terms “the administrivia of academic life” began to take its toll on my time.

Over the years, I have got to know Thom well. I also got to know Brian Gannon, the other mainstay on CYC-Net, initially virtually, through some very encouraging comments on my writing and then in person at the NACCW conference in Cape Town in 2015. I now know that there are indeed real human beings behind CYC-Net and am in awe of what Thom and Brian (and Martin) have done for the field. So, when I was approached last year to take on an editorial role, I was, and still am, both honoured but a bit unsure as to whether I could live up to the role. If the truth be told, I’m still unsure – I am beginning to become aware of the extent of time Thom and more latterly, James, put into encouraging and
supporting people to write. But I am in no doubt about the worth of that role in
giving workers some say in defining the field. And that is something that, at so many
levels, is important to me – for too long it has been defined by those with little
experience or understanding of just how complex it is in its everyday guise.

I don’t come into this new role with any grand plans or indeed any plans at all –
I will be very happy to maintain service as usual, but would hope in due course to
maybe bring some ideas of my own. My first task, though, will be to get back into
the habit of writing on a monthly basis and connecting and reconnecting with
contributors, new and old.

I guess I’m going to sign off here. It’s going to take me a while to get into the
swing of things but I do so knowing that Thom remains in the wings to offer wise
counsel. Enjoy the March issue!

The new CYC-Net app is now available!


Deepening a child and youth care understanding of presence: Engaging living-dying dialectical moments

Patti Ranahan

The concept of presence is discussed throughout child and youth care literature in various ways situating the construct as important to practice and scholarly conversations. Mark Krueger (2004; 2005) spoke of the relational dance between child and youth care worker and youth, a way of moving and adjusting moment-by-moment to remain in-sync. Gerry Fewster (2012) described presence as a style of connecting in practice that required a commitment on behalf of the child and youth care worker to his or her own self-discovery and transformation. Jennifer White (2007) describes bringing oneself fully to the therapeutic relationship in her discussion on praxis, and Marie Hoskins (2003) suggests, “knowing arises from being in relation with other” (p. 331). Garfat and Fulcher (2011) describe a co-created space between worker and youth, which unfolds in everyday moments. Loiselle, de Finney, Khanna and Corcoran (2012) suggested that when present – or presencing – child and youth care workers are fully implicated in the process in moments of naming and making visible silenced experiences. De Finney (2014) further draws on Leanne Simpson’s emphasis on presencing as decolonizing work that she states, “involves understanding and generating meaning ‘through engagement, presence and process’” (Simpson, 2011, as cited in de Finney, p. 11).

Child and youth care is only one discipline, among many, that takes up the conversation about presence. For example, in discussing presence within the
expressive arts, Sally Atkins (2014) emphasizes the different ways presence has been taken up over time; Martin Buber (1958, as cited in Atkins, 2014) described an I-Thou encounter characterized by honor and respect. Carl Rogers (1961, 1980, as cited in Atkins, 2014) discussed features of presence including unconditional positive regard and empathy. In nursing care, Fitzgerald Miller (2007) suggests active listening, compassion and a nurse’s use of presence are used to inspire hope and healing. Collectively, these conversations attempt to demystify or define an internal-external experience of being connected to, and engaged with others and our-Selves.

In this short article, I offer three stories as contexts in which I learned deeply about presence. Each story is conceptualized as a dialectical moment, where tensions of living-dying are embodied in experiences of motorcycling, suicide intervention, and palliative care. While depicted as moments in time (i.e., the present moment), these experiences transcend time such that they are influenced by the sum of past, present and future. Marie Hoskin’s (2003) proposes, “curriculum is much more than what occurs in the classroom” (p. 320), and images, stories or metaphors can allow us “to feel confident we were on the same page” (Newbury & Hoskins, 2010, p. 175). I intend to use stories to bring the discussion on presence outside of the classroom and connect in a meaningful way. Following the stories, I unpack my learning about presence in relation to child and youth care practice and research in an attempt to add to the existing conversation.

**Motorcycling**

Heading south from Osoyoos – the southern-most town in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia – on Highway 97 leads to a right turn onto the North Cascades Highway in Washington State. It is over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. I’m sweating under the thick layer of protective gear – called armor - designed specifically for slide protection and a full-face helmet. I know the temperature will drop with the climb ahead over the mountains, and any ‘slide’ off the bike will likely end in disaster despite my multiple layers of protective armor. Open only in
summer months, the switchbacks and spectacular scenery of the North Cascades Highway are notorious among motorcyclists and the topic of many post-ride conversations and Facebook pictures. Fatigue, hunger, muscle pain from the long hours of driving fade into the background as I see a sharp turn on the horizon. To take any significant time to think about my pathway through this turn, query the optimum gear to be in to cover the entire corner, or looking down to ensure that the road is gravel-free, could be deadly. Engagement in the turn is unfolding before a decision to commit to it is made. I tap my foot on the pedal to gear down and shift my body weight leaning the bike down to the left. I apply just enough pressure on the handle bar to hold the lean steady and lock my eyes on the horizon. Mid-turn, I realize I need to drop the bike lower to make the corner. I feel the foot peg scrape the pavement and cognitively push back the instinct to pull on the front break lever or straighten the bike up. I hear my former instructor’s voice: “Steady on the gas, apply back brake, lock your gaze on where you want to go, and breathe.”

**Suicide Intervention**

“I just want to go home!” she says repeatedly as I’m driving. Her son sits in the back of my truck. I am driving the mom and her son home from a therapy group, where I spent the last 90 minutes co-facilitating discussions on mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal skills and distress tolerance. “I just want to go home!” she sobs. On our drive back her son received a phone call learning that the family dog had passed away. This loss was added to the pile of losses the mom and her teen had experienced over the past year. “I just want to go home!” This statement was repeated. I draw on my entire repertoire of child and youth care skills and communicate empathy; try to emphasize the discussions from the group that night, and pull into their driveway. The son jumps out and runs inside saying he is going to call a friend. The mom’s hand rests on the truck door for a moment. I’m missing something. *I can feel it* and her brief pause affirms what I already know in my body. Thoughts filter through – its already been a 12-hour day, my dog is
waiting to go out, I’ve got another early appointment tomorrow morning, is the youth’s mother my ‘client’, should I call my supervisor? We sit down on the front steps. I let these thoughts pass and commit to the present conversation. “When you say ‘home’, are you talking about suicide?”

**Palliative Care**

On Monday the bed in 108 at the hospice is now empty. The quilt is tucked neatly into the sides of the mattress, the door is open, the pillows are fluffed, and the room is clean and available for the next person to lie in wait. I am reminded of how we got a bed for my sister here. Someone had to die. My sister says she hates waiting to die. "How long do I have to wait?" she asks. I tell her I’m not sure why she’s kept here a bit longer than what appears necessary and apply another layer of cream on her dry hands. Her kids visit. Her 13-year-old daughter complains she does not have a gym membership "like all the other girls", and her 11-year-old son says that it took a really long time to get here leaving him little free time to play his games. I experience her discouragement, yet am left in wonder as she is able to muster up the ability to respond to her children in a helpful and kind way. What strength it takes to still parent, to understand how and why they speak about these seemingly meaningless things in the midst of her life ending? As I exit the hospice that evening, a large van without windows has backed up to the entrance. They open the back panel doors and my gaze lands on a coffin: a visual reminder of the temporal moment I am in and the commitment to be here, in this journey, and in this place.

**Present Tensions**

I initially encountered the idea of presence in my undergraduate degree program in child and youth care at Malaspina University-College (now Vancouver Island University) under the instruction of Gerry Fewster. We began our classes with mindfulness exercises, we engaged in experiential activities that provoked our embodied learning about boundaries, and held several discussions on presence and
our ethical engagement with young people. Over time with this instruction I learned how to be in the moment in a skillfully attuned manner with children, youth and families. Yet, my experience of being able to be present in my child and youth care practice was fluid. At times, my capacity to be present was impacted by the practice context in which I was working. For example, when I’ve had the privilege of what Anglin (1999) referred to as ‘truly living with young people as a profession’ as a live-in houseparent of a group home or team leader on the overnight shift at a crisis shelter, the opportunities to be with young people were many. The 1:00 AM hot chocolate at the front reception with a youth taking a break from working in the sex trade in Boys Town, the camping trips, fire side stories, and long drives from the Interior to Children’s Hospital in the group home van – provided opportunities for being with young people. Being present with young people is how I lived, learned, and earned in my child and youth care practice.

Yet at times, I experienced roles and responsibilities in my child and youth care practice that situated me on the periphery. While this was likely a co-constructed position, it was a distal position from my early child and youth care experiences in the daily lives and living with young people. I worked within office settings, took up leadership roles, and provided teleconference supervision. I encountered high caseloads, experienced the pressure for increased classroom capacities, and engaged with research participants. I struggled with how to be present in these settings, roles, practices, or institutions and the possibilities and constrains therein. In speaking on pediatric palliative care, Rushton (2005) suggests that the healthcare environment has become “relationally depleted” (p. 317). What can deepen our understanding of, and efforts to be, present – or what de Finney (2012) termed - “entangled together” (p. 187)?

So, I return to the stories I shared above with the post-reflection realization how much presence matters to living. Stories of resting on the tenuous tipping point of life and death on a motorcycle, engaging a mom in a conversation about her thoughts of killing herself on the front steps of her house, or journeying the last leg
of a marathon battle with cancer at a hospice, serve as insight-building experiences propelling this discussion on presence.

*Presence reflects the sum of lived experiences… Terminal illnesses expand our understanding of the human journey by placing us in a position to share the lived experiences of others. Their experiences provide insight into who we are and what we should be doing.* (Stanley, 2002, p. 937)

Embodied encounters with living-dying moments provide opportunities for transformative and regenerative learning and deepen our understanding about being present with others in child and youth care. Living-dying dialectical moments are lived experiences that entangle us together within and beyond the moment at hand.

Features of presence are also emerging within the findings of several studies within my research program. For example, child and youth care professionals described the practice of being with young people in suicide intervention (Ranahan, 2013). Being with was the worker’s relational and physical proximity to the youth informed by embodied and relational knowledges in the moment-by-moment interaction. In a study exploring attachment security within Francophone parent-youth relationships during a 10-week intervention, parents’ capacities to self-regulate their emotions during interactional moments with the youth were critical to strengthening the parent-youth bond. Self-regulation of emotions was dependent upon the parents’ boundaries through understanding the relation between self-other as the youth moves towards increased autonomy-seeking. As the parent increases their capacities to reflect – to step back, to be present – and consider the youth’s needs, listen and express empathy, and differentiate their own needs and emotional states from the youth’s – the parent-youth relationship is strengthened. To illustrate, one mom stated at the end of the program:

*For sure it cannot change overnight. It’s a long process. Still I consider that I really tried many things over the last 10 weeks. Put things into*
places, change the way I talk, my way of being empathetic, my way of seeing things, letting go, take a little time for me, to be able to help him, to walk with him.

In an arts-based project exploring Indigenous young people’s perspectives on wellness, temporal qualities emerged in the data such that a connection to the past in the present fosters hope and vision for the future (Ranahan, Yuen, & Linds, in press). Images created by the young people represented moments in time that held past, present, and future simultaneously: a sunset, a tree, or a winding path. While awareness of the now – the moment-by-moment interaction – may be how much of the literature describes presence within the helping relationship, findings from this study remind us that the moment is influenced by past and future.

**Presence on the Horizon**

When embarking on a tight turn on a motorcycle, it is imperative to lock your gaze on the horizon while remaining fully present in the moment-by-moment momentum forward. Looking down, looking at the car in the oncoming lane, focusing on the rider ahead – these are distractions with potentially fatal consequences. Past drops of the bike, near misses, and comprehending the limitations of the machine, are all necessary as well. Like the Indigenous young people who informed us about the temporal features of wellness, presence is comprised of understanding the past in order to have hope for the future (Ranahan et al., in press).

Returning then, to Garfat and Fulcher (2011) who state, “this co-created space represents the ‘hub of the wheel’ around which all other characteristics of practice revolve” (p. 9). What possibilities lay on the horizon? How can we enhance presence in developing and practicing child and youth care professionals? What are child and youth care professionals already doing to remain present in the midst of tension-filled challenging and complex situations? How might future interdisciplinary collaborations – for example, with palliative care nursing – help foster further
understanding of presence in child and youth care practice and pedagogy? How can child and youth care workers support parents’ presence in their relationships with their youth? What learning experiences are needed in higher education to invite emerging practitioners to take up a decolonizing presence in young people’s lives?

To end with these questions is an effort to suggest that presence is an ever-emerging concept that may continue to be discussed and examined in multiple new ways through child and youth care conversations, within present and future research, and by forming new interdisciplinary relationships. A co-created space involves much more than the worker and youth – it is an intersection where place, human and more-than-human elements, history and hope meet. “Presencing… exceeds the interpersonal notions of relational practice… it involves intensities of place, affect, spirit, healing, embodied contestation, political struggle for sovereignty, and community building” (de Finney, 2016, p. 29). Presence is temporal, experienced within the intersections of living and dying, and developed through tension-filled, relational involvements with Self, others and places.

References


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12
Talking About Evidence in Child and Youth Care Practice

Kiaras Gharabaghi

The term ‘evidence’ surely has become the buzzword of the twenty-first century in the human services. Funders want to know the evidence that their money is well invested. Service providers want to generate evidence that their services have the desired impact. Entrepreneurs who lingered for many years in low-paying human service jobs want to develop packaged approaches that meet the need for evidence and that they can sell for a great deal of money through processes of licensing fees and copy rights. Evidence as an idea has become a paradigm in contemporary social practice contexts, since this idea has reached the status of hegemony so that social practices without evidence are tantamount to unethical conduct. In this short essay, I want to highlight some of the core questions that come to mind when thinking about evidence in the specific context of child and youth care practice.

The first question is a definitional one; what is evidence? For many, evidence is some sort of proof that a particular intervention or approach to intervention produces predictable outcomes that are usually desirable. This is, of course, a misguided definition of evidence, since there are good reasons for why the word ‘proof’ and the word ‘evidence’ co-exist and denote quite different things, and don’t even rhyme. At best, one might say that evidence is what gives us good reason to believe that doing something might lead us in a good direction. At its core, evidence, quite differently than proof, gives us reason to explore further in the hopes of stumbling upon some good ideas. The reverse is of course also true: We might find evidence that a particular approach we are taking will produce harm.
or other negative results, in which case we have good reason to refine that approach or change something about how we are doing things. Here is what we can say with some confidence – having found evidence that something we do might be good or bad, it is equally nonsensical to either do only that or to totally abandon that.

The second question is one of scale. How much of what we do is based on evidence? In fact, almost nothing we do is based on evidence, at least not on the kind of evidence that is systematically derived. In our field of child and youth care, the thousands of initiatives, words, body postures, encounters, experiences and activities we engage with young people are not covered by any evidence regiment. They are simply ways of being human, of communicating with others, of being present with others and with ourselves. Even if we wanted to adopt an evidence-based practice, most of what we will actually do on our shift (such as using the bathroom, eating food, coughing, telling a joke, playing a game, hugging a child, walking from one side of the service site to the other, answering the phone, etc.) has nothing to do with that evidence base. Whatever evidence might be and however committed we may be to observing its commands, at best a small fraction of what we do every day is actually related to evidence. What is the meaning of focusing our energy on the small minority of things we do rather than the overwhelming majority of the things we do?

The third question is one of purpose. What is the purpose of evidence and how does it relate to the purpose of child and youth care practice? The benefits of evidence are usually framed around effectiveness; that is to say, a given intervention is more likely to be effective when there is evidence that suggests it will be effective. In other words, the idea of evidence suggests that our purpose is to do things that are effective. This suggests that in doing anything, we have an already established outcome in mind based on which we can measure whether what we intended to achieve has in fact been achieved. In child and youth care practice, we often use terms such as ‘being present’, ‘exploring’, ‘the journey’, and ‘reflection’. None of these terms are compatible with the sequence of intention-action-
outcome. These terms imply that the outcomes are secondary to the process. At the very least we can say that the purpose of evidence is in tension with, and perhaps even contradicts, the purpose of child and youth care practice.

The fourth question relates to participation of young people. Can an evidence-based framework promote child and youth participation? There are two possibilities here. The first would suggest that this is not possible since only the practitioner has access to the evidence and therefore the process of bringing evidence to bear in any social context is a one-sided and inherently non-participatory process. The second possibility is that young people too can in fact have access to the evidence, but if that were the case, there would no longer be a need for practitioners since young people could then just follow the evidence and do what it suggests without the practitioner intervening. This would imply not so much a participatory framework but rather an end to social practices of any kind and a libertarian ideology in child and youth care practice (do nothing and let young people sort it out).

A fifth question is one of outcomes. It is in fact true that there is evidence that suggests some interventions produce outcomes that seem desirable; this simply means that young people appear to live well post-intervention. But there is no evidence that would suggest that all young people can be made to live well if we do things in accordance with the evidence. For the young people who are not living well in spite of having experienced evidence-based interventions, we will require a new set of evidence-based interventions, which again will result in some, perhaps even most, of them living well afterwards, but never all. In other words, evidence of effectiveness requires, inherently, chronic efforts to produce new evidence of effectiveness specifically to deal with the ineffectiveness of the original evidence pursuant to some of the young people subjected to it. This process seems no different than practicing in the absence of evidence altogether, where some young people turn out to live well later in life and others don’t.

A sixth question relates to the implications of evidence. Really good evidence – based practices require significant levels of fidelity with the context in which the
Evidence was originally produced. This means that if in one setting a particular group of staff achieve desirable outcomes through a particular way of being with the young people, in a different setting with a different group of staff and a different group of young people an evidence-based practice requires mirroring, indeed copying in great detail everything that happened in the first setting. Evidence is not, of course, derived from just one iteration of a particular practice, but instead of many such iterations in many different settings and with many different variations, so long as there is a strong, readily identifiable, and ultimately manualized common thread in what happens across these settings and variations. Nevertheless, the process of rendering evidence of high quality inherently requires practitioners to think less and parrot more. The message is clear: Do what has been done elsewhere rather than what the moment and your relational context would suggest. This, it seems, is quite a challenge to the very essence of child and youth care practice.

This brings us to the seventh question, which builds on the previous one. I would frame that question like this: In a best-case scenario, do evidence-based practices increase the capacity of young people to live life well while necessarily decreasing the capacity for child and youth care practitioners to do their work well? In other words, could it be that evidence-based practices rely on the self-destruction of the practitioner in order to be successful? Let me explain this question using a McDonald’s example. The success of the Big Mac lies in its consistency. A Big Mac tastes the same and looks the same in South Africa, Russia and Chicago. The experience of having a Big Mac ought to be as similar as possible regardless of where or when one is having it. To achieve this effect, McDonald’s hires people who bring to the job nothing at all. They are then trained to perform the task of assembling the Big Mac. Creativity in this context is considered undesirable; one would likely get fired if one decided to add some creative flare to the Big Mac, such as adding some eggplant or avocado, or spicing it up with some chilli peppers. This is why McDonald’s hires people without qualifications and pays them a (below) subsistence wage. Could it be that the more we adopt evidence-
based practices in child and youth care contexts, the less we desire the reflective, creative and in-the-moment responses of practitioners? And therefore, it becomes quite logical to think of those practitioners as unskilled labourers, capable of being trained to perform a pre-programmed sequence of tasks, but not worth to developing into anything beyond that? Is child and youth care practice in an evidence-driven world the equivalent of assembling Big Macs?

And thus we arrive at my final question. What role does evidence play in my own life? Well, it plays a significant role in my life and I do in fact base many decisions on what I believe to be the evidence pursuant to the specific context. There is evidence that consuming alcohol before driving a vehicle increases the chances of disaster – therefore, I don’t drink and drive. There is evidence that consuming large amounts of junk food, including Big Macs, increases the chance of heart attacks – therefore, I limit the amount of junk food I consume. But evidence also plays an entirely different role in my life. It frames my resistance to compliance. Every day I am confronted with new evidence of what is good for me and what is not. And every day I ignore that evidence precisely because I find it too directive, too imposing and too objectifying of who and what I am. I get to resist the evidence because I am free. Are the young people we encounter as child and youth care practitioners free? Or do we, as practitioners, act as their masters? The evidence, as far as I can tell, says that we do more so now than before we ever started talking about evidence.
A Tribute to Dr. Carol Kelly

Varda Mann-Feder and Sister Madeleine Rybicki

*Photos courtesy of Frank Eckles*

The Child and Youth Care field has lost one of its most passionate advocates and most internationally recognized ambassadors. Carol Kelly died on Friday February 10, 2017 near her home in Simi Valley, California. She was hospitalized briefly and passed away unexpectedly.

Carol was a pioneer in the international CYC Community, and among the first women to take on a leadership role in our field. Carol was among the original founders of NOCCWA, the first national CYC association in the US and the precursor to ACYCP, the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice. She was an accomplished educator who created the Child and Adolescent Development program at the University of California at Northridge. Carol served overseas as a senior consultant for the United Nations International Year of the Family. In recent years, she was an active member of the FICE board, an ardent leader of the Martha Mattingly Scholarship committee, and a contributing member of ACYCP. Her retirement from the university did not in any way diminish her energy or her
contributions. Carol believed in professionalization, certification, accreditation, and international collaboration. She was deeply committed to generativity and the cultivation of emerging leaders. The Child and Adolescent Development Alumni Chapter of California State University recently referred to her as a “transformative figure … who established a legacy through her teaching … and continued to mentor students and alumni as a professor emeritus”.

On a personal level, Carol was small in stature but mighty of spirit. Her greatest gift was her ability to connect with people. Those of us who had the pleasure of interacting with her experienced her talent for communication and her love of conversation. Carol had an encyclopedic knowledge of our field and served as a great resource … she always had so much to share. Carol was a devoted grandmother who frequently expressed her love for her family, her colleagues, her students, her neighbours and for the field of Child and Youth Care.

Carol was the recipient of numerous awards throughout her career, but one of her proudest moments came last August, when she was awarded the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award by ACYCP. In a recent newsletter, the nominator was quoted as saying that Carol “was an extraordinary force in CYC for over 50 years, in which she unselfishly dedicated her life to making the world a better place for children. Her impassioned efforts as a change agent has led to the development of ground breaking policies both nationally and internationally, her legacy extends from Russia to Finland to Africa and the USA”. Carol Kelly achieved much in her lifetime and her efforts will have a profound impact on CYC for years to come.
We the people

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Many years ago when I first started working with young people, I was attracted to the work because it afforded an opportunity for free thought and innovative practice. I started off at the edges of the deinstitutionalization of the asylums. I worked in a newly established mental health center built in the inner city of Seattle. It was surrounded by group homes in old abandoned mansions left behind from an earlier era. Each day a mix of psychiatric survivors of the asylum would make their way from the group homes to the mental health center and back home again.

The particular group I was assigned to work with were young people experiencing psychosis for the first time. In the past, such a break would have been a ticket into the asylum, very possibly for life. Under the new regime of deinstitutionalization, the idea was a brief hospitalization to stabilize the worst of the symptoms and then referral into the community mental health system.

The system itself was pretty ad hoc with a staff made up largely of volunteers. There were Mennonite, Jesuit, Catholic Worker, conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War and community volunteers. I fit into the latter category. I had no experience working with a population like this and no academic training. I had B.A. in comparative literature and some experience with the good and bad effects of psychedelic psychosis. Somehow this seemed to me, and the people who hired me, to be adequate background to inflict myself on these folks in their initial encounter with madness.

As it happened I loved the work and the intensities of the encounters with mad people. It was exhilarating and challenging. My days were filled with relationships beyond anything I had ever experienced. The staff was wildly varied because of the
diverse agendas, ethics and beliefs of the various volunteers and our supervisors were also a bit renegade or they probably would have never agreed to work in such an indeterminate workplace. To be honest, none of us (including the psychiatrists and nurses) knew exactly what we were doing. It was cutting edge. No one had really tried this before (certainly not in the lived experience of anyone involved) and so we were trying to evolve a new set of practices for dealing with madness outside the asylum.

The only established model was psychoanalysis and that didn’t really seem to be particularly useful in providing community based service. We held groups, worked with folks individually, experimented with family work, did flying outreach to group homes and apartments when folks got out of hand and the neighbors or group home staff complained. But we really didn’t have any idea what we were doing. We were making it up as we went along. Family therapy was in its infancy and thought of as a bit dubious, brief therapy was just getting started, Ericksonian hypnotherapy was both radical and relatively unexplored, Rational Emotive Therapy was pretty edgy, Frank Farrelly’s provocative therapy had some traction, Virginia Satir and Sal Minuchin were getting some attention, but were brand new and so on.

It was, for me as a young person just entering the field, a very exciting time precisely because no one knew exactly what we should be doing. As a result, our staff meetings were truly collaborative and non-hierarchical. They were multidisciplinary in the best sense of the word. Because community based practice was certainly nothing psychiatrists had ever trained for, they listened carefully to the line staff when they talked about what was happening on a day to day basis.

The lack of a canon or standards that established pre-existing expertise allowed lived experience between staff and the young people they encountered to become the gold standard by which we measured our work. All practice became possibility and experimentation with new ways of working becoming the order of the day.

The ethics of such a mobile and heterogenous set of practices was premised in our ability to work collaboratively with each other and with the young people we encountered in work. Our imperatives were not drive from without by
professional bodies with an array of competencies and prohibitions on unethical practices. Instead, we had to figure it out in every staff meeting. We had to learn to challenge each other and ourselves as to our intentions and our blind spots. We certainly made mistakes and there were predators who attempted to take advantage of our openness. But, we managed these crises and minimized negative impacts through our own mutually constituted lived ethical modes of praxis.

Regrettably, much of this came to an end with the advent of pharmaceutical interventions that were seen as the magic bullet that would end the necessity for human therapeutic encounters beyond diagnosis and the right prescription. It was a window of opportunity and like many such windows it had a shelf life and then it closed.

I should note, that I am not bringing this up as a nostalgic yearning for the good old days or in any sense of resentment that the medical model made community based models redundant for quite a long time (although community based models are making a come back in practices such as Open Dialogue and the Hearing Voices Network). Instead, I want to suggest that the current political climate for CYC is changing the face of work in ways that might indicate a revaluation of what it is we do and how might we do it a bit differently. In another term, perhaps our window is closing.

For the past twenty years, at least, our field has become increasingly dependent upon funding from governments and NGOs for our programs and institutions. We have come to rely pretty heavily on grants to pay our staff and our administrators and to fund our buildings and other forms of infrastructure. I would suggest that this may all be coming to a crisis in the next decade if not sooner.

Governments in Europe and the U.S. seem to be increasingly interested in controlling young people and incarcerating large numbers of them if necessary. This of course, does not bode well for community based services. I hear from my colleagues in Britain and my students here in the states that funding for programs is being rapidly withdrawn and programs shut down or forced to get by on very meager rations indeed. In Canada, I heard from a colleague recently that there is
new legislation designed to re-open forced hospitalization or incarceration of young people on the street who are experiencing madness in obvious ways. While none of this is good news for our ability to move forward professionally or with any financial certainty, it may open new avenues for innovation and direct collaborations with the communities in which we work.

Thom Garfat gave a talk recently in my beginning CYC class here in Georgia the other day by skype. In it, he related a bit of CYC history I didn’t know. He said that CYC-Net was initiated though the exchange of cassette tapes among several internationally located CYC practioners and scholars. They would record thoughts and reflections and mail them to each other, listen to them and then record their own tape in response and mail it back. Eventually technology allowed this be done by computer and CYC-Net was born.

I was struck by an odd serendipitous connection with another relatively obscure historical series of events. In her fascinating work on breakdancing, Mary Fogarty (2006) notes that after peaking in mid 80s the urban dance form largely disappeared from the public radar until the mid-90’s. But it didn’t disappear as a community based practice. Instead, it was spread amongst dancers internationally off the media radar. As Fogarty notes,

> the development of major transnational networks between b-boys and b-girls during the 1990s was a key factor in the return of 'b-boys/b-girls' (known formerly as breakdancing). Street dancers toured, traveled and competed internationally throughout this decade. They also began to create 'underground' video documentaries and travel video 'magazines.' These video artefacts circulated extensively around the globe through alternative distribution channels (including the backpacks of traveling dancers). (p. iv)

Interestingly enough rap and hip hop, like Garfat’s CYC conversations, initially spread though cassette tapes. These tapes were carried in the trunks of cars driven between cities where they were sold and shared off the media grid.
I am struck by the way that these community based practices subsisted and in fact thrived during periods in which they did not have extensive support from outside their communities. The innovations and experiments in emergent CYC, breakdancing and rap all flourished under duress and came back as an international phenomenon with considerable force. Fogarty in writing about this says that, 

*I argue that underground video artefacts helped to produce 'imagined affinities' between dancers in various nations. Imagined affinities are identifications expressed by a cultural producer who shares an embodied activity with other practitioners through either mediated texts or travels through new places. These 'imagined affinities' helped to sustain b-boy/b-girl culture by generating visual/audio representations of popularity for the dance movement across geographical regions. (p. iv)*

In passing above, I mentioned that community practices initially experimented with during the deinstitutionalization movement and then ignored have come back with some degree of force in recent years. Perhaps it is possible that we, as CYC practitioners also have practices and experimental forms of work that may be eclipsed through shifts in funding and retractions of programs. However, if this happens then we need, more than ever, to recognize that beyond being a profession or employees of an agency or program we are a certain kind of culture. What I would term, a culture of child and youth care work. We have what Fogarty describes as an imagined affinity for each other and the work, that is international. I would argue that we need to sustain this network of practice, underground if necessary, until we emerge into a climate that is more supportive of what we do and the young people we serve.

What we cannot do is subordinate our practices and our ethics to a funding regime that requires radical reconfigurations that are antithetical to what Thom Garfat and Leon Fulcher (2011) have delineated as the characteristics of our field. As Thom pointed out in his talk with my class, our practice will change and evolve, the meanings associated with the characteristics will morph and develop, but the heart of our work,
centered on caring for young people, is inviolate. In this, I guess we could say that we are a kind of people and the “we the people” must not perish, but must persevere as a bastion of care in a world that may temporarily forget that it is caring that allows for our ultimate survival as a people and as a species.

References


Understanding the Fear of Connecting

Jack Phelan

New people to the CYC field often have a rude awakening when they first encounter youth or families who react aggressively or abruptly when they try to get too friendly with them. The type of people who are drawn to the helping professions generally have fairly strong attachment ability, which means they are inclined to trust others and seek relationships for support. Unfortunately, people who have experienced serious abuse and neglect do not share this trust in others, and generally have low attachment ability. This mismatch in attachment dynamics can cause some unpleasant interactions for both parties.

When I have interviewed new staff for CYC positions, one regular question is, “Why do you want to be a CYC practitioner?”, and the answer often includes wanting to help others who have not been loved and cared for. This desire to care for others can often be expressed as wanting to help even just one other person to feel loved and valued. I have advised many of these new hires to be cautious about sharing their loving feelings because they will predictably be met with anger and suspicion.

Another predictable dynamic is that newer staff can begin to feel unappreciated by the seemingly ungrateful youth or family members they encounter. Emotional exhaustion is a result for some overly giving and too openly friendly people and they can become bitter and cynical about the youths in care after six months or so. Poorly supervised staff members can struggle with creating safe boundaries for themselves and will feel taken advantage of because of their good intentions.

People who have experienced significant abuse and neglect have very legitimate beliefs about allowing others to get close to them. There is a logical reason for the low attachment ability and fear of connection prevalent in most youth and families.
in CYC programs. Our challenge is to gradually create beliefs and trust built on a more useful experience of closeness.

When an adult, who is obviously in a paid position, tries to build closeness with a poorly trusting youth, there are some barriers that are intrinsically present which are much more apparent to the youth than to the adult. Many adults, especially when they are new to the CYC field, think that because their intentions are good, that their actions will be trusted. The aggressive, rude response sometimes received from a mistrusting youth (e.g. swearing, insulting remarks, ignoring) startle and embarrass the adult, who feels unappreciated and angry. Untrained staff can begin to believe that these youth are ungrateful and undeserving of one’s good feelings.

The more helpful way to understand these interactions is for the adult (who is indeed getting paid) to appreciate the fact that they have created anxiety in the youth by intruding too quickly and abruptly into the boundary that the youth needs to stay safe. In fact, when they get sworn at or ignored, the real message is that the youth is trying to signal you that you are getting too close and they are uncomfortable with your intrusion. The fact that you don’t see it the same way is irrelevant. The fact that the adult’s intentions are good is not important. Unfortunately, deciding to then ignore or reject the youth because of this response is not helpful. The fear of closeness expressed by the youth is exactly what we need to address in our practice, not ignore or reject, because this is a key dynamic in the healing process.

So what do you do to address this? The goal is to increase this youth’s ability to trust others, to become more connected and to feel cared for. Yet our more obvious, common sense approaches are not useful. We need to create a manageable amount of anxiety about closeness for this person that does not result in the need to be fearful and aggressive. The adult has to build life space experiences of closeness that do not become too unmanageable for the youth. Assuming that there is enough safety in the environment for both the adult and the
youth (neither is too new or too unsafe because of other factors) here are some ideas to consider.

When a youth ignores your attempts to interact verbally, and does not respond to a “Good morning” or a “Hello, how is your day going?” do not stop saying it, but do not wait for a response, acting as if it is quite normal to not respond if it is uncomfortable for you. Look for situations where the youth who does not respond is with another youth who will interact with you and speak to this youth, but mention the other youth too. This will both acknowledge that you are interested in the other youth and sensitive to his/her suspicions about you. For example, if two youths are playing chess, talk to the safer youth about the game and mention that the other youth is a very good player. Then move on without expecting a reaction.

It is not a good idea to react negatively to the fearful responses of the youth. Do not insist that he respond to your question or pleasantry, and do not get defensive or angry if they respond with a rude remark. Acting like you intruded too much and accept that he/she was not comfortable with you is a much better response. Unfortunately, untrained staff will insist that youth have good manners and be “appropriate” and this is not good practice in these situations.

Taking a more proactive stance with attempts to create relational connections with suspicious youth and family members will require CYC practitioners to monitor the amount of anxiety they are creating as they try to get through this relational resistance. Being more responsible for one’s own behavior and less inclined to blame people for their legitimate beliefs is not common sense, but is necessary to be effective.
Why You Should Worry about Clinical Judgment and Interviews

Doug Magnuson

Would it surprise you to learn that counselors’ success at predicting the actual outcomes for their clients is far worse than guessing? Would it surprise you also to learn that the interview, when used by itself, is a lousy way to get accurate information?

One study described by Kowalyk (2014) found that “clinicians using their subjective clinical judgment predicted that only 3 of 550 clients would deteriorate at termination, and only 1 of these predictions was accurate” (p. 29). A second study they described found that therapists reported client deterioration in only 32% of the cases in which there was deterioration. A third study found that 129 clinicians rated their own skill at the 80th percentile compared to colleagues and half of them claimed they had no clients who regressed. These are statistical impossibilities. Clearly, we tend to overestimate our effectiveness and underestimate our weaknesses.

The interview is the research and evaluation equivalent of clinical judgment; it suffers from the same problems, and these were described a long time ago:

Today, the dominant mass of social science research is based on interviews and questionnaires. We lament this overdependence upon a single, fallible method. Interviews and questionnaires intrude as a foreign element into the social setting they would describe, they create as well as measure attitudes, they elicit atypical roles and responses, they are limited to those who are accessible and will cooperate, and the responses
obtained are produced in part by dimensions of individual differences irrelevant to the topic at hand. (Webb, et al, 1966, p. 1)

Just as counselors are over-confident, we evaluators and researchers are over-confident about the validity of our interviews. A lot of our research relies on interviews as the only source of data. When combined with small sample sizes, a problem I described last year in a CYC-Online column, the error rates are compounded.

An additional problem with interviews is that interviewees are often quite wrong about the most important things we want to know. They are rarely lying to us; they tell us what they honestly believe to be true. Yet there is plenty of evidence from research in many fields that people are often wrong about simple facts, even when they experienced or observed something first-hand. This is especially true if some time has elapsed—even just a few days—and if someone else has offered alternative storylines since the event that interfere with someone’s memories. Also, for some things a self-report might be the least valid method: It might be better to ask one’s friends.

However, and this is an important “however:” Webb and his colleagues did not suggest we throw out the interview—only that we stop using it alone as the sole source of data and as the sole method to draw conclusions about social settings, individuals, and groups. Interviews are important because they can elicit information that no other method can; however, the error rate is high, and the data need to be checked. Similarly, every data collection method has weaknesses; we want to triangulate methods so that the combinations of methods we use do not have the same weaknesses. Note that they did not say triangulate so that they have different strengths; instead, we want to avoid duplicating weaknesses.

Similarly, the clinician ought to triangulate methods of understanding one’s clients to avoid relying solely on one’s own point of view. One of the studies described by Kowalyk found that the OQ-45 (an outcomes questionnaire easily found on the web) was far more effective at predicting outcomes than clinicians.
The brief therapy literature includes examples of measures that are used with both practitioners and clients to try to minimize misperception on the part of either. We can use clinical judgment AND other measurement tools. There are many clever ways of triangulating data and improving the validity of our interpretations. These are practical practice skills and practical evaluation skills that should be part of our professional toolkits.

References

@CYCAREWORKERS
Coming back

Laura Steckley

January’s column was my first in several months. It was good to be included in a such a heart-felt issue acknowledging Thom Garfat’s retirement from editing this journal, his significant contribution to the sector more widely and the positive impact he has had on so many of our lives.

Compared to January, I have found writing this month’s column a much greater struggle. Converting my thoughts and ideas into coherent words that anyone else might want to read has been even harder than usual. This morning, after another hour of typing and deleting, I resorted to old fashioned pen and paper in the hopes of pushing through this blockage. Instead, I ended up writing about the blockage itself.

Coming back after an absence, even under amicable circumstances, can be hard. The issues behind the absence may not be resolved and there may be uncertainty about whether it’s possible to meet people’s expectations upon return. Reflecting on this has reminded me how difficult it can be for young people when they return from absconding, a sometimes common occurrence in the places I’ve worked. From a relational practice perspective, I suspect what happened between ourselves and young people upon their return was probably more formative than my colleagues and I realised at the time. Currently, a student at our university is exploring this subject in his master’s dissertation, and I’m keen to hear his findings. Maybe I’ll be able to get him to write about them in an upcoming column. In regards to my return, I must say that the editors of CYC Online have been very supportive about me taking a break and that my struggle is to do with my own ‘stuff’.
Despite my high regard for this journal’s other contributors and for the contribution CYC Online makes to the field, making the decision to recommit to this monthly column hasn’t been easy. Not only do I find writing uncomfortable and difficult, making the time to do a proper job of the column each month was becoming increasingly impossible. In part, I think I just ran out of steam to meet the challenge, and time wasn’t the only issue. I often didn’t have enough of the kind of energy and head space to be able to do this kind of writing. Other work, including work that involved writing, seemed to eat up all of my reserves. Issues of time, energy and head space haven’t been completely resolved, and as long as I am working in an academic environment, I don’t think they ever will be. Similarly, while I am finding strategies for managing my writing-related anxieties better, I think this will be a life-long process.

I’ve noticed that one of the effects of my break from this column has been I’ve been doing less of a certain kind of reflection – one that is the result of writing. In all honesty I haven’t missed the discomfort of the monthly blank page or the consistent scramble to carve out space to get the column done, but I have missed the discipline imposed by the regular requirement to reflect, in writing and in a more personal and narrowly focused way, about some aspect of theory, practice or both. This has been good for my own development of thinking, as well as my development as a writer. (I’d also like to think it has made a contribution to others as well, but I’ll let you be the judge of that.)

There are parallels here with the challenges of taking time to reflect, individually and collectively, about what is going on in direct practice. The work can be experienced as a constant barrage of important practical tasks, many of which require application of knowledge and of the self, both in the moment and after it. These tasks, while important, can crowd out space for reflection. Moreover, we can unwittingly and unnecessarily keep ourselves busy doing tasks to the exclusion of some of the more uncomfortable thinking-work necessary for those tasks to really make a difference.
Reflection is more than just thinking about what has happened. Effective reflection requires us to go beyond what is inside our own heads, usually through some combination of dialogue, journaling, writing for others and reading. Engaging with these other activities deepens our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. With what’s left of this month’s column, I’m going to focus on reading and argue that it is vital for reflective practice and personal development more generally (and yes, I’m aware that if you’re reading this, I’m preaching to the choir here).

Reading can energise, challenge, affirm or sharpen the lenses through which we make sense of what happens in our work (and in our lives, for that matter). It can offer entirely new lenses for understanding as well. Many of my columns have been prompted by a desire to deepen my own understanding of something by reading more about it and then sharing it with this community.

I read something recently that, while having nothing to do with Child and Youth Care, nevertheless speaks to the importance of reading to enable vital reflection. In an interview with Barak Obama during the last days of his presidency, he discussed with Michiko Kakutani the ‘indispensable role’ books played during his time in office. For Obama, reading was an essential part of his daily life and the reading he described wasn’t the quick scan of memos, compiled by aids, distilling key information and arguments (this kind of reading was portrayed an awful lot in West Wing, a television series about a US president). While I would imagine Obama had a daily diet of those too, the reading he described – both what he read and what it did for him – was a reflective kind. This isn’t to say it was all heavy philosophy or Shakespeare. Obama also spoke of novels, history, biographies, popular science and even escapist fiction and how they all contributed to his ability to slow down and maintain a sense of perspective and balance. Whether it was seeing the world through the eyes of another or being reminded that patterns of human interaction have been with us through history, books supported his ability to reflect beyond himself. Obama described his work as ‘a place that comes at you hard and fast and doesn’t let up’, and while I’m hesitant to compare leading a country with working in
Child and Youth Care, I think that particular line is recognisable for many of our own experiences of practice.

Given how pressurized leading a country must be (at least if the responsibility is taken seriously), there was something reassuring about a leader who protected time every night in order to read, and who valued the reflective space it afforded him. I wish I could say I have the same sense of his successor.

A big theme running through the interview was the power of reading to overcome isolation. For Obama, reading biographies or the writings of great leaders enabled him to put into perspective many of the challenges he faced and to locate those challenges with a wider historical context. The sense of solidarity he spoke of feeling with Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela made me think about those writers who fortified my own sense of connection to the Child and Youth Care community – and to humanity.

Beyond the widened perspectives and wisdom gleaned from books, Obama spoke compellingly of the unifying power of shared stories and their ability to ‘bridge differences and divisions’. For our work, this might be the history of our emerging profession or the narratives around what makes Child and Youth Care distinctly Child and Youth Care. It also includes expanding our stories to incorporate more complete explanations about why the world is the way it is and what we might do about it. This interview also made me think about sharing books with children and young people, and how the process of reading together creates space for connection, reflection, empathy-building, new perspectives, imagination and possibilities for them too. A central theme of American literature that Obama said he identified with was ‘…being an outsider, longing to get in, not sure what you’re giving up’. While maybe all of us has felt this way to a greater or lesser extent, it definitely characterises entire childhoods of many of the young people I’ve worked with. Much of what we do is about bridging, whether it is providing ourselves as a bridge to a different way of being in relationship, or providing opportunities for other kinds of bridging experiences that strengthen self-esteem or fortify resilience. Reading, then, is a vital bridge out of our own heads, our own
bubbles, moving us beyond our limits of understanding so that we might be better bridges for kids.

If you’d like to read the interview I’ve been referring to, you can find it here: Obama’s Secret to Surviving the White House Years: Books

Happy reading.
A New Conceptualization of Development in Child and Youth Care

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Keywords
Child and Youth Care education; philosophical critique to developmental theory; postmodernism; dominant developmental discourses vs. Deleuzian becoming

Abstract
Child and Youth Care programmes rely from developmental theorists, such as Bronfenbrenner, Vygotsky, Erikson, and Piaget, to “introduce [practitioners] to concepts and models of how human behaviour is acquired, maintained, and modified” (University of Victoria, 2015). Although these theories can be useful, discussions around the questions “what is childhood and why, and how, did psychology come to be the arbiter of ‘correct’ or ‘normal development’?” (Burman, 2008, p. 2) often arise in this field. This paper aims to think with this question by looking at the limitations of developmental theory. It also aims to explore other developmental perspectives.
Youth Care field. This paper aims to think with this question by looking at the limitations of developmental theory. It also aims to explore other perspectives on development.

According to Siegle, Deloache and Eisenberg (2006), developmental psychology, since its conception, aimed to broaden individuals’ understanding of how children mature, in order to assist parents in raising their offspring in an effective way, pointing society to the adoption of informed policies pertaining to child welfare, and shedding light on complex concerns regarding human nature. Since the emergence of psychology as a field in the mid-1800s, “measurement and classification” (Turmel, 2008, p. 115) has been essential to the study of ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ development. Social technologies, such as record forms, charts, and tests were developed to identify universal, “hetero-normative patterns” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 43; Uprichard, 2008) of growth and development (Lesko, 2001; Turmel, 2008). These tools were then used to classify and categorize individuals according to their cognitive, physical, emotional, moral, and social attributes (Burman, 2008; Lesko, 2001; Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006; Uprichard, 2008).

As pointed out by several scholars (Burman, 2008; Lesko, 2001; Morss, 2002; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2011; Skott-Myhre, 2009), developmental theories that stem from this need to categorize individuals to regulate and promote their growth, have raised concerns because of their decontextualized nature (I further elaborate on this idea when I critique developmental psychology’s universalizing tendencies). One of these scholars’ concerns is how “the Western scientific notion of biological development, with its neat series of stages and normative benchmarks, forces the world of growth and change into a predictable and linear progression of limited alternatives” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 42). Skott-Myhre (2009) explains that this idea of linear development is problematic because it rests on the assumption of lack.

That is, “lack[ing] implies that what drives development forward is an absence of something at each stage that will be at least partially fulfilled at the next” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 46). This notion of lack is also problematic because it refers to theories that constructed childhood as a stage of innocence and ignorance, that is,
lacking the privileges associated with maturity and wisdom (Burman, 2008; James & Prout, 2004; Skott-Myhre, 2009; Uprichard, 2008). This meant that children, individuals “considered to have a higher degree of social malleability” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 45), needed to be “protected from the sins of [the] fallen world” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 45) and be socialized and educated to advance developmentally with the goal of becoming ‘normal’, independent adults (Burman, 2008; James & Prout, 2004; Lesko, 2001; Uprichard, 2008).

This idea of normality also presents concern because it is highly discriminatory. Developmental psychology models suggest that individuals evolve orderly through time (Skott-Myhre, 2009). This shows that the developing body “has a normative trajectory that if violated can retard or pervert the normal progression of the body including the brain and mind” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 43). These violations constitute exceptions to the Western ideal of ‘normal’ development and “can fix a body at a particular stage, such a child or adolescent” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 43). Disabilities, as perceived in the current development model, are cognitive or physical limitations that constrain individuals’ ability to function and flourish into adulthood. It is our responsibility, as practitioners, to support these bodies “in attaining as much ‘normal’ development as possible” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 43).

Individuals who have disabilities are often marginalized because they are “positioned as ‘other-than’” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 46) normal. As Braidotti (2010) explains, “otherness in our culture has historically functioned as the site of pejoration or negativity” (p. 46). This happens because the dominant development discourse affords less status to people that diverge from the universal concept of normality. The ‘other’, in this modernist developmental structure, “functions as negatively framed fraction of the same”. (Braidotti, 2010, p. 47).

The last concern to be addressed in this paper also relates to ‘othering’. The issue refers to the “practical problems of a universalistic conception of childhood” (James & Prout, 2004, p. xi). As Burman (2008) explains so clearly:
The trajectory of development is seen as basically uniform, with ‘cross-cultural perspectives’ appearing as optional extras within ‘applications’ sections, in which it is largely childrearing and education strategies or differences in moral codes that are presented for consideration. That is, cultural issues are treated as informing the ‘content’ of development rather than entering into its structure in a more fundamental way (p. 91).

Moreover, by universalizing and “collectivizing children into ‘childhood’” (James & Prout, 2004, p. xiii) differences of class, ability, race, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief system between children are underestimated (Burman, 2008; Castaneda, 2002; James & Prout, 2004). As Frones (1993) explains, “there is not one childhood, but many, formed at the intersection of different cultural, social and economic systems, natural and man-made physical environments. Different positions in society produce different experiences” (p. 1). In sum, universalism fails in its attempt to “hold good across all societies and at all historical times” (James & Prout, 2004, p. 18) because it conveys generalities that hold little to no meaning about “the relationship[s] between individual[s] and [their] social worlds” (James & Prout, 2004).

Raising concerns without offering other ways of thinking is fruitless. So, in the rest of this paper, I briefly look at some of the possibilities offered by the Deleuzian concept of becoming. This lens goes beyond what I previously referred to as development being a way to flourish and ‘become’ adult (James & Prout, 2004; Lesko, 2001; Morss, 2002). As Stagoll (2010) explains, Deleuze’s becoming is an “antidote to what considers to be the Western tradition’s predominant and unjustifiable focus upon being and identity” (p. 25). It is critical to this analysis because it represents movement, “dynamism of change, situated between heterogeneous terms and tending towards no particular goal or end-state” (Stagoll, 2010, p. 26). In sum, “becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 239)
I resort to Nietzsche, Deleuze, and Skott-Myhre to propose a productive understanding of time and temporality that surpasses linearity. Hoy (2009) explains that Nietzsche’s idea of time does not refer to being stuck, “in denial or reactive” (p. 87) to the past. In turn, he follows Heidegger and proposes “tak[ing] a negative phenomenon and turn[ing] it into something positive” (Hoy, 2009, p. 87), constructive, creative. This, as interpreted by Deleuze, refers to a “cyclical time. … time of seasons which repeat in an infinite cycle; an endless resurgence of the same elements but always in an unending combination of difference” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 48). This eternal return entails that stories and events can always be re-envisioned and reinterpreted (Hoy, 2009). This means that, “return holds the creative force of infinite difference in each return” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 48). Some may reject this concept of time as cyclical, because of fear “of profound boredom … with time itself, and particularly the past” (Hoy, 2009, p. 87).

However, the exposure to what is (be)coming entails “a sea of unforeseeable possibilities” (Caputo, 2013, p. 93) – possibilities that often are not “accepting [and in accordance with] the terms of the dominant framework” (Lee, 2002, p. 137). In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) words, “becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliances” (p. 238). This means that alliances and/or encounters with others are essential to the transformative and transient aspect of becoming. Braidotti (2009) explains that this “difference expressed by subjects, who are especially positioned as ‘other-than,’- that is to say always already different from – has a potential for transformative or creative becoming” (p. 46). As Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) clarifies, “and’ is the predominant word here – more than ‘or’, ‘either’ and ‘rather’” (p. 201).

This way of looking and understanding the world is more than accepting of differences. It invites variations, discrepancies, other ways of knowing and being. Instead of repealing difference, this position “disengages the emergence of the subject from the logic of negation and attaches subjectivity to affirmative otherness – reciprocity as creation, not as re-cognition of sameness” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 46). As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose, “becoming is involu-tionary, involution is
creative. To regress is to move in the direction of something less differentiated” (pp. 238-239).

With that in mind, development must be understood as a process that “provide[s] for dissidence and different voices, to minimize the chance that someone … [be] silenced or marginalized … , not out of mere tolerance, but on the grounds that [people] might learn [and become] something new” (Caputo, 2013, pp. 98-99). This process must also be accepting of ever occurring changes – changes or becomings that do not “ha[ve] a fixed finishing point, such as journey’s end or standard, complete adulthood, to refer to” (Lee, 2002, p. 137) nor necessarily comply with mainstream discourses of age, time, development, and growth.

Practically speaking, developmental psychology is a practical ‘tool’ that provides comfort, and facilitates accountability, when practitioners are assessing risks, needs, and strengths in order to support the children, youth, and families with whom they are working. However, “the applications of assessing development as a way to intervene make us miss the richness of [life]” (M. Hoskins, personal communication, March 9, 2015). This happens because the ‘boxing’ of people into categories hinders individuals’ abilities to live up to their flexible and singular potentials.

As demonstrated in this paper, some (Burman, 2008; Lesko, 2001; Morss, 2002; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2011; Skott-Myhre, 2009) have critiqued the importance of developmental psychology for the field of Child and Youth Care. I expanded on their views and offered other possible ways to look at children, youth, and families that do not resort to universalism, binaries, and linearity. Rather, my ideas imply that as Child and Youth Care practitioners our role requires us to do more than just recognizing differences and intervening to assist clients to develop as normally as they can. Working in this field involves accepting and appreciating new ways of being, becoming, and knowing and “creat[ing] space for emancipation, agency, voice, and empowerment of those who, [by being classified and referred to as
other-than by developmental psychology theories], have been marginalized, oppressed, and excluded” (Andreotti, 2014, p. 383).

References


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I AM a Child and Youth Care Practitioner

Heather Sago

can’t tell you how often in the last month I’ve come across individuals who are angry and upset, while telling me that their identity is first and foremost that of a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (CYC-P). They go on to tell me how it pains them to have to put that identity aside, often in its entirety, to call themselves a psychotherapist, a social worker, a psychologist, or any other regulated term and that, when they do, they are typically perceived as more credible. I also regularly come across individuals who undermine their own expertise in child and youth care because they themselves have had no formal academic education in Child & Youth Care. Then there are those who have no training in complex needs of children, youth, and families but take on this identity and practice anyway, increasing the opportunities for detrimental outcomes. While these situations are not new, the last year in Canada has brought a sense of urgency to address them. From official report findings, such as the Residential Review Panel (2016), to negative media coverage that spans the country, an array of incidents has been uncovered wherein young persons, their families and/or their workers have been injured or died.

Somehow, someway, CYC-P’s need to develop a stronger secure base (Bowlby, 1990) where competency is of utmost importance. We need to advocate for who we are, what we do, and why we have value -- not just to others but to ourselves! All of this got me thinking about Rosenthal & Jacobson’s (1968) conceptualization of what they term the Pygmalion effect – if someone thinks you have the potential to be something, then they are likely to treat you in a way which encourages that development, and concurrently you are likely to believe in your own abilities. In essence, this is a self-fulfilling prophecy in a positive form. So, I wonder, how we can work to create such an effect for our field and for ourselves while hypothesizing that perhaps it is through this positive messaging.
I started looking at social media for examples and unfortunately came up with few that were CYC specific in example. However, I did keep coming across Joe’s Rant (Molson Canadian, 2000) or parodies of it that inspired me to make up my own version for self-inspiration. While this isn’t going to quite cut it as a musical wonder, I thought I’d share it with you to challenge CYCPs everywhere to help find their own way of spreading the joy of practice!

Hello
I’m not a babysitter or a gatekeeper
and I don’t pathologize or label
or see myself as a social change agent
And no I’ve never given up because I’m certain, really, really certain young person’s deserve hope

I assess based on developmental, not chronological, age
I do with, not to, or for
And I work within lifespace, not officespace.

I can proudly practice relational care
I believe in structure not stricture
Empathy not sympathy
And that bids to connect come in all forms!
A smile means approach
The frown says come get me
And it’s about strengths; not deficits, strengths!!

Children, youth and families are complex identities
Where unmet needs exist beyond their behaviours
And the best part of this work is providing opportunities for something different

My name is INSERT
And I am a Child and Youth Care Practitioner.
Resources

Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations, Scope of Practice. Available here: http://www.cyccanada.ca


Molson Canadian (March 2000) Joe’s Rant: I. AM. CANADIAN! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMxGVf09IU


References


Mariana is an SOS Children's Village mother in Guatemala, who has been there right from the start. She is a prime example of one of a first generation SOS mother. She is a mother with "mucho amor" for the children, a mother with all her being. At least that is what Mariana is now, but as she says, she used to be irascible and impatient. Living with the children has changed her. When Mariana started working for SOS Children's Villages, she had completed three years of primary schooling. During her career as an SOS

Mariana García Pérez

Born 18.1.1949, Guatemala

I had the idea because I loved being with children and had already worked with them. I found out that these children were motherless and thought they needed the help of a mother.
Children's Village mother, she has quietly caught up on her education. Even during our long conversations, this subject hardly ever comes up. Mariana enthuses about her training to be an SOS mother and about the constant in-service training she still receives.

For many women, who take on the profession of an SOS mother, it is a positive step forward. In the developing countries, this starts with the fact that the women get access to education, as well as the chance to be a working woman and, in some countries, to be able to live on their own. For the women who come from the poorest backgrounds, being an SOS mother means they have taken a step up socially, have material security, even into old age, and receive training and prestige as a working woman. These women have taken the opportunities presented to them and are able to pass this on to the children in their care.

The Story of Her Life

"Even if we did not have very much, at least we had something."

My father's name was Pio García and my mother was called Amalia Perez. We were four children, two boys and two girls. Now there are only two of us still alive,
one brother and myself. I was born in Dos Quebradas and was the third of my parents' children. My father died when I was twelve years old. By then there were only three children living at home, because my eldest brother had already married. We worked together with my mother in the fields. My older sister stayed at home and did the housework, because she did not like working in the fields. Then she got married. My job was to look after my married brother's animals and to help with the coffee bean harvest.

When I was seventeen, one of the sisters said that I could work in the school. I did the washing there, cleaned and made sure that the children's clothes were clean. I liked working for the children. When the children were older, between twelve and fifteen years old, the mother superior sent me out with them to work in the fields as well. Time passed. I worked there for eleven years and in the meantime my mother died.

There was no school and no teacher in the place where I grew up. However, my sister read an advert in the paper, which said that it was possible to learn by doing a correspondence course. I was already able to write a few letters and so I filled out the piece of paper and asked for the correspondence course from the capital. One day I received all the papers. They sent me all the books. So I worked all day and learned at night, but I only got as far as the third year.

I enjoyed working with the children for eleven years. Then I had problems and went to the town of Chiquimula to work. I was there when the first houses were built here in the SOS Children's Village. One day, Auntie Luisa (Note: Luise Sinnhuber was then the project director for SOS Children's Villages in Guatemala) came to visit Father Gabriel and he recommended me to her. Then she came to Chiquimula and spoke to me. That's how I came to SOS Children's Villages. Father Gabriel convinced me to take the job, even though I was a bit afraid. At first I didn't want to take the job, but he came twice and told me that I would be able to go on a course and that I should at least give it a try. So I filled out the forms. A fortnight later, I got the letter saying that I had been accepted and could attend the course in Quetzaltenango.
Could you describe your parents in more detail for us?

My father was a farmer. He worked the land. He grew maize, black beans, animal feed and sugar cane. He made unrefined sugar from the sugar cane. He did that every year by hand. In order to get the juice out of the sugar cane you had to use three sticks; one big one and two smaller ones. One man stood at each side, the sugar cane was in the middle and two oxen walked in circles to get the juice out. The sugar juice was then cooked in a big tub. You needed a lot of wood so that it cooked hard enough to turn into syrup. Finally, the syrup was poured into pipes where it cooled and hardened. My father was a small man. He was thin but was a good worker and enjoyed working. He had four brothers and four sisters.

My mother was from Muyurcó. She was also one of nine children, five boys and four girls. She also liked working. She used to get up with my sister at three in the
morning to grind corn on a stone. That was hard work. She worked the land and weeded the maize field. I used to work together with my mother a lot. We gathered in the beans and picked the coffee beans. Even if we did not have very much, at least we had something.

_Can you remember your grandparents?_

I can only vaguely remember my grandparents from my father's side. On my mother’s side I only knew my grandmother. She was a tall, thin woman and she spoke Chortí, the indigenous language. My parents couldn’t speak it any more because my grandfather couldn't speak Chortí. My grandparents were the same as my father – they were farmers.
Are you still in touch with members of your family?

One of my uncles from my father's side is still alive. He sometimes comes to visit me when I am at my little house. My brother also visits me regularly on my days off. My younger brother is dead. He was dragged off and killed by the guerrillas. My big sister is also dead already. We were neighbours in Camotán and her children, three girls and three boys, still live there. I sometimes visit them.

Do you know a woman who is a role model for you?

I admire one of my nieces: she was ten years old when my brother, her father, disappeared from the face of the earth. We didn't know what had happened to him. He just disappeared. Two years later, the mother also deserted the children. My niece was the eldest and she took on the role of the mother. They lived with my other brother, and she brought up her brothers and sisters. She only got married when the other children didn't need her anymore. She is the woman I admire most.

Do you have a good friend that you can talk to?

Yes, I have one friend here at work and another one outside. That's my niece, but she is like a friend to me. I talk about everything that happens outside of the SOS Children's Village with her. I think that everybody needs somebody that they can talk to.

What are your particular strengths?

A sense of responsibility. I am responsible for everything I do here. And I try to keep everything nice and clean. Order and responsibility are very important to me.
**What do you like to do in your free time?**

When I have some free time, but there's not much of it, I take the children to the playground. On my days off, I go shopping to Jocotán, or I go to the doctor in Chiquimula if I need to. I like to read the bible and to clean my little house. When I go to Dos Quebradas, I help my niece with the housework, or we take the children for a walk across the fields.

**Motivation for Her Choice of Profession**

"*I have always liked children and they also grow fond of me very quickly.*"

I had the idea, because I loved being with children and had already worked with them. I found out that these children were motherless and thought they needed the help of a mother. I first heard about SOS Children's Villages from a friend, who was working in a small hospital whilst I was still working at the school. She told me about it and we went to the SOS Children's Village together. She is still an SOS mother in Quetzaltenango.

It all started with the course in Quetzaltenango. There I was trained in how to work with children. First there was a three-month course and then I spent ten months working as an SOS aunt. When I had finished the ten months, the first family house here had been completed. Auntie Luisa told me I could come to Jocotán as an SOS mother. So, I started on the 15th of April 1983 with seven children. I was thirty-three years old then. Another child joined us in the first month, so then there were eight. That was the first group of children here in the SOS Children's Village.

**Was there a point when you decided, "That's what I want to do"?**

Yes, there was a point. The priest, who had recommended me, told me that I would be responsible for a house here and would have to run it. I didn't know
anything about the job. It was only with time that I found out what it was all about. I was a bit scared, because I didn't know whether I'd be able to manage it, but during the course they explained the work to us and showed us a lot. Then I knew that, with time, I would be able to do it. I have always loved children and they also grow fond of me very quickly. Then I decided to become an SOS Children's Village mother, because these children would have strong ties with me.

How did your family react when they found out that you wanted to be an SOS Children's Village mother?

As my parents were both dead by then, there was only one of my brothers and my sister. Before I started, I told my sister that I would be going away and would be starting with SOS Children's Villages. I told her about the work and who I would be living with. She approved.
Did you ever think about starting a family of your own?

I never thought about that. I always wanted to help. My brother who died, the one who was dragged off by the guerrillas, he drank a lot. I was always worried about what would happen to his children if he were no longer there. It would have been terrible if there had been nobody there for them anymore. I never thought about having a family of my own, because I wanted to be able to help my nephews and nieces. When he was taken away, I was already in Quetzaltenango. I supported his wife financially but she simply went away two years later. After she disappeared, my nephews and nieces moved in with my other brother. I helped them, particularly financially, until they could look after themselves.
Experiences as an SOS Mother

"You have to work with a lot of tolerance here, because what the children need is love."

When I came here, the youngest child was one year old. I have come to love them so much, that has made me happy here and I can work with joy and enthusiasm. After I had been here for two years, I was given a three-day-old baby, José-Manuel. That was the greatest joy. That is what gives me inner satisfaction. So, I have been happy here up to now and still enjoy my work very much.

How would you describe your task as an SOS mother?

There are no words to describe it. It doesn't seem like work to me. That's how I feel about it - it isn't work at all. The most important thing is to have the will to fulfil the tasks, and I do that with love and dedication. I give a lot of myself and pray to God to give me patience.

Have you, as a person, changed since being in the SOS Children's Village?

Yes, I would say that I've changed, especially my personality. I didn't have much patience in my previous jobs but when I came to the SOS Children's Village, I realised that children need a lot of patience. I feel that I have gained more patience every day since I've been here. I am also more committed and give more of myself than I used to. One reason for that is that I now live together with a group of people. Before I came to the SOS Children's Village I was a bit grumpy, irascible and bad tempered. With God's help and thanks to Him, I have in that direction since being in the SOS Children's Villages. You have to work with a lot of tolerance here, because what the children need is love. You have to be careful that your temper doesn't run away with you. I think it was the children who most helped me to become patient.
You have already mentioned your training in Quetzaltenango. I would like to know how you experienced it.

I was a little worried that I wouldn't be able to remember anything they showed us. We had to take an exam at the end and I wanted to pass, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to work in the SOS Children's Village and I wanted to work there. I enjoyed all of the training, but cookery was my favourite. They also showed us how to mother a child. I had never had a child, but they showed us how to deal with a small child and how to love it. Then we sat the exam and the next day they told me that I had got everything right. I was also worried, because I'd only had three years of primary schooling and we also had lessons in maths, language and writing. But they helped us. We also had exams in public relations, cookery and first aid. I passed everything. That made me want to do the job even more. I knew that I would be able to put into practice all that I had learned in theory, because I had
already worked as an SOS aunt. That really motivated me and gave me strength. When Auntie Luisa brought me here I already felt a bit surer.

**Have you taken part in any in-service training since?**

Yes, the last in-service training was in Quetzaltenango at the end of July. We have one week's course every year. They used to be more spiritual days, days for reflection and self-examination. But, since the purpose-built centre has been completed, we have had a course every year. We refresh our knowledge about children, how to deal with them and how to live together with them. I enjoy these courses, because they help me. I always return with greater inner strength.

**Could you tell us how your working relationship with the other SOS mothers has developed?**

I get on well with the other SOS mothers. We have to work well together, because the children see how we interact with one another. If I need something, I go to one of my neighbours and they give me it. For example, if I have a lot to do, I go to one of the SOS mothers and ask her if she could help me. She comes and helps. We all get together once a month and, for example, celebrate the birthdays. We also have a "savings package". Each of us puts a small amount in a piggy bank and every month the contents are paid out to one of the SOS mothers. Whoever is going to receive the next monthly payout invites all the others for coffee. We also have work meetings with the village director when he wants to make an announcement or something. There is no fixed date for these. A memo is sent out telling us when the next meeting will take place. He’s an incredible person, a good man. He often comes to our houses to visit us and we work together very well. If a small problem arises with one of the children, he immediately comes to help.
Are you able to relax on your days off?

Yes I can, but when you've been working here for as long as I have, you feel best when you are here rather than anywhere else. I always get slightly ill when I go outside. I'm happiest when I have my days off and the children are not at school. Then I can take at least two of them with me, if the village director gives me permission. During term time, I can only take the little ones, because the bigger ones have schoolwork to do. But now, in the holidays, I take three of them with me at a time until the holidays are over. The children enjoy that too.

What sort of contact do you have with your surroundings, or the village that you come from?

I have a lot of contact. On my days off I visit people who live close by, my family and friends. I like to talk about other things such as farming, for example. I can never be quiet. I always have to be talking to people. I also like to take the children to church festivities. I take the children to Camotán, where I come from, on the 8th of December, which is the day of the Immaculate Conception. And here in Jocotán, the 25th of July is the day of the local patron saint, Santiago. We always take part in those festivities too.

What have been the nicest and most difficult experiences you have had in your time in the SOS Children’s Village?

It's nice to see how the children grow. The best thing was when the first girl graduated from school. It was also wonderful when I was given the little one. At the time I wasn't feeling too good. My legs were hurting and I was a bit depressed. Then they gave me the little one and, I don't know what happened, but all of a sudden the pains were gone and everything was all right. I was extremely happy to get him.

It was very difficult for me when my sister died five years ago. That really affected me. The death of the SOS mother from house number two also affected
me badly. About a year ago, she was on holiday when she became ill and she never returned. This SOS mother had been here for seventeen years when she died. She was such a good woman.

**Have you been here long enough to have met Hermann Gmeiner? What impression did he make on you?**

As far as I'm concerned, he is a saint. I tell the children about everything he did and that he's in heaven now, taking care of us. We have taken in so many children who were extremely malnourished. If it hadn't have been for him, they would have died. I feel that he isn't dead and is still amongst us. That's what I think about Hermann Gmeiner. We always pray for him at mealtimes.
When you think about your future, how do you see yourself in ten years' time?

As a little old lady! I think in ten years I will look a lot older. Up to now people don't believe how old I am. I hope that I can be with the children right until the end. If God should let me live, but I no longer have the strength to work with the children, then I would like to work in the fields again. I would like to have two cows. That's what I would like but only God knows what He has in store for me.

Do you know yet when you will retire?

Definitely not now! There is, of course, the arrangement that an SOS mother can retire after fifteen years if she is in bad health. But Auntie Luisa told me that it's possible to do twenty-five years and I'd like to do that. I hope that God will give me the strength to do it.

The Children in Her Care

"There used to be a playground too, over by the mango tree, where the flowers are."

The five that were on the photo I showed you were my first children. They arrived on the 15th of April. Two more joined us two days later, and in July another arrived. Then I had eight children. The change in climate from Quetzaltenango, where it was cool, to here, where it is hot, made it difficult for me in the beginning. We were also the only family in the SOS Children's Village at that time. Nobody moved into the next house until June. The village director, Father Gabriel, also only arrived at the end of June. The SOS aunt and myself were all on our own for three months. But the children soon felt at home. You could sense that they needed love and that they hadn't had any before. I spent a lot of time with them. We played and talked and I took them for walks along the river. Then school started and only the
youngest stayed at home. The days just passed. I helped them with their homework, which was difficult for me because two of them had problems with maths and I had to help them every afternoon. But they all survived the school year and advanced to the next class. By the end of the year there were families in three houses and there were other children to play with. There used to be a playground too, over by the mango tree, where the flowers are. Then the second year at school started and the children were doing better. That’s how we started.

Then a kindergarten teacher and primary school teacher came to the village and from then on the children went to kindergarten and primary school here. I had a lot of fun with the littlest one, as he was always so happy. When I was cooking, he used to walk through the whole house, pick up a basket and say, "Buy some bread, buy some bread!" Time passed and he grew up and became more and more astute. Because he was so young when he came here, he always looked at the village.
director as his father. The director often came to visit the children and have coffee with them. The little boy would give him a hug and say, "Here comes dad!" Three years later I was given another little one. They all grew up and by the time they were in the fifth year at primary school, they were already helping in the kitchen and with the cleaning. By the time the girls had finished primary school they could already cook. The eldest one could even bake bread. The three girls then went to the secondary school in Chiquimula and boarded there. They always came home at weekends and in the holidays, though. The eldest boy then moved to the youth home. Three of the children didn’t want to continue their education, just finish primary school. One of them went to America when he was sixteen. I don’t know if he’s still there, because he doesn’t write any more. We stayed in touch for a while. He wrote and even sent me a bit of money but that’s two years ago now. I don’t know how he got into the States, but I’m sure it wasn’t legally. The first time he tried, he got arrested, but the second time, he managed to get in. He wrote me all that in a letter. He asked me to send his birth certificate, which he needed for work.

What are the other children from the first generation doing now?

Of the first ten that I had, six have learned a trade, two just completed primary school, one is in the States and one is a policeman. The first group was made up of ten children. The eleventh one that I had is still here as part of the second round. He’s in the third year of secondary school and working for McDonald’s now. He did a practical there last year and they kept him on straight away. That was a bit of luck, because it’s very difficult to find work.

How many children are living with you now?

I’ve got ten children here again now, including the one from the first round. The children all have their moments. They argue with one another, but after a while it’s all forgotten and they’re playing with each other again. I have four boys and six girls. The eldest girl was so undernourished that you could count her ribs.
boys will be moving to the youth home at the beginning of next year. Two have completed the middle school and will be starting apprenticeships, the third has just finished primary school, but because he's already sixteen, he'll be moving to the youth home as well. He was already quite old when he came here and that's why he's so behind with his schooling. But he wants to continue. He was the best pupil in the school. He has the ability to learn. The other children are still at primary school and one is at middle school.

What do you know about where the children come from?

I don't know much. Three of them are from a town here in Camotán. Their mother died and their father abandoned them. The parents of two of them both died. I don't know what of. Perhaps it was an illness. A lot of people in these small
villages are sick. We got the children from very poor huts. There was a cholera epidemic. The parents probably died during that. The grandparents couldn’t cope with the children and applied for them to be taken into the SOS Children's Village. Two other sisters, whose parents had also died, were living with an aunt who was very poor too. The eldest, his mother died giving birth to him and his father has an alcohol problem. He never comes to visit and the boy doesn’t even know his father.

Are the children still in touch with any members of their families, aunts or grandparents?

There is an agreement in the SOS Children's Village that relatives are allowed to visit the children every three months. Some visit, others don't. I have one boy
here whose father visits him regularly. The aunt of two of the girls often visited, but she fell ill and we don’t know what's happened to her. But the children are happy here and they feel that they were born here.

**Do the children ask about their parents?**

If the children were older when they arrived here, they would talk about their previous life. The eldest, who is sixteen, never asks about his parents. He knows that his father is alive, but never asks after him. I told him he should visit his father before he moves to the youth house, but he said, "No, this is my home and this is the place I'll come back to."
Do you know the children’s hopes for their futures?

The older ones already know what they want. They want to finish their education and then work. One of them wants to go to the military academy. One wants to become an accountant and says he wants to work and build himself a little house. The youngest says he wants to finish his schooling and his training and then move in together with a woman and live with her. The girls want to become kindergarten teachers or teachers, but they’re still very young and don’t really know exactly what they want to do.

What do you hope, for the girls and the boys?

I hope that they all complete their training. I just hope for the best for all of them, and that they all become valuable members of society. They should become
good people who can stand up for themselves and keep evil at bay. That's all I want for them.

**What special thing do you think you can give the children to help them on their way?**

I think that it's important for me to be able to give them responsibility for themselves. I want them to be able to take the best with them into life. I'm happy, because up to now they have all found work and are making their way in life. It was difficult for them to find work after they'd finished school, but it worked in the end. Even though they weren't living here anymore, I was still worried about them.

**Are you still in touch with the children who have left home?**

Yes, they visit me every year. I'm overjoyed when they all come at Christmas, for example. The one who is a policeman always says, "I wish I were a little boy again and then I could stay here forever." He comes here quite a lot, because with his job he has more free time. The little ones still see him as a brother. He likes to play with them and they enjoy that.

**Once the youths are living in the youth home, do they still come back here?**

None of mine are in the youth home at the moment, but they used to come every Sunday and if ever there was a celebration, or on Mothers' Day. It's just like going home for them. The ties are never lost. They are always there.

**To my Colleagues Around the World**

You always have to pass on your entire inner strength to the children. You have to love them as if they were your own children, and must try to be patient. I believe that you can achieve much with patience. That is what we need. You have to accept the children as they are. That is all I can say. I don't have any more words to express it.

Greetings to all and, "onwards, onwards!"
Mariana on the Situation of Women in Guatemala

In the past, women were valued less than men. Women were only there to do the housework. Today it is possible for women to improve themselves. They go to school, are able to spend more time with people from the community and are able to attend functions. I believe that a woman can do the same work as a man. This is already happening in the bigger towns, but not yet in rural areas. It is still as the man says, "A woman's place is in the home and the man is the breadwinner." Maybe in time things will change for the better.

What a woman wants most of all out of life is to be married, to have a home and a family of her own. And I believe that she can combine that. She can have an education and still marry.

There are women's groups and, when I take part in one of the courses, we see that we all stick together. Sometimes people come and present projects to us. Afterwards the women carry on these projects themselves. They receive financial loans so that they can buy pigs and chickens. Then at least they have something.

SOS Children's Village Work in Guatemala

The first SOS Children's Village was built in San Juan Sacatepéquez about 30 kilometres from Guatemala City in 1976 after an earthquake had totally destroyed this Indio town. In the following years SOS Children's Villages were constructed in Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu and Jocotán, and finally SOS Children's Village San Cristóbal was built in the capital to replace SOS Children's Village San Juan Sacatepéquez, which in the meantime had been converted into a social centre. The sixth SOS Children's Village went into operation in the autumn of 2001 in San Jerónimo. Most of the SOS Children's Villages also have SOS Social Centres attached.

Existing SOS Children's Village Programmes

5 SOS Children's Villages, 4 SOS Youth Programmes, 1 SOS Vocational Training Centre, 3 SOS Social Centres
Kia Ora and Warm Greetings from back home in New Zealand where I’ve been reflecting on the Maori word “Whanaungatanga” is lingering (what we know and feel about family), like a cloak of ferns around me. We spent the morning at a tangi or funeral for a young father in his early 20s who fell asleep on his 45-minute early morning run into our local town – crashing into a bridge abutment died instantly. This morning at Hinekura Marae, family, extended family, adopted family, work colleagues and friends of family and a community of North Island family – gathered to mourn his passing and celebrate Pou’s life and family.

Pou was a whangai or adopted son; a very capable and well-loved family member and friend to many. I kept finding myself reflecting back on the week with our family members, celebrating anniversaries and birthdays.
The rainy day at Pananui Beach fit today’s mood.

The Maori word ‘tangi’ means tears and there were many tears amongst the 300+ people – mostly Maori – who attended this tangi. The waiata and haka took your breath away.

And as the day progressed, the sun came out, and family here at Hinekura Marae celebrate being together, with family members, some of whom live far away. A Family Re-union.

We joined the visitors being welcomed to Hinekura Marae although we are acknowledged as tangata whenua or part of the Hinekura Whanau or family. I kept reflecting on our family gathering together for a time of re-union, enjoying hanging out together more exclusively. It got me thinking of family re-unions and the reasons family members gather together.

Funerals are a big and usually sad reason that bring families together. Whilst camping at Lake Waikaremoana in January, we suddenly found 9 utes, pick-up trucks and vans arrive and park in the flat space in front of our tent. In the next hour we watched this whanau work cooperatively together to set up camp for a long weekend. Each year, all members save weekly for 40 weeks to fund this time
together as whanau, checking out different parts of their country! We chuckled about the small “Chill-Out Tent” erected near the main family events tent! It isn’t the ‘Naughty Tent’ but a ‘Chill-Out Tent’ with books, puzzles and games!

Our own Family Re-union was in celebration of anniversaries and birthdays. There was also a special reason that involved the two older grandchildren meeting their newest cousin for the very first time, as well as spending time with their New Zealand cousins. I think that all anyone says about the importance of cousins in family life is so true! Yay for Cousins!

With Henry Maier’s admonition ringing in my ears about how the space we create controls us, we grandparents took the risk of making moments more meaningful for both parents and children alike by altering the seating arrangements around the large rectangular table. By adding two chairs, we created child-adult-child seating, taking apart an old 2016 Calendar with a cat theme to create personalised place mats for 4 kids aged 4-7. Whew! Then, we all practiced involving the kids in conversations, following their leads wherever possible. It was great fun, and a whole lot more peaceful than sitting at separate tables!
I have yet to lose a child, thank God. It must be horrific with the pain unbearable at times.

Only Granddaughter meets Youngest Grandson

Mokopuna Jack and His Dad

/:)

Signed

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76
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