CYC-Online

e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network

A Journal for Those who Live or Work with Children and Young People

Issue 317 | July 2025

CYC-Net PRESS

ISSN 1605-7406

Contents

In association with

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

MSc CHILD and YOUTH CARE STUDIES by DISTANCE LEARNING

Developed and launched in 2014, this programme has a fresh, engaging curriculum that covers globalised childhoods, international policy contexts, bringing up children and research methods. The programme is aimed at students with an interest in developing positive strategies for affirming and developing the professional identity of child and youth care practice.

The programme is accredited by the Child and Youth Care Educational Accreditation Board of Canada (CYCEAB) and we are now recruiting for our September intake.

CACEJ CYCEA
CONSEIL D'AGRÉMENT DES CONSEILLERS AUPRÈS DE L'ENFANCE ET DE LA JEUNESSE DU CANADA
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE EDUCATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD OF CANADA

Fees for the programme are: £4235 (for years 1 and 2)

To find out more or to apply to join the course:
www.strath.ac.uk/courses/postgraduatetaught/childandyouthcarestudies/

Or contact
Graham McPheat (Course Lead)
graham.mcpheat@strath.ac.uk

CELCIS Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection

School of Community Studies

Child and Youth Care Diploma

Program length: 16 months | Program start: September
Course delivery: In person classes and off-site practicum

Make a positive impact in the lives of children, youth, and families.
Prepare for a career supporting children and their families who have experienced adversity such as childhood trauma, oppression, systemic discrimination, mental health, or substance use.

bowvalleycollege.ca

Bow Valley College

Apply now for Fall 2025

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Go here for information on how you can help us

Mount Saint Vincent University

AMAL YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRE

ALLAMBI CARE

Otonabee Family Counselling Centre

Toronto Metropolitan University

The PersonBrain Model™

Lakeland College

kibble

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

RRC POLYTECH

Bow Valley College

Ontario Association of CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

Association Ontarienne des Techniques D'ÉDUCATION SPÉCIALISÉE

GIRLS & BOYS TOWN

MEDICINE HAT COLLEGE

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

Sheridan

Brayden SUPERVISION SERVICES INC.

Hull SERVICES

acycp ASSOCIATION FOR CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE

Shift

Seneca POLYTECHNIC

Tanager

HOLLAND COLLEGE

MacEwan UNIVERSITY

HomeBridge

HUMBER

BARTIMAEUS

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

University of Victoria

nscc

DOUGLAS COLLEGE

BOYS RANCH FOUNDED BY CAL FARLEY

waypoints guiding young people and their families

CYC-Online
July 2025
ISSN 1605-7406

Strengthening Families and Alternative Care Mechanisms through Capacity Building of Functionaries

Kiran Modi

Ensuring high standards of care for children and youth in alternative care settings remains a crucial challenge in India. More complex is managing an evidence-based, collaborative approach for preventing children from separation from the families as well as reintegrating back into families, those who were institutionalized. While most child protection functionaries are trained and equipped to manage care within institutions, there remains a significant gap in their understanding of how to transition children back to their own families or into placing them into alternative family-based care options. In the given context, this often results in prolonged institutionalization despite available mechanisms such as foster care, kinship care, and adoption. The absence of

structured training on deinstitutionalization and reintegration leaves the functionaries underprepared for implementing successful reintegration and prevention strategies. The lack of nuanced understanding as well as adequate training on the part of the functionaries leaves many a children and youth confined to life within institutional walls. Bridging this knowledge gap is essential for creating pathways for children and youth to permanence and belonging of family-based care.

Capacity building is at the core of sustainable child protection frameworks; and the professionals working in childcare institutions, juvenile justice systems, and aftercare homes must be well-versed in standards of care, trauma-informed interventions, transition planning and reintegration and prevention mechanisms to adequately support children and youth without parental care. Training plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between policy and practice. Many child protection laws and schemes remain underutilized due to limited awareness among frontline workers. By equipping them with legal knowledge, procedural clarity, and child-sensitive approaches, it is important to ensure that the intent of legislation translates into meaningful action. Moreover, training provides a platform for cross-learning, where functionaries can share challenges, replicate good practices, and build a community of care.

In India, at Udayan Care, our commitment to this cause has been unwavering. Through rigorous training programs, technical partnerships, and policy interventions, we have consistently attempted to strengthen child protection workforce, equip professionals, and empower care leavers with the necessary tools for independent living. Udayan Care has developed structured frameworks designed to enhance the capacities of both governmental and non-governmental functionaries. These training models ensure practitioners are equipped with best practices to create stable, supportive environments for children in care, in families and in alternative care models. Through continuous training and sensitization programs, we have empowered childcare functionaries with the knowledge and skills necessary for impactful interventions.

A crucial yet often overlooked aspect of alternative care is mental health support. Children and youth in institutional settings frequently endure trauma, neglect, and emotional distress. Addressing these challenges requires dedicated interventions. In partnership with the Government, and intervention by the mental health experts, Udayan Care also ensures regular assessments, individual and group therapy sessions, and structured rehabilitation strategies. Our training modules incorporate trauma-informed care, fostering a child-friendly environment in alternative care settings. As a result, youth have demonstrated improved emotional well-being, increased trust in support systems, and a willingness to engage in career and education opportunities.

The road to holistic child protection requires unwavering commitment, innovation, and collective action. As we continue our work with childcare institutions, state governments, and care leavers, our focus remains on expanding capacity-building initiatives, fostering evidence-based policy reform, and ensuring that every child and youth in alternative care receives the support they deserve. At Udayan Care, we believe that effective

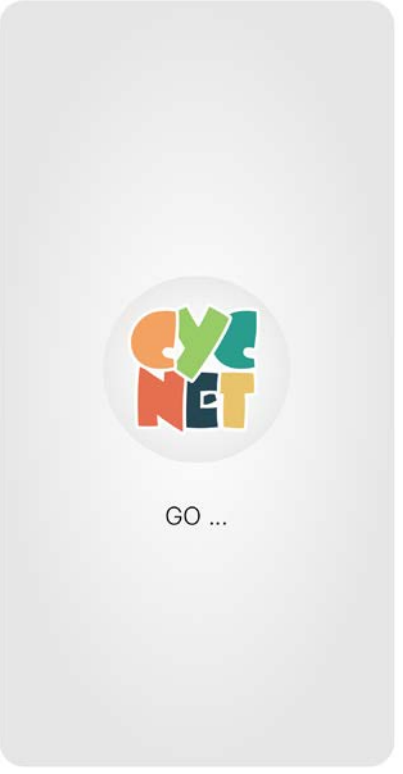
training, combined with strategic partnerships, creates a foundation for sustainable change. Our goal is not just to address immediate concerns but to build resilient support systems that endure. Only through continued collaboration and knowledge-sharing can we truly create a future where vulnerable children and youth find safety, stability, and success.

DR KIRAN MODI, MA PhD, is Managing Trustee of Udayan Care, India, and a member of the CYC-Net Board of Governors.

CYC-NET CANADA
Connecting Canadian CYC Communities
www.cyc-net-canada.org

CYC-Online
July 2025
ISSN 1605-7406

GET THE CYC-Net App ...



Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

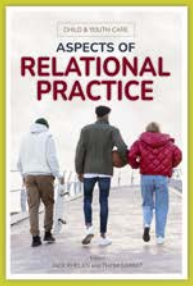
CYC-Online

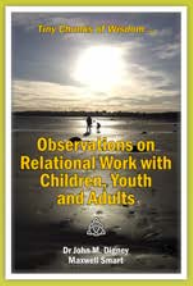
July 2025

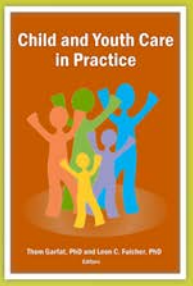
ISSN 1605-7406

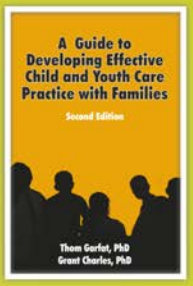
11

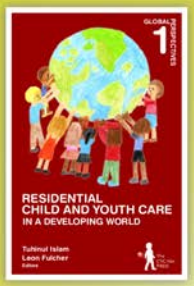
CYC-Net PRESS

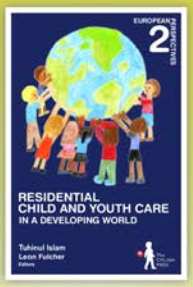


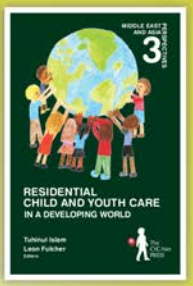


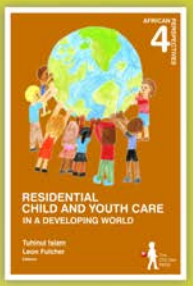


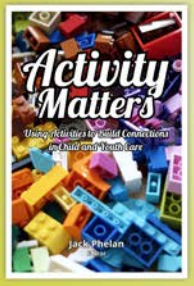


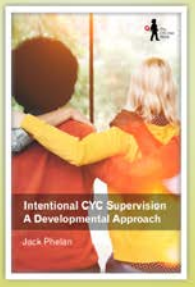


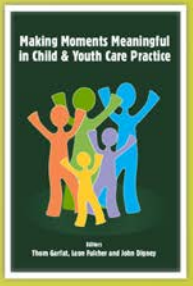


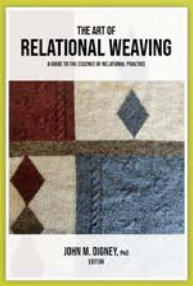


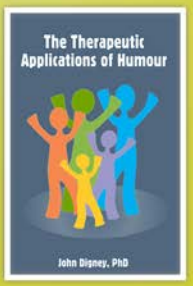


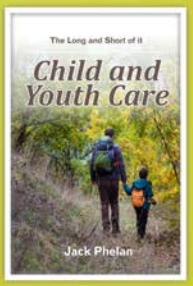












Academic, Organisations, Agencies, Individuals

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

www.rcycp.com

Beware of the Residential Care Comeback

Kiaras Gharabaghi

I am not writing to either criticize or endorse residential care as a way of serving children and youth who for whatever reason cannot live at home. Although I have been party to those debates as well, this month I am writing to express concern about developing system infrastructure out of despair, because this is very much what is unfolding in Canada, and I suspect elsewhere too. It is worthwhile going back a few decades to remind ourselves where residential care came from (at least in its mass availability), why it has been downsized significantly over the past decade or so, and what pressures are driving its comeback.

In Ontario, residential care providers appeared in large numbers during the late 1970s, grew dramatically over the course of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, and then held steady for about 10 years until the residential care system started to implode more or less 10 years ago now. It is important to note that during the growth years, residential care (and treatment) grew significantly across all three sectors that are associated with this type of service delivery: the publicly funded and regulated Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Protection sectors, as well as the private, usually for-profit, sector, which is publicly regulated to some degree (through a licensing regime) but it is neither publicly mandated nor publicly funded (although it is sustained through public funds indirectly).

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

Much of the growth during the 30-year period from the 1970s to the early 2000s was driven by two things: first, a complacent approach to child welfare that allowed for placements to unfold with minimal thought about the impact on young people, and secondly, the enormous amount of money associated with residential care and treatment in Ontario. The first of these drivers unfolded in the context of several other enablers during this time, including legitimation of residential care providers through an absurdly minimalist licensing regime that had no quality components whatsoever, the absence of any consideration of possible trauma-inducing experiences for young people placed at considerable distance from their families, friends, and home communities, and a deeply embedded racism that allowed for a throw-away culture of practice especially in the context of Black Youth and Indigenous young people, who were always and continue to be today disproportionately represented amongst residents in residential care settings, particular the private, for-profit settings. Further enablers included lacklustre attention to children's rights, participation and voice and a very weak regulatory framework that allowed, for example, anyone to work at direct service and supervisory levels in these settings (and by anyone, I really mean anyone, including people convicted of serious and violent crimes, people with no pre-service education whatsoever, and, especially in supervisory and managerial contexts, people with familial connections to the owner of the service).

The second driver, the enormous amount of money associated with residential care and treatment then and now, enabled the rise of private, for-profit service providers of highly questionable merit. These included businessmen and women with no prior engagement with children and youth, those interested primarily in making money through the real estate associated with owning residential care facilities, and those for whom children and youth placed in their services was no different than running a

meat packaging factory. In some cases, private for-profit services were established by individuals who had worked for many years in child welfare organizations and therefore knew how to exploit the placement needs of that system to the fullest. Over the past five years, several individual and class action lawsuits have been exposing the degree of abuse and inadequacy associated with such service providers, and the facts in those cases are truly shocking. Run as a business, residential care and treatment is characterized by a profit motive, and that includes spending as little as possible and maximizing revenue. To this end, many of the private, for-profit service providers were operating unsafe physical homes, inadequate food, minimal recreation, and programs that were built around control and surveillance measures and therefore that could be implemented with unqualified and untrained staffing more akin to security guards than to child and youth care practitioners. Not surprisingly given that most of the private for-profit homes were operated in rural and highly isolated areas across Ontario, one outcome of this was the criminalization of Black and Indigenous youth, for whom residential care and treatment, ostensibly as a supportive service, ended up as a pipeline to the youth criminal justice system.

The mayhem of residential care in Ontario did not unfold quietly or behind closed doors. Children and youth died in residential care, often in violent ways. Staff also died. Ontario had the highest rate of youth incarceration in the global north driven largely by the supply of young people to custody facilities through the residential care system (and not just the private, for-profit system; Children's Aid Societies operating their own residential care were very much involved). Thousands of young people provided horrific narratives of their experiences. Youth homelessness in Canada included more than 50% of young people with prior residential care experience in the child welfare system. Suicide rates amongst young people

within the residential care system or from that system were nearly double compared to the general population of youth, and even higher for Indigenous youth. There were public inquests, reviews, system transformations, re-designs, and blueprints for change. Despite all that, we lived with this residential care system for 30 years, occasionally perplexed but largely unbothered by the mayhem.

Around 2010, this system of residential care started to implode. This was not because we came to our senses, or we suddenly started caring about what was happening to young people. Several things transpired to make the change. First, child welfare underwent changes that resulted in a strong preference for family-based care (note that this did not mitigate mayhem for children and youth, who die, get injured, and are traumatized in family-based care too), and placements in residential care slowed significantly. Second, the cost of residential care placements resulted in constant deficits for Children's Aid Societies, who were paying for those placements on a per diem basis, but who were not funded for these placements by the government. This resulted in government putting pressure on Children's Aid Societies to curb spending, and most Children's Aid Societies that had been operating their own residential care services closed these abruptly. Foster care and kinship care seemed like cheaper options, and these started expanding dramatically. Third, after decades of legislative neglect, a new legislation for child welfare was introduced in 2017 and took effect in 2018, which allowed for a much more thorough licensing system and enforcement practices where licensees were not meeting requirements.

As a result of these dynamics, many private for-profit agencies no longer saw the insane profit they had been reaping, and many decided to get out of residential care and treatment services. Some were aware of their sub-standard approach to service provision and got out before criminal charges could be laid. Some were shut down by government licensing

specialists. Even in the publicly mandated and funded Child and Youth Mental Health sector, many agencies decided to close or reduce their residential treatment centres. To be clear, many private businesspeople who had for so long profited from children and youth placed in their services did not get out of the business of placement. They simply adapted, and many began offering private, for-profit foster care as well as intensive services (group homes with two or three children where every child is on a one-on-one staffing arrangement). Those who were especially compromised because of stories of abuse and neglect in their services switched their attention to the much less regulated elder care sector, and indeed, many of these businesspeople are now running nursing homes for profit, and stories of abuse and neglect in those settings are plentiful.

Fast forward to today. A new challenge has emerged that is pushing Children's Aid Societies to desperate measures. Specifically, in recent years child welfare has experienced an influx of young people who are often labeled as having 'complex needs', which serves as a euphemism for neuro diversity. Family-based supports for such children and youth are limited, often feature many years of wait lists, and not infrequently are simply not meeting the needs of families. The Child and Youth Mental Health sector has been hesitant (and sometimes simply refuses) to provide services to these young people, because the specific needs of the young people fall outside of this sector's self-generated mandate and procedural practices. Although in many cases the circumstances of these children's lives are not really congruent with child protection criteria, families are often forced to surrender their children to Children's Aid Societies because they cannot access services on their own, or because while they are waiting for services, they cannot assure the wellbeing of their children. Children's Aid Societies, in turn, are entirely unequipped to provide services to these children. As a result, there has been an incredible increase in the placement

of children and youth in low budget hotels, Airbnb's, and even in makeshift bedrooms built into agency office buildings.

As a result, today we are once again subject to the child welfare system's desperate cry for resources, and specifically residential resources. The system is already doing what it did in the 1970s and beyond. It is relying on and enabling the rapid emergence of private, for-profit businesses that claim to provide safe and meaningful service to this group of young people. In fact, this time the profit margins of residential care specifically designed for neuro diverse young people is even higher than it was in previous eras of rapid for-profit expansion. Some children are placed in these settings at a cost of well over $1000 per day, subject to not only one on one staffing, but sometimes two on one and even three on one staffing. Such settings are frequently not licensed, again hire staff without any need for qualifications, and again are concentrated in far flung rural areas with limited oversight and accountability. Once again, some children have died in these places, staff and children have been injured, and families have been forever ripped apart.

I am not against residential care placement options for neuro diverse young people. But I am against and very concerned about placing young people in residential care operated by for-profit private businesses, knowing that every one of these children is worth a lot of money to the operator. We have been here before. Once again we are embarking on a planless, short-sighted, economically driven, and politically expedient random experiment on the backs of children and youth to respond to the inadequacies of child and youth services more broadly. This time, the children and youth we are talking about are even more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than their predecessors stuffed in residential care and treatment settings for 30 years. And their voices are less heard, their participation is more curtailed, and their families are more desperate for help than ever before. It won't be long before we see the same patterns of racist disparities in services, with Indigenous and Black communities especially impacted (there is lots of evidence that this is already the case).

It seems that we learn nothing from the past. It also seems that families and their children are worth nothing, expendable, and easily trivialized as cases and numbers. This is most unfortunate (a euphemism for criminal neglect, ethical bankruptcy, and professional incompetence). We need a serious change of mind and heart that re-centers children's rights and the responsibilities of the public sector to respond to evolving social needs and circumstances. What is clear is that our child and youth serving sectors are unprepared to evolve along with these social needs and circumstances. Our institutional fragmentation, accompanied by a profound professional stagnation, is precisely what enables smart, nimble but also ruthless and singularly profit-minded businesspeople to move in and silence this issue as they have done in the past. Commodifying children and youth is not an answer.

Now is the time to design (and implement) a system fit for the 21st century. Let us not create more infrastructure of abuse and neglect simply because we are desperate. Let us instead think more deeply about what is needed to move forward, and although the answers almost certainly will be very different from what we currently have (siloed and ineffective sectors), now is the time to show the courage to change our ways.

DR KIARAS GHARABAGHI is Dean of the Faculty of Community Services at Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada and a regular contributor to *CYC-Online*. He can be reached at k.gharabaghi@torontomu.ca

Academic, Organisations, Agencies, Individuals

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

www.rcycp.com

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Go here for information on how you can help us

Mount Saint Vincent University

AMAL YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRE

ALLAMBI CARE

Otonabee Family Counselling Centre

Toronto Metropolitan University

The PersonBrain Model™

Lakeland College

kibble

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

RRC POLYTECH

Bow Valley College

Ontario Association of CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

Association Ontarienne des Techniques D'ÉDUCATION SPÉCIALISÉE

GIRLS & BOYS TOWN

MEDICINE HAT COLLEGE

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

Sheridan

Brayden SUPERVISION SERVICES INC.

Hull SERVICES

acycp ASSOCIATION FOR CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE

Shift

Seneca POLYTECHNIC

Tanager

HOLLAND COLLEGE

MacEwan UNIVERSITY

HomeBridge

HUMBER

BARTIMAEUS

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

University of Victoria

nscc

DOUGLAS COLLEGE

BOYS RANCH FOUNDED BY CAL FARLEY

waypoints guiding young people and their families

The Four R's of Relational Child and Youth Care Work

Ziigwanbinesii Charles

As a child and youth care practitioner when I first came into the field I wasn't surrounded by other practitioners of the same discipline. However, I was surrounded by people who were wholistic, client-centred, culturally knowledgeable and strength based which made all the difference. Being led by these amazing folks I was able to be connected to mentors who had different educational, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences. In the early days of my practice these folks were available for me to run things by and have a safe place to try new approaches and strategies with the young people I was serving. This supportive environment gave me the time to develop myself as a practitioner along with my own individual 'guides to practice' while I was doing the work, often on my own being in a constant state of learning, building my own skills, capacity, and wisdom along the way. While I was moving in my practice in a relational way, this led me to identify four steps that supported me to connect with young people which I have identified them to be: respect, responsiveness, reciprocity and responsibility.

Respect

In my cultural (First Nation – Anishinaabek on Turtle Island or so-called Canada), we are taught to acknowledge every living being as our relative.

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

This can provide a different way of thinking about relationships specifically with the land, water, animals, one another, community and the list goes on. This is one of the first ways we can show someone we honour them, their story, who they are in that moment and acknowledge their *'essence'* or what is culturally referred to as to as their *'purpose'*. When we make a safe space for a young person to be themselves, to be heard and seen in their entirety this provides an ease, safety and comfort.

Adding to this, providing moments to get to know the young person, hearing their stories, experiences, expectations, values, needs and aspirations is one way that we show respect when our paths cross. When we listen and do not offer our own interpretation (perspectives or judgements) of their life, this is true respect. Accepting a person for who they are in the moment and what they bring to this world is often a step I see being missed in practice. Many practitioners are quick to discount how a person has got to the present and often want to rush in to 'make changes or fix' their life without recognition of the person's own efforts of how they prevailed through their challenges, overcame difficult situations, or survived to present day.

When practitioners show respect, kindness and are courteous, it can reinforce ease and openness within the connection. When we recognise a person as a sacred being and equal to us (the worker), this promotes human to human or rather a *heart-to-heart* dynamic. Many of the young people that I have worked with often are looking for *acceptance* from the world around them. I find that when practitioners can offer *respect* within the first interaction or conversation (that continues throughout the connection), it is a quick way to open the door to build a supportive connection, one that goes hand in hand with acceptance.

Respect is in the little things, it can look like offering a snack, drink or more comfortable place to sit, stand or change the milieu. It can look like

asking a young person "*how they are doing or where they are at?"* before a meeting starts and giving them time to speak and be heard. It can be a simple smile and providing space for a cultural, spiritual, religious, or meditative ritual that helps them get grounded. It can be offering choice. It can simply happen by providing an empathetic and listen ear when they might be struggling. It can be voicing a concern that the young person is not ready to bring forward on their own. True respect is *'I am here, in this with you as you are."* Respect is beautiful as it is diverse in how it is expressed. I appreciate how it invites in creativity with each person we meet. *How we view* the individuals we work with *can be felt* and I encourage us all to reflect on how we are showing up each day.

Responsiveness

Building on respect, responsiveness helps to allow for flow in the interactions and mutual understanding of the connection. As a practitioner it is important for me to let young people know, *I hear you and I see you*. I am available and here to be supportive to your needs, development and growth. Responsiveness is having an in-depth understanding of the person, listening to their voice, seeking clarity, identifying needs all while showing care and empathy. Responsiveness is a great way to develop rhythm with a client because when we are truly responsive, we are inviting the client to fully participate in their plan of care and respect when they voice their needs. In my practice I work hard at having young people a part of their plans and to have influence over the decisions being made where appropriate. Equally, I think it's essential to explain the process of how decisions were made to them or for them ensuring their developmental capacity and stage of development are taken into consideration. Being as transparent as possible with young people, I find builds trust, mirrors

honesty and opens the door for discussions, questions and understanding. Responsiveness is unique and depending on the young person it is individualized as all peoples needs differ.

I once was working with a young person whose caregiver wanted the youngest sibling to work with me as their older siblings were also involved. This sibling didn't have the same level of risk or needs as the other siblings. There was a lot of pressure coming from the caregiver assuming that all the children needed the same service delivery. I made it a priority to meet with this young person a few times, to try to identify what it is they might need and if they want to be a part of the program, as it is voluntary. I decided to give space to engage in a fun, low pressure activity that gave us time to connect, laugh, chat about *'nothing and everything'* more than once. Slowly the young person started to share about how they wanted a role model, a healthy and safe adult in their life. Someone they could talk about the peer pressure they are experiencing, body changes that come with puberty, the anxiety they feel from the world (social media) and learning about healthy relationships. As a practitioner, being able to pivot to what this young person needed and what they are experiencing in their life at this moment is responsive. This looks different to the work I am doing with their siblings, but it doesn't make it any less important. When we take the time to hear a young person and validate their concerns in their life outside of the dynamics with family, school, and the world we allow for their truths to surface. As a practitioner, I feel it's important to honour and assist in building young people's capacity to use their voice and allowing them to identify their needs (however big or small), is a respectful and a responsive way to be in a caring connection. Validating the needs and looking at what is realistic, what is a short term or long-term goal, all helps a young person build decision making skills while getting to know themselves alongside a safe person (worker). I find this draws a young person into being actively

engaged in the process. What I try to mirror to my young people is *how can they become responsive to themselves*, a skill that takes practice and active effort. In my opinion we are doing young people a disservice if we are not teaching (mirroring) them how to look within to support a greater understanding of self. We can teach self responsiveness while also building an appropriate support system into their lives that encompasses specific services and expands their community so as they grow and develop, they know who is in their corner.

Reciprocity

Once we have built a stable foundation of respect and we are able to understand how to show up (be responsive) for a young person, what I usually experience next is reciprocity. This is interesting to me because being a worker I do not expect a client to 'give' to me as my role is to support the client. What I find beautiful about relational practice is how when care, safety, comfort, trust are established and become consistent it starts to be mirrored back to the worker from the client as it is learned. This can take longer depending on the young persons life experience and it can be inconsistent, but I have found that it does show up if you are willing to look for it. When I see it, I draw attention to it and validate the way the young person expressed the form of reciprocity. When we engage in a supportive and genuine way, both parties benefit from the relationship as it becomes symbiotic. For example, the worker shows up with skills, capacity and knowledge to share and the young person can benefit while learning. Eventually, I have found that the connection transforms over time and the worker can learn from the young persons perspective, experiences and life events as well. This is why intergenerational connections are of a high priority for me because they offer robust learning and wisdom.

Reciprocity can look small, if you blink you might miss it. I once had a young person who was defined in their group home as 'selfish, egotistical, and aggressive'. Over time they started to offer me little things like gum, a cookie, a water and even held the door for me as I walked into the home. Each time this happened I would draw attention to it and thank them for their kindness as they took the opportunity to go outside of themselves to help someone else and it wasn't requested or demanded of them. One of the other youths in the home asked them *"why they do that"* and they responded with, *"it's easy to do for them because they do it for me."* This was important to not only see but to hear. This young person often talked a lot about respect and how important it was to them, so it was a value for them they felt they weren't receiving in their group home at the time and they knew how to reciprocate when it was shown. Reciprocity is a beautiful way to develop a young person's generosity and service to others. In practice when I start to see "signs" of reciprocity I know that I can then start to slowly introduce and highlight generosity and community involvement based on the context of our connection.

ISSN 1605-7406

Responsibility

I've always taken my roles in young peoples lives seriously and with immense honor. The connections I've developed for a short time or long time are meaningful to me and I carry them with me throughout my life and practice. Culturally, we have a responsibility to others in our identified community, blood family or not we treat everyone equally. It's not an *obligation but a responsibility* that is overflowing with care and compassion. Showing young people, you are responsible for them can be a restorative process from prior damaging relationships. Building upon respect, responsiveness, and reciprocity leads us into the *responsibility* of the person and the co-created connection between us. Responsibility is a teacher for me that takes effort to not only maintain the safety within the connection but to continue building and growing. Sharing with young people how responsibility is also about discovering their influence to self and community helps them conceptualize the world and where they fit. When we show what it means to be responsible to the connection (client and worker) we are teaching (informally) how they can show up in the world responsibly as their journey continues.

I once worked with a young person, and we were exploring "independence" and what that means and looks like to them. This young person happened to be in a residential program. The irony of this is that they are not able to do their own laundry or cook in the home but when they turn the age of 18, they are *'magically'* supposed to know how to take care of themselves and live on their own. You can probably see how this would be an issue in the future. I digress. So, we are having this discussion around chores and responsibilities. This young person says, *"Hey Ziig, you live on your own, eh? Do you eat cake for every meal? Cuz I would be."* Both of us laughed at this question and in the moment my answer (recovering from giggling) was, *"Well, I'd probably get sick from the sugar rush and a good chance I would develop diabetes, but you are right, I could eat it everyday".* The comment from the youth is incredibly comical to me (still) not because of the question itself (it's a good one) but because of the innocence and honesty that shine through it. Understanding where the young person is coming from with this question is imperative. In this young person's case, due to their living conditions they never had the choice for meals and everything they ate was provided and planned for them. Of course, they are going to be thinking about cake and of course they would want to eat it for each meal when food is restricted in this manner. However, this led us into a great discussion about moderation, money management, and health. I'm still not entirely sure I convinced them not to eat cake for every meal, but I am sure I highlighted and planted some seeds about physical well-being, yeah, let's go with that! My role as a worker is to not control or hold power over what the young person does, but to engage in dialogue around the pros, cons and to help educate them so they are equipped to do what is right for them. My role is to teach self responsibility.

Throughout my interactions with young people, exploring responsibility in its layers encompasses many things but I see the following as a focus

point depending on the young person: developed sense of autonomy, comprehension of their influence, self confidence, the ability to self advocate, developed life skills, have an in-depth awareness of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, independence, well-being, and increased healthy decision making among other things.

Wrap up

Working on my own and having independence and freedom around how I implemented my education, training, culture and life experience helped me to develop my own approach. With each person I interacted with these Four R's kept re-occurring as I started to identify themes in my early days in the field. I started to notice over the years how these worked or didn't and I was able to try them in different scenarios to see if they fit. I don't feel that these have any order and I'm not naive to say they must be used, or they are better for a long-term interaction rather than short term ones. I think this worked for me because it is flexible to each situation I find myself in with young people and adults while capturing their individuality, voice and needs.

ZIIGWANBINESII CHARLES is mukwa ndoodem (bear clan) from Mnjikaning, Chippewas of Rama First Nation on Treaty 20 currently known as Ontario, situated on Turtle Island otherwise known as 'Canada.' Ziigwanbinesii is an active community helper, educator, adviser, and advocate. Ziigwanbinesii is a proud Child and Youth Care Practitioner who is passionate about strengthening young people's identity, purpose, and community connections. Ziigwanbinesii uses their cultural teachings of love, kindness, authenticity, and reciprocity to guide their practice in Child and Youth Care. They have worked in a variety of roles with children, youth, adults, and families who are put at risk. Ziigwanbinesii currently is working in child welfare, supporting to re-define, reimagine equitable and culturally informed care with the ultimate goals being intergenerational healing, autonomy, self-governance, and healthier communities.

Academic, Organisations, Agencies, Individuals

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

www.rcycp.com

Outcomes that Matter

A New Solution to a Consistent Challenge

Developed by Leon Fulcher, PhD of New Zealand with Thom Garfat, PhD of Canada in 2012, and based on 50 years of research by the Search Institute, Outcomes that Matter© (OTM) now has a new and innovative web-based solution providing real time, confidential recording and reporting by carers of developmentally focused observations and commentary specific to each individual child.

Key Features

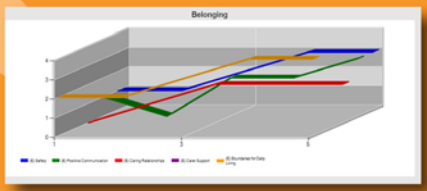
- ***Fosters a collaborative and relational approach between the carer, child or young person, and across care teams, to noticing and recording developmental achievements across 20 domains within the Circle of Courage: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity.***

- ***Instant and automated progressive reporting in graph form with the ability to export all data to Excel for bespoke reporting requirements.***

- ***Self-administered with secure log in for all carers, teachers and others, with unique identifiers for children and young people within a secure, cloud-based data environment.***

- ***Enables care planning specific to the child or young person's individual developmental needs through capturing narrative and quantative data.***

- ***Easy to use interface on tablet or PC with implementation, training and technical help-desk support available.***



"It is difficult to find an outcome monitoring system that can comprehensively evaluate the complexities of relational work, let alone one that is culturally responsive. Using OTM, it's comforting to know that the feedback helps our staff adjust and change their practice to meet the individual needs of youth with more than just intuition."

Ernie Hilton - Executive Director - HomeBridge, Nova Scotia, Canada

Visit www.transformoutcomes.com

For further enquiries contact Shane Murdoch at shane@transformoutcomes.com

‘The Space Between’ – Embracing Culture in Residential Care in South Africa from a Western Standpoint

Harrison Dax Nash

Introduction

The experiences I share here are from my 13 years based full-time in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape of South Africa where I was Programme Manager and Social Work Supervisor at a residential child and youth care centre working with children in need of care and protection, through to young adulthood. But the experiences I share are also from my own background and standpoint as a white British male who completed my social work studies in the UK. Prior to this, I had first visited South Africa as a volunteer in my late teens. This context is important in the sense that the young people I had the privilege to work with were initially the ones who educated me when it came to cultures, traditions and rituals. Subsequently, I acknowledged that it is inadequate to simply expect those we work with to be our teachers – we must take responsibility in terms of learning about cultural practices (Fulcher, 2003). I can also attest to my own belief that in

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

the social work profession we embark on an ongoing journey of learning and professional development (Azzopardi, 2020) which must extend greatly beyond our own personal life experiences.

As we had a youth centre of 34 children and young people, divided into 4 houses, it meant that we were able to be very involved in the lives of those placed with us. I would interact with the young people daily through visits in their lifespace and maintain an open communication with the child and youth care workers to get their essential feedback. In addition, I also provided direct therapeutic support where it was needed, and as a management team we would have collective input and oversight in relation to the individual development plans of our beneficiaries. We should always be goal orientated in our approach, as we help our youth develop a sense of authentic belonging. At the same time, our focus cannot just be on biopsycho-social challenges '... without seeing children or young people as cultural beings' (Fulcher, 2003).

ISSN 1605-7406

Coming of Age Processes

Most staff working directly with children in residential care are female. This is not to understate the tremendous impact positive male role models in this space can make. But it led to an experience where for many of the boys staying with us, I was the most consistent male in their lives: without dramatizing the point, even those in contact with their families often had absent fathers (Makosa et al, 2024). Notably, where it came to the amaXhosa boys and young men, there were certain cultural aspects that they needed to discuss with a male – ideally of course not with the 'umlungu' (isiXhosa term for white person) from the UK, of which I am explicitly self-aware, but this certainly created a mutual opportunity for sharing and learning.

One of the experiences I especially want to share, is that of navigating the period of our young people approaching their 'coming of age' processes, being the traditional male initiation within the Xhosa culture. There are already many layers to this and as a social work practitioner from a Western society, I first want to endeavour to provide some education on this practice of 'Ulwaluko', because I am aware that the rituals may draw negative connotations or assumptions for those not familiar with the culture if efforts are not made to understand the significance on a broader scale.

Context of Initiation

In a general sense, male circumcision as a practice has been historically carried out by different African communities and indeed throughout the globe. It is also a known practice amongst Jewish and Muslim societies. However, the emphasis on this particular cultural event is that of being an initiation and rite of passage. Such initiation processes are associated in an African context with the impartment of generational knowledge and skills

(Barker and Ricardo, 2005). There are five ethnic groups in South Africa which promote the practice of traditional male initiation, which includes the Nguni people incorporating amaXhosa (Deacon and Thompson, 2012) that are prevalent through the Eastern Cape where I had been based. Often, I would hear this process referred to loosely as 'going to the bush'. The reason for this is because the initiate will reside in a place that is surrounded by bush, or a mountain area, with the location being symbolic of a place of isolation for both teachings and healing (Lungcuzo, 2013). The circumcision itself takes place on the first day of Ulwaluko, utilising an assegai and without any anaesthetic or pain medication. It is worth noting that the rituals and lessons are kept sacred and secret (Ncaca, 2014) which negates the clumsy questioning a practitioner external to the culture may be tempted to ask a young person on completion, for example: 'so tell me what you learnt?'

In a broad sense, I do need to mention that the practice is not without its pitfalls. There are a multitude of stories relating to serious incidents and deaths taking place. However, I also want to mitigate this by stating that the practice is regulated and many of the challenges experienced stem from initiation schools which are operating illegally and without the necessary precautions in place. More can definitely be done in terms of policy around this, and it is also crucial that the government itself takes the necessary action against unlicensed circumcision schools (Mpateni and Kang'Ethe, 2021). The family of the initiate also take responsibility in appointing a reputable Ingcibi, being the traditional surgeon undertaking the procedure, and Ikhankatha who is the traditional attendant that supervises the initiate – then referred to as the Umkhwetha – throughout the healing process (Nomngcoyiya, 2015). With our young people in care, cultural safety also means encouraging family involvement in decision-making (Fulcher, 2003).

Achieving Manhood

As practitioners, it is crucial to understand the significance and meaning that amaXhosa boys attribute to this ritual (Mhlahlo, 2009) - it is more than just a 'coming of age' transition, as ultimately it is intrinsic to one's own feeling of belonging within the culture. An uncircumcised Xhosa male remains a boy – referred to as inkwenkwe (Gwata, 2009). The achieved manhood resulting from Ulwaluko is itself a sense of being (Mfecane, 2016). Whilst being important in terms of growth and development, including psychological development (Mpateni and Kang'Ethe, 2021), it also provides a sense of identity to economically disenfranchised men in the society (Siswana, 2015). Whilst there is level of seniority referred to as izilimela being the years spent as a man after initiation, we can also observe a level of unity and equality within the Xhosa culture as the men all undergo the same process (Sipungu, 2024). They also learn new vocabulary whilst going through their initiation.

ISSN 1605-7406

Throughout the literature, you will find that there are commentators who are not always favourable of the connotations of 'traditional masculinity' associated with the process. However, at the same time, such notions as men being providers and protectors of the family (Gwata, 2009) and pillars of strength within the community (Ncaca, 2014) can conversely be seen as a positive one. The conveying of ethnological value systems and pedagogical dimensions of manhood is a core aspect of the process (Msutwana, 2021., Diko, 2025). Culturally speaking, this is undertaken with the view of instilling maturity and assisting in the formation of good morals (Mpateni and Kang'Ethe, 2021). From a medical perspective, the traditional male circumcision also helps in reducing the risk of contracting infections, inclusive of HIV (Mpateni, 2017).

Whilst this process signifies the transition from boyhood to manhood (Jewell, 2023) it is worth noting that 'manhood' within the Xhosa culture is not just the completion of the initiation, but fulfilling social expectations, with young men first establishing themselves in their early adulthood as they progress through the initial Isifana phase (Ntombana, 2011). They are needed to assist older males in traditional ceremonies. The 'new man' is considered to have both membership and responsibilities within the tribal community (Magodyo et al., 2017). There is a clear distinction between 'ubukhwenkwe' being boyhood behavior, and 'ubudoda' being manhood behavior, with those having gone through the process expected to be responsible and engaged members of their society (Diko, 2025).

The Space Between

Over the years I have been involved in several initiation processes, and I can safely say that there were different intricacies involved in each one, that provided further learning opportunities to myself. When it comes to

cultural education, there is much that can be gained from real-life experiences and both in-person conversations and observations. One case that was particularly unique was a young person who had been with us for a period of 8 years, when it had reached the time for him to embark on this initiation. Now at times within residential care there is what I refer to as 'the space between'. Often, we may have background information on a young person that does not give the full picture or details when it comes to the child's family and upbringing. We then have to populate this with first-hand information from the child themselves, which we also know will be more readily shared when a secure and trusting relationship is established. It is then that we can fill the space.

This young man had finished his schooling and achieved well in his final 'matric' year. He was one of the beneficiaries of our 'independent living' program at the youth centre, which was specifically beneficial for those staying on with us post-18 as young adults, with the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 giving the ability for residential care services to be legally recognized until the year of a beneficiary turning 21 years of age. We had been able to assist him to secure a bursary where he was able start a post-school qualification in business management. We also assisted him to find a part-time job as a waiter at a local restaurant. As part of the program, we would provide support in relation to financial management, as he had wanted to save particularly for his initiation process. It is important to explain that there are a multitude of expenses associated with Ulwlauko: from the traditional Umgidi celebration to the formal clothing they must wear following this event when referred to as Amakrwala. There is a replacement of clothes and belongings needed in general to symbolise a separation from childhood.

Navigating Family Dynamics

One evening, I had specifically set aside time to help proofread one of this young person's business assignments. Of course, those familiar with residential care across a vast age-range will know the scope of work can easily shift from guiding a young child to tie their shoelace one minute to helping with higher grade study tasks the next! However, this young person then wanted to talk to me about the challenge he was facing. He was an orphan, but had family ties, including wider family members I had already engaged with in initial preparation for the initiation planning. But it then transpired that he had a more complex background in terms of family composition, as the father who had initially raised him, was not the biological father; this father had in fact died when he was very young, and his mother initially raised him within the context of her new relationship which was therefore his only concrete memory of parents. The crux of this was that there were ancestral concerns over him embarking on this process without engaging with the paternal family biologically speaking, with the belief system that this could lead to negative consequences within the process. Here, it is important to note the perceived importance of Ulwaluko in advancing connection with the ancestral past (Diko, 2025).

The conversation was powerful enough for me to decide that we would need to go and locate these estranged family members, with him having received tentative information of a street address within a township location an hour away. We had to visit more than one address and knock on more than one door – including a 'Gogo' (Grandmother in the Xhosa language) we encountered coming in the car as a guide – but ultimately we located the relevant family members and could overcome an initial scepticism through to being warmly received, particularly when I could attest to the young

man's own achievements with him being modest in his own nature. As practitioners we should always be the best advocates for our young people!

The young man was thereafter able to successfully complete the Ulwaluko process, and I could represent our youth centre by attending the Umgidi ceremony. I also found being part of such events such a privilege. I consulted my own amaXhosa friends and colleagues for guidance. It was seen as a welcome gesture for me to bring a bottle of brandy as a contribution, with the alcohol later offered out by the appointed 'injoli' of the occasion. I was greeted wonderfully by women in traditional dress ululating my welcome. It was well received for me to try the Umqombothi – an African beer made from maize, sorghum malt, yeast and water – as well as eat the delicious food prepared meticulously as part of the celebrations. As well as seeing and congratulating the young man, I enjoyed all the conversations and hospitality. The 'new man' – beaming with pride - now had an unmqayi, a sacred stick, seen as a symbol of a man's maturity and considered 'intonga yamathamasanqa nenzuzo' (a stick of blessing and benefit).

Cultural Competence

Often I think when working in residential care we need to appreciate that for many of the young people we are also fulfilling a family role for them – whilst of course we want to empower our youth to move towards independence, we also need to be able to be part of these key milestones and occasions in their life when the opportunity presents itself.

We should all know the importance of being culturally safe and competent. But as practitioners, this actually needs to be a sense of being, it needs to transcend who we are and what we want to achieve. Of course, at times this inevitably means embracing the unknown. Such competence requires a heightened level of consciousness towards the unique

experiences of those we work with (Azzopardi, 2020). It also transcends the professions of child and youth care work and social work as without this a clear barrier to effective engagement can present itself.

Whilst this specific process must be carried out in a safe and legally regulated manner, we can also see '...the importance of Ulwaluko as a formative experience in shaping well-rounded individuals' (Diko, 2025). In this instance, the young man went on to study at diploma level in logistics management and then came back to our youth centre to fulfil a role as a child and youth care worker with the next generation of boys and help invest in their development. Was a sense of authentic belonging achieved? Most definitely.

Bibliography

Azzopardi, C. (2020). Cross-cultural social work: A critical approach to teaching and learning to work effectively across intersectional identities. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *50*(2), 464-482.

Barker, G., Ricardo, C. (2005). Young men and the construction of masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict, and violence (Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction, Paper 26).

Deacon, H., Thomson, K. (2012). The social penis. Traditional male circumcision and initiation in Southern Africa, 1800-2000: A literature review. Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town.

Diko, M. (2025). Constructing masculinity through ulwaluko: a scoping literature review. In *Cogent Arts & Humanities*. *12*(1).

Fulcher, L.C. (2003). Rituals of encounter that guarantee cultural safety. In *Journal of Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*. *16*(3), 20-27.

Jewell, J. (2023). The informal economy in Masande Ntshanga's the reactive. In *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*. *10*(1), 57–73.

Gwata, F. (2009). Traditional male circumcision: What is the socio-cultural significance of initiation among young Xhosa men? Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town.

Lungcuzo, B. W. (2013). Ulwaluko kwaXhosa. East London: National Library of South Africa.

Magodyo, T., Andipatin, M., Jackson, K. (2017). The role of Xhosa traditional circumcision in constructing masculinity. In *South African Journal of Psychology*. *47*(3), 344–355.

Makosa, N., Tanga, P. & Ekobi, G. (2024). Effects of non-resident fathering on children: A case of selected households in the Hillcrest community, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. In *African Journal of Social Work*. *14*(1),40-48.

Mfecane, S. (2018). Towards African-centred theories of masculinity. In *Social Dynamics*, *44*(2), 291–305.

Mhlahlo, A. P. (2009). What is manhood? The significance of traditional circumcision in the Xhosa initiation ritual. Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology Thesis. Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Msutwana, N. v. (2021). Meaningful teaching of sexuality education framed by culture: Xhosa secondary school teachers' views. In *Perspectives in Education*. *39*(2), 339–355.

Mpateni, A. (2017). Health Factors Associated with Traditional Circumcision of Adolescent Males in Alice, Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality. Department of Social Work Dissertation. University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

Mpateni, A., Kang'Ethe, S.M. (2021) Ulwaluko rite of passage among the Xhosa in South Africa: the challenges relating to poor standards in unlicenced circumcision schools. In *African Journal of Social Work. 11*(5), 207-212.

Ncaca, M. (2014). Yithi Uyindoda! (Say, you are a man!) An ethnographic study on the religion and masculinities in initiation schools in Cape Town townships. Department of Practical Theology and Missiology Thesis. Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Nomngcoyiya, T. (2015). Exploring the psychosocial challenges associated with traditional male circumcision practice (TMCP) through the lenses of newly initiated men: A case of Lusikisiki, Phondoland area - Eastern Cape. Department of Social Work Dissertation. University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

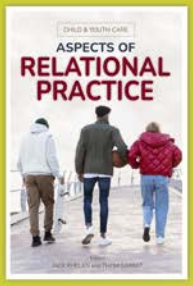
Ntombana, L. (2011). An investigation into the role of Xhosa male initiation in moral regeneration. Department of Sociology and Anthropology Thesis. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa.

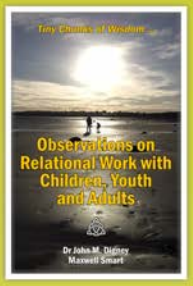
Sipungu, T. (2024). Cultural Pathways to a Respectable Manhood Masculinity for Visibly Physically Disabled Xhosa Men. In *Journal of Men's Studies*. *32*(3), 399-420.

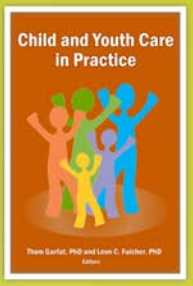
Siswana, A. (2015). ULWALUKO KWA XHOSA: Young Xhosa Men's Lived Experiences in the Context of Traditional Male Initiation. Department of Psychology Thesis. Rhodes University, South Africa.

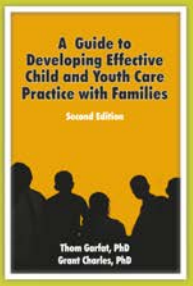
HARRISON DAX NASH is founder of Maranatha Care Children (UK Charity) in 2009 and was Programme Manager/Social Work Supervisor for 13 years with Maranatha-Siyakatala Child & Youth Care Centre in Gqeberha, South Africa. He is an honorary lecturer at the University of Plymouth UK and recipient of a British Empire Medal (BEM). Email harrison@maranathacarechildren.com

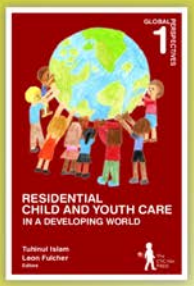
CYC-Net PRESS

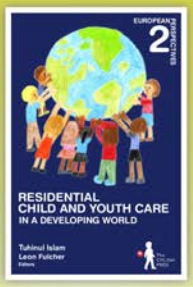


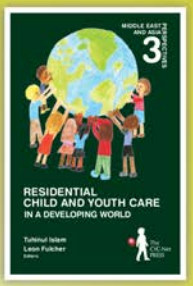


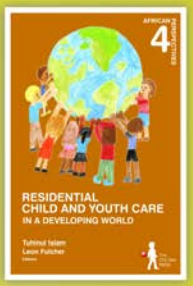


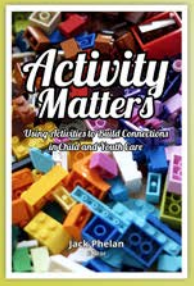


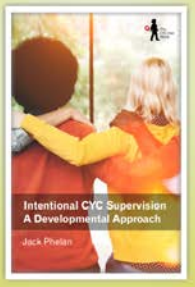


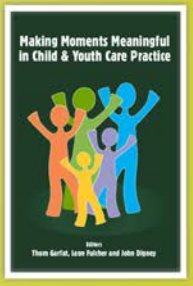


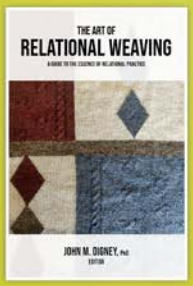


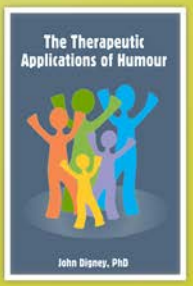


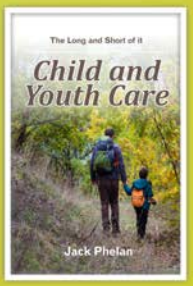












Erasure Redux

Hans Skott-Myhre

In December of 2019 I wrote a column in *CYC-Online* entitled Erasure. Writing six years ago, I lamented what I saw as the erasure of BIPOC peoples by the media, government, law enforcement and the education system. Following that in 2021, I published an article with Vanessa Robinson Dooley on what we termed double erasure, where we argued that under virtual capitalism the ability to erase the history of traumatic brutality of colonial practices reaches new levels of sophistication. We argued that double erasure takes as its first step the radical denial of trauma followed by an absolute refusal of any form of remedy since there was no trauma to resolve or heal in the first place. Little did I know at the time that things would get so much worse and that the machinations of 21st century social media would escalate the erasure not just of historical traumas as they are perpetuated and extended today, but the literal attempted existential erasure of entire peoples both virtually and literally.

Over the past couple of years, the efforts to erase groups of people literally and virtually have escalated on a global scale. I would cite the attempt at the literal erasure of Palestinians in Gaza through massive military campaigns that have killed over 50,000 people including tens of thousands of children. A report from Unicef in March of this year reported,

> *On Friday, we saw videos of the bodies of burnt, dismembered children from the al-Najjar family being pulled from the rubble of*

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

their home in Khan Younis. Of 10 siblings under 12 years old, only one reportedly survived, with critical injuries. Early Monday, we saw images of a small child trapped in a burning school in Gaza City. That attack, in the early hours of the morning, reportedly killed at least 31 people, including 18 children.

The attempt to erase Palestinians as living human beings is being conducted by the literal killing of children and their families, as well as blockades of humanitarian aid, starvation, displacement, and destruction of hospitals, water systems, schools, and homes. Bu it is also being conducted by the erasure of their lives in public discourse that attempts to silence anyone who would advocate on their behalf. The attacks on those who would challenge what is happening in Gaza and in the West bank relies on intimidation and coercion including loss of employment, arrest and, in the U.S., threats of deportation. Erasure though muting the voices of those who would sustain the visibility of a people is an increasingly common tool of authoritarian discourse worldwide.

Of course, this is not the only example of erasure, but it is a cogent one when the president of the United States suggests that Gaza be emptied of Palestinians and turned into on large seaside resort. In February of this year, less than 6 months ago, President Trump proposed "that the United States take control over Gaza and permanently remove the entire Palestinian population of about two million people to countries like Egypt and Jordan." Shortly thereafter he proposed "transforming the enclave into a "Riviera" that would be owned by the United States."

There are those who would argue that this is sheer hyperbole and not to be taken seriously, but I would argue that such a perspective misses the point of authoritarian discourse in the virtual world of the 21st century. For a major world leader to even suggest the literal erasure of an entire people

though displacement has immense force in the world of social media. It opens the door to legitimizing the idea that such people are disposable. Maybe not in the specific manner being proposed, but in a more generalized sense that these people have no right to exist or make claims to the land where they currently live their lives. Once that idea is out there in the world of virtual media, it becomes easier and easier to engage a certain kind of forgetting about the suffering and dying of certain children. And once we begin to accept the suffering of some children, it becomes easier to accept the suffering and death of other children.

We have seen this for hundreds of years within the context of colonialism. The suffering and deaths of enslaved or colonized children was, and to a large degree (and remains) invisible. Accounting for the savagery and brutality of the colonial project as it gradually colonized and subjugated nearly all the inhabited areas of the globe was only recently engaged as a serious endeavor. The historical record created by the European colonists systematically erased entire peoples in favor of a story that centered white men as heroic bringers of civilization to the rest of the world.

Absent from these accounts were the millions of deaths, the destruction of sophisticated social systems, the displacement of homelands, and the eradication of moral, spiritual, and religious ways of life. Instead, the colonial narrative created a mythic world of progress, in which evolution favored white men and their culture. All “others” were considered evolutionarily backward and irrelevant or an impediment to the inevitability of the evolutionary imperative of European superiority. Every attempt was made to erase alternative narratives that would tell stories of resistance, revolt, and courage against the death machine of enslavement and land theft that was the reality of colonization and emerging capitalism.

The power of the colonial narrative was dominant for hundreds of years with an evolving set of social mechanisms that attempted to sustain it as

the truth of how society should work and function. But, as, Foucault points out, for every assertion of dominant force, there is always resistance. Resistance is often thought of as a reaction to domination and to some degree that is true. However, the reaction to dominant power is not dependent upon the system of domination for its force. Resistance always precedes domination. Resistance is composed of the force of all of the alternative possibilities that life affords.

Systems of domination function on the principle that one story must predominate and be enforced no matter what the cost. There can be an almost infinite variation of the dominant story, but the core of the story must run like a thread throughout the entirety of the narrative. The story of white patriarchal supremacy that lies at the core of the colonial project relies on the capacity to eliminate any alternative narratives that could threaten its hegemony. This absolute reliance on a mono-cultural narrative is both its strength and its greatest weakness. Its strength because it has the capacity to claim the truth as its own and its weakness because life is not a monoculture.

Dominant systems of domination and control are always fighting a rear-guard action against the fact that life is literally producing an infinitude of difference every moment of every day. Resistance is always being produced out of this wellspring of alternative ways of living and producing the world. It draws on every possible way of life that could be lived. Such possibilities are ever present under the surface of the monoculture of dominance. Which is why denial and erasure are such key elements in the creation of fascism as a social form. And why, in the end such monocultures will fail. The question is how much damage to life and living things will be done in the interim.

The question is a very real one in the world we live in today. Certainly, the existing system of global virtual capitalism is an extension of the white

patriarchal supremacy that we have been describing. It is perhaps the most effective version we have ever seen and yet there are cracks in the fabric that indicate a crisis in the smooth functioning of the machine.

It is again Foucault who tells us that the most effective systems of domination and control operate seamlessly and to a large degree invisibly. The domination is maximally effective when we don't see it in operation. Things just seem normal, and we behave voluntarily because we have been trained to believe that this is the best of all possible worlds and we should shape ourselves so as to perpetuate the way things are. Bad things happen to others who don't belong and who would disrupt and possibly even destroy the best world we are creating. Overt acts of discipline and control are obscured as anomalies. Unfortunate necessities that are seldom seen. This is why effective erasure is such an important tool. But such erasure works best when you can't see it.

For the last 50 years or so the dominant system of global capitalist rule has become increasingly visible. From the middle of the 20th century forward there have been innumerable challenges to both its narrative and its logic. The subjugated histories of peoples who have resisted the hegemony of the dominant narrative and way of life have been surfacing and gaining plausibility and force as an alternative understanding of how life could be lived and why the brutality of the current system should be resisted.

If the dominant system was secure and unassailable, such challenges would simply be passed off as inconsequential. When most of a people are successfully inducted into the logic of the system, they pay little attention to those voices challenging the status quo. But if the system is in crisis and losing ground, then such resistance becomes a threat that has to be addressed. Any substantive alternative to the existing way of life and governance must be eradicated.

I would argue that we are in just such a moment, and we are seeing a reactionary response to the inevitability of an emerging alternative. The truth is that among the young people coming of age in the 21st century, their induction into the system of capitalist control and domination is seriously fraying. In short, they are finding the dominant narrative unconvincing, and they are listening to the previously subjugated narratives that have been gaining force as we have entered the new century.

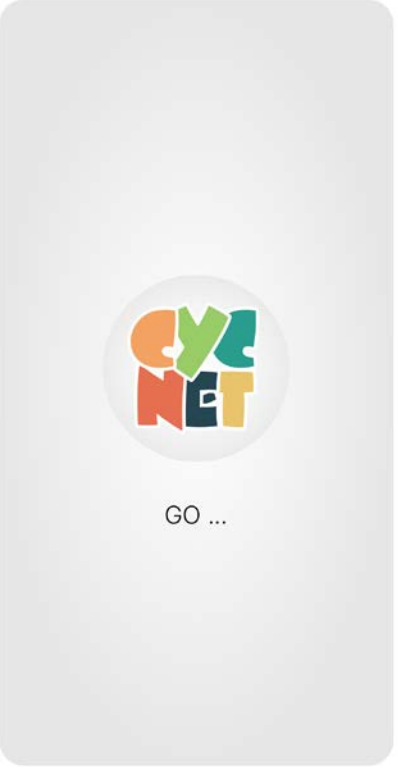
The response of the dominant system has been one of what I would term panic and paranoia. There has been a dramatic escalation in the attempts at erasure of both alternative narratives and any material attempt to revolt or resist. Here in the U.S., we are seeing a comprehensive attempt to silence emerging alternative narratives, ways of life, and acts of resistance. Government at all levels has begun to attempt to erase alternative histories, modes of identity, speech, and political action. There is every effort being made to erase any mention of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or women. There is a resuscitation of the heroic narrative of white men as the saviors of civilization and a corresponding demonization of anyone who is not a white male. We can see this in the increasingly draconian attacks on immigrant communities of color. We can also see this in the attacks on universities and schools that might offer a curriculum that includes the voices and histories of BIPOC peoples and women. It is also evident in the drive to increase the birth rate of white families so that the U.S. will sustain itself as a white nation. There is a reassertion of the patriarchal family that subjugates women and children to the will of the father. The denial of medical care and social inclusion of transgendered young people and adults are part of the pattern. The ongoing killing of people of color by the state police or military domestically and internationally continues. The abandonment of young people and their families in the global south in need of medical care for malaria or AIDS has begun. The list of the acts of erasure

is extensive and escalating. This is erasure on steroids and of course it impacts the young people we serve in CYC inordinately.

Without a doubt this is all symptomatic of a political and social system in severe crisis and quite likely these efforts at erasure will ultimately fail. In the meantime, there is tremendous damage being done to the young people we serve and to our colleagues and friends. We need to stand up and speak out. We need to refuse erasure and look out for each other in these dark times. If relational work is what we do, then caring for each other is more imperative than ever. Let's show the world what CYC can do.

HANS SKOTT-MYHRE is a regular writer for *CYC-Online*. He is a Professor of Social Work and Human Services at Kennesaw State University in Georgia (USA). He may be reached at hskottmy@kennessaw.edu

GET THE CYC-Net App ...



Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

55

Academic, Organisations, Agencies, Individuals

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

www.rcycp.com

The “AEF Social Lab”

An Innovative Social Platform for Child and Family Welfare in Luxembourg – Findings on Participation, Protection and Complaints

Marzenka Krejcirik and Magali De Rocco

Introduction

The AEF Social Lab[1] represents an innovative model for incorporating stakeholder perspectives into policy-making and service delivery. This paper introduces the AEF Social Lab, focusing on the findings of two surveys on participation, protection, and complaints within Luxembourg's child and family welfare sector.

The AEF Social Lab

Definition of a social lab

The term “social lab” literally means a social laboratory. A social lab is a set of public-private partnerships in which institutions, researchers, authorities and citizens work together to create, validate and test new services, new ideas, etc. in real-world contexts. In the social field, such a lab is similar to a kind of incubator supporting innovation and

[1] The acronym AEF stands for “*aide à l’enfance et à la famille*” in French, i.e. child and family welfare.

CYC-Online

July 2025

ISSN 1605-7406

experimentation, which makes it possible to address complex social challenges at a systemic level (Kieboom, 2014; Fortin, 2015; Baran, 2020). Social laboratories "are part of a global vision of social change" (Fortin, 2015, p. 1).

The AEF Social Lab – context and objectives

The AEF Social Lab is an exchange, innovation, and co-creation consultation platform that was established in 2020 through a trilateral governance structure involving:

- the Luxembourg's Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth, and more specifically its General Directorate for Child and Family Welfare and National Children's Office (*Office national de l'enfance*);
- the not-for-profit Federation of Social Sector Actors (FEDAS);
- the not-for-profit National Association of Educational and Social Communities (ANCES).

It benefits from an advisory committee made up of representatives of those 3 governing bodies.

The AEF Social Lab's creation was prompted by the need for a quality framework for child and family welfare measures. The AEF Social Lab's primary goal was to co-create Luxembourg's first national reference framework for child and family welfare, which was published in 2021. This reference framework aims to guarantee quality welfare, emphasizing rights, protection, and appropriate social and educational responses. The AEF Social Lab gathered input from professionals, children, young people, families and foster families to contribute to the reference framework; furthermore, its Appendix 4 describes the AEF Social Lab's process, data and recommendations.

Following the national reference framework's publication, the AEF Social Lab's focus became supporting the framework's implementation, using a participatory approach and ensuring the framework's theoretical concepts translate effectively into practice.

Guiding principles and achievements

The AEF Social Lab's guiding principles are as follows:

- Child-centred: the child is at the heart of all support systems;
- European-informed: its work is based on European consultations on child protection;
- Internationally-aligned: its methods follow international recommendations;
- Ethical: it adheres to a charter of ethics and professional conduct.

Between 2020 and 2024, the AEF Social Lab engaged over 2,156 stakeholders[2] through 50 events, including surveys, interviews, workshops, conferences and debates. During this period, it produced 24 reports, 23 articles, and 44 newsletters, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to stakeholder engagement and knowledge dissemination. The reports are available in French in the AEF Social Lab's online library.

Surveys on participation, protection and complaints

The two surveys this paper focuses on are the "Protection is..." survey and the "Letters for the Future" survey that were conducted in 2022 and

[2] Stakeholders refer to 0-27-year-old children and young people, families, foster families and professionals in the child and family welfare system. Some of the people in the figure were counted more than once if they participated in several events.

2023 and had a dual objective: (1) implementing the national reference framework for child and family welfare, and (2) contributing to the development of three handbooks for professionals on participation, protection, and complaint management. The surveys aimed to capture the perspectives and experiences of all stakeholders within Luxembourg's child and family welfare system, i.e. the target populations were: (a) children and young adults (up to 27 years old) using child and family welfare services; (b) parents and relatives receiving child and family welfare services; (c) foster families; and (d) professionals (field staff, managers, etc.) working in the sector. The AEF Social Lab published the surveys' results in various reports, as well as in a child-friendly Comic book available in French, English and German.

Methodology of "The Protection is..." survey

The "Protection is..." survey used a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative data collection) and was available in French, German and English from 2nd November to 31st December 2022. The survey aimed to understand the feelings of safety and the actual safety experienced by children and young people using child and family welfare measures, such as alternative care, outpatient care (psychotherapy, psychomotor therapy, etc.) and family-based support measures (psychological, social or educational support). The survey was anonymous and explored both the auto-perception (self-assessment) and hetero-perception (assessment by others) of the protection of children and young people using welfare measures.

Sample characteristics

A total of 484 individuals participated in the survey, representing diverse perspectives within the child and family welfare system:

- 206 children and young adults averaging 14 years and 5 months old, mostly male, and primarily receiving one type of welfare services, particularly day and night care;
- 203 professionals: mostly female, working with children and young adults of all ages, primarily in day and night care settings;
- 49 families: with children primarily between 12 and 18 years old, most of whom were placed in care (institutional or foster care);
- 26 foster parents: caring for children with an average age of 8 years and 2 months. Most of these foster parents were primarily female and caring for only one placed child.

Data collection

Respondents could complete the survey either online (via a QR code) or by filling out a paper version, which could then be scanned and emailed or sent by post to the AEF Social Lab.

To ensure accessibility and engagement, particularly for younger participants, child-friendly questionnaires were developed using a format with post-it notes. Some of the questions were based on the "three houses" method, a technique associated with the Signs of Safety approach[3]. The survey tool consisted of three parts: one providing a definition of protection and safety with examples (added following a testing phase), a second part inviting participants to describe what contributes/does not contribute to the feeling of safety as well as means of complaining, and finally a third

[3] www.signsofsafety.net

informative part featuring contact details of individuals and organisations in case the respondent needed help. As can be seen in Fig. 1 below, the survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions:

Fig. 1 - Example of the questionnaire for children in residential care

Survey development and testing

The survey design was inspired by an Australian study conducted by Moore et al. (2016) as part of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, titled “Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care”. This study explored the safety and feelings of safety among young people placed in care within institutional settings. Inpired by the Australian study, the AEF Social Lab consulted partners to ensure the terminology used was clear and comprehensible for all children, including those with specific needs.

Recognizing the diverse contexts of services provided by the child and family welfare sector in Luxembourg, specific questionnaires were tailored to different settings (e.g. residential care, foster care, and psychological support services) and target populations (children, young people, families, professionals). This customisation ensured that the questions were relevant and appropriate to the experiences and perspectives of each group.

Promotion of the survey

The survey was promoted through various professional networks (i.e., Ministry of Education, Chilhood and Youth, FEDAS, ANCES) and social networks (LinkedIn and Facebook), as well as on the AEF Social Lab's website and newsletter.

Data analysis

In terms of processing the qualitative data collected, a categorisation, *a posteriori*, was carried out by the members of the AEF Social Lab. This categorisation gave rise to a codification of all the answers, based on an inter-judge agreement. Regarding the processing of qualitative data, regular coding was carried out to meet the needs of analysis.

Methodology of the "Letters for the Future" survey

The "Letters for the Future" survey used a qualitative method to gather insights into how participation, protection and complaints are experienced within Luxembourg's child and family welfare system. The survey was conducted by the AEF Social Lab from mid-February to mid-March 2023. It aimed to gather information on good and bad practices, as well as ideas for improvement related to participation, protection, and complaint mechanisms in the child and family welfare sector.

A total of 65 people participated in the survey:

- 38 professionals;
- 21 children and young adults using child and family welfare measures;
- 4 foster families;
- 2 families (parents or relatives) using child and family welfare measures.

Data collection

Customised letters: the core of the methodology was a survey using customized letters in French and German, designed to be anonymous and easy to complete. The letters prompted respondents to share what is working well, what is not working well, and ideas for improvement related to:

1. the protection and safety of children and young people
2. the participation of children, young people and their families
3. opportunities for complaining.

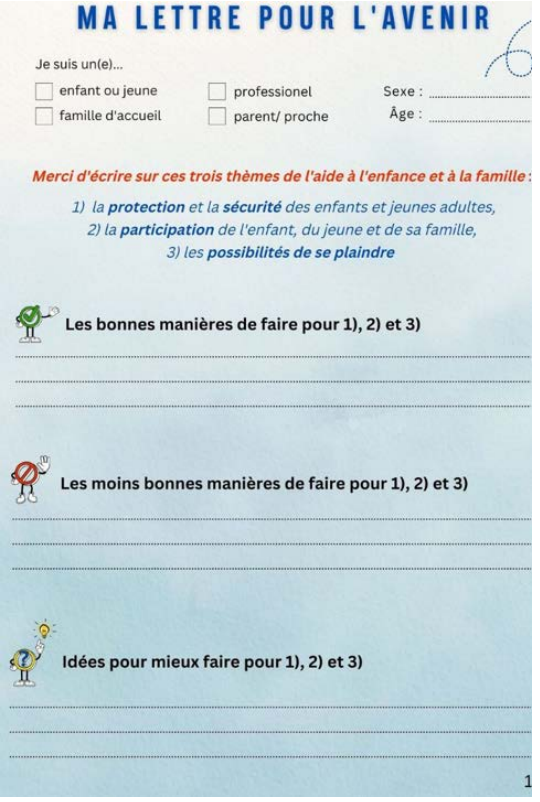


Fig. 2 - Customised letter in French (reduced to 1 page instead of 2)

A virtual letterbox: an online "letterbox" was created on the AEF Social Lab's website using Survey Monkey and a QR code for easier access. This allowed respondents to submit their letters electronically.

Physical letterboxes: secure, locked letterboxes were placed in child and family welfare facilities to collect physical letters. Posters and letters to be filled out (in German and French), as well as pens were placed near the letterboxes.

Fig. 3 - Letterbox placed in a facility

The AEF Social Lab issued a call for participation to all providers of child and family welfare services and selected 21 facilities where the team then set up the letterboxes. The AEF Social Lab had three selection criteria:

inclusion (various service contexts), equity (number of boxes proportionally to the number of structures) and geographical coverage.

- Based on the previously stated criteria, the number of mailboxes was distributed as follows:
- 7 in outpatient facilities of child and family welfare service providers (e.g. psychotherapist, speech therapist, psychomotor therapist);
- 3 in day care facilities of child and family welfare service providers (psychotherapeutic centre, socio-therapeutic centre, etc.);
- 11 in day and night care facilities of child and family welfare service providers (residential care, juvenile detention, etc.).

The survey drew inspiration from the mailbox system implemented by the association “Les Papillons”[4] in France, which sets up mailboxes in schools, sports clubs, and other places frequented by children.

[4] https://www.associationlespapillons.org

Promotion of the survey

The survey was promoted through professional networks (Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth, FEDAS, ANCES), social media (LinkedIn and Facebook), and the AEF Social Lab's website and newsletter.

Data analysis

The qualitative data collected was categorised *a posteriori* by the members of the AEF Social Lab based on an agreement between judges. This categorisation led to a codification of all the answers, which allowed the team to determine the frequencies of the categories mentioned and apply an analysis to the qualitative data collected.

Outcome of the surveys

This part of the paper will not detail the outcomes exhaustively. The outcomes can be found in French in the online library of the AEF Social Lab: https://aef.lu/bibliotheque/

Outcome summary of "The protection is..." survey

The "Protection is..." survey offered valuable insights into what contributes to a sense of safety and protection for children and young people who are child and family welfare service users in Luxembourg, despite some limitations in the survey's design and methodology. Analysis of stakeholder perspectives reveals that fostering a sense of safety for children and young people within welfare services hinges on a constellation of interconnected factors. Across all groups, the primacy of nurturing relationships and supportive environments emerges as a cornerstone of well-being. Children and young people directly emphasize the need for trusted adults, secure settings free from violence, and clear structures,

while families and professionals echo these sentiments, highlighting the significance of positive interactions, predictability, and stability. Foster families uniquely underscore the importance of attachment, a calm and protective atmosphere, and the consistent fulfilment of emotional needs within a family-like environment.

Key factors included a supportive and consistently accessible professional (often a designated educator), who provides children and young people with active listening and trust. A structured, stable, and predictable environment – with clear rules and boundaries, a transparent intervention plan, and calm atmosphere – also foster safety. Meeting personal needs (being taken care of, playing, love, having trustworthy relationships, etc.) and supporting personal and social development (respect for the service user's wishes, needs and individuality, promoting autonomy, etc.) further contribute to their sense of safety. Measures like physical safety measures, such as lockable doors were cited less often. The fact that love and affection contribute to children and young people's feeling of safety in alternative care was emphasised by some children and young people, as well as by many families and foster families. While the factors mentioned above promote safety for children and young people, experiences of relational disruption, environmental instability (including violence and the absence of a family-like atmosphere), unmet needs, and inadequate professional support were reported to undermine children and young people's sense of safety and well-being. A table featuring all the factors – reported by the stakeholders who responded to the survey – which influence the feeling of safety of children and young people using child and family welfare services can be found in Appendix 1.

Generally, whether from their own perspective or from a third party's perspective (e.g., family member, professional, etc.), children and young people using welfare services feel and are often safe within Luxembourg's

child and family welfare framework. Children and young people in foster care, on the other hand, consistently reported feeling and being safe (87.5%). This finding is consistent with evidence that safety concerns in alternative care are most prevalent in institutional settings (Moore et al. 2017; Konstantopoulou & Mantziou 2020). The case for deinstitutionalisation relies on findings that foster care leads to better outcomes than institutional care (e.g. Strijbosch et al. 2015) and on findings from child development research and neuroscience (Eurochild and Hope & Homes for Children 2014)—deinstitutionalisation being an approach long advocated by both the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The survey also interestingly revealed that in day and night settings, service users believe they are safer than what the professionals believe.

Only three quarters of the children and young people responded to the question as to whether they can complain within the framework of their welfare services, including 67% reporting that they can complain, over 10% that they don't know if they can complain and almost 5% that they cannot complain. Although, from all stakeholders' perspectives, children and young people could generally identify avenues for complaints, a notable proportion did not specify go-to persons or mechanisms. The educator was most often identified as the go-to person (except for foster families, in which case the birth family was mostly cited). Few respondents identified external complaint mechanisms beyond the children and young people's immediate care setting, such as the National Children's Office (*Office national de l'enfance*) or the Ombudsman for Children's rights (*Ombudsman fir Kanner a Jugendlecher* or OKAJU).

Approximately 30% of each stakeholder group (children, young people, families, foster families and professionals), abstained from answering questions on various facets of safety. This raises questions about the

suitability of the survey format, the clarity of the topics covered, and potential unidentified components of safety.

Outcome summary of the "Letters for the Future" survey

The "Letters for the Future" survey revealed significant findings regarding the child and family welfare system in Luxembourg. The conclusions highlighted the close interdependence between participation, protection, and complaint management, emphasising that improving one aspect strengthens the others. The interdependence between child participation and child protection is well-documented. For example, the Committee on the Rights of the Child argues that child participation facilitates their protection (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2011), Mitchell, Lundy and Hill (2023) stated that "children cannot be kept safe if they are not heard and cannot be heard where they are not safe" (p. 6) and a quantitative study by the University of Luxembourg (Engel De Abreu & Wealer 2023) established a connection between participation and well-being among young people in alternative care. Children's participation is even considered essential for achieving good outcomes for children involved in child protection systems (Woodman, Roche and McArthur 2022), while Eberitzsch, Keller and Rohrbach's (2021) analysis of multiple European studies, children and young people in residential care clearly demonstrated a need for participation, particularly in planning their own lives. The concepts of "complaint" and "participation" can also be seen as inherently linked (Hemker, 2003) and implementing complaint procedures can serve to safeguard the rights of children and young people while establishing participation as a core principle in care provision (Erz 2008; Hiller 2003). The study identified three main axes for optimising the child and family

welfare system. Firstly, an appropriate professional "posture"[5] is essential. This encompasses interpersonal skills, characterised by active listening, respect, and non-judgement towards service users and their families. Secondly, the importance of a favourable environment was emphasised. This environment should be participatory and protective, allowing service users to express themselves freely and actively participate in decisions concerning them. This involves more than just offering opportunities for participation; it requires effective participation, where service users' voices are genuinely heard, valued, and acted upon in their child and family welfare context. Thirdly, the survey highlighted the need to adapt the child and family welfare system to address several challenges. These include reducing waiting times for access to services, improving the staff-to-service user ratio, and resolving the lack of resources, particularly in terms of available places and qualified personnel. The study also underscored the need for specialised and small-scale facilities, as well as for better collaboration between the various actors in the system.

The survey also pointed to the importance of informing and raising awareness among service users. It is essential that they are fully informed of their rights, opportunities for participation, and means of lodging a complaint. However, the study revealed certain methodological limitations. The sample was limited (n=65) and the proportion of participants did not respond to all the questions or provided limited responses, while there was a low number of responses from outpatient services.

The results from "Letters of the Future" survey provided a foundation for actions aimed at strengthening the quality and effectiveness of child and family welfare services, while placing the needs and rights of service users

[5] Posture refers to attitude, know-how and ethics.

at the heart of concerns. A summary of the data trends identified regarding protection, participation and complaints can be found in the table hereafter:

	Protection and safety of children and young people	**Participation of children, young people and their families**	**Opportunities for complaining**
Good practices	Creating a safe and supportive environment for children/young people. Protecting children/young people from harm (physical, emotional, sexual). Promoting children's/young people's well-being and development. Providing clear rules and boundaries.	Creating a trusting relationship between the professional and the child/young person. Listening to the child's/young person's opinion and taking it seriously. Involving the child/young person in decision-making processes that affect them. Providing clear and age-appropriate information about their rights and options.	Having clear and accessible complaint procedures. Taking complaints seriously and responding to them promptly. Protecting complainants from retaliation. Providing support to complainants throughout the complaints process. Offering a diversity of complaint mechanisms, including internal and external channels, as well as options for anonymous or identified submissions.

Bad practices	Lack of safety and security in care settings. Exposure to harm or abuse. Lack of clear rules and boundaries. Inadequate supervision of children/young people	Not listening to the child's/young person's opinion or dismissing it. Making decisions without involving the child/young person. Not providing clear information or using language that is difficult to understand. Professionals not collaborating with families.	Lack of clear complaint procedures or difficulty accessing them. Complaints not being taken seriously or being dismissed. Complainants experiencing retaliation or feeling unsafe. Lack of support for complainants.
Ideas for improvement	Improving safety and security in care settings. Providing training for professionals on how to protect children/young people from harm. Developing clear policies and procedures for safeguarding children/young people. Increasing awareness of child protection issues	Empowering children/young people to express their views freely and without fear of repercussions. Providing training for professionals on how to effectively involve children/young people in decision-making. Developing more creative and engaging ways to gather children's/young people's opinions. Increasing awareness of participation rights	Developing more user-friendly complaint procedures. Providing training for professionals on how to handle complaints effectively. Ensuring that all complaints are investigated thoroughly and impartially. Increasing awareness of complaint

	among children, young people, and their families. Need for qualified staff. Need to avoid staff turnover. Need for more communication between staff.	among children, young people, and their families.	procedures among children, young people, and their families.

Fig. 5 - Summary of data trends

General implications/Conclusions of the surveys

Based on both surveys, the following factors appear to have a direct impact on children and young people's well-being and safety in the child and family welfare sector:

- professionals' attitude, know-how and ethics, as well as children and young people's relationship with other service users;
- systemic aspects, including the availability of resources (human, structural, financial, etc.);
- group size, having a home-like environment, being placed in foster families as opposed to institutions, feeling love/affection, etc.
- the availability of a wide range of participation opportunities and complaint mechanisms.

Key findings of the surveys

The two surveys identified three key findings informing Luxembourg's child and family welfare policy development and professional practice guidelines: first, the interconnected nature of participation, protection, and complaints mechanisms, where enhancing one area positively impacts the others. Second, the significant influence of various factors on children's well-being and safety, including professional attitude, know-how and approach, resource availability, and environmental considerations such as group size and home-like settings. Third, a gap in children's rights awareness, which is problematic as children who are unaware of their rights are unable to assert them.

Recommendations based on the surveys

When combined, the surveys' results yielded eight recommendations:

1. Develop an adapted professional attitude, know-how and approach and a favourable environment (foster a participatory culture that is protective and open to complaints; create a reassuring environment in different support contexts; ensure the availability and accessibility of qualified professionals).

2. Enhance safety and protection measures for service users (concretely organize human and material aspects contributing to the feeling of security; implement strategies to combat all forms of violence; deploy security measures and clear procedures for crisis situations).

3. Improve complaint management systems & awareness thereof (raise awareness among service users about internal and external complaint

mechanisms; diversify channels for collecting complaints; ensure quality complaint management).

4. Promote active participation of service users and families (seek service users' opinions on their safety and protection needs; develop participatory projects; strengthen partnerships between professionals, service users, and families).

5. Implement an integrated approach[6] in the child and family welfare system (foster connections between justice, health, and protection sectors; simplify administrative procedures; adjust human, structural, and financial resources).

6. Promote children's and families' rights (implement awareness-raising campaigns and workshops; collaborate with rights advocacy organisations).

[6] https://fra.europa.eu/en/content/child-protection-systems

7. Support relevant scientific research (develop research on participation, protection, and complaint management themes; study factors contributing to the feeling of safety and protection)

8. Optimize communication and information dissemination (develop information campaigns accessible to all concerned audiences; foster a participatory culture open to complaints).

Bibliography

Baran, G. (2020). Social Innovation Living Labs as Platforms to Co-design Social Innovations. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 12(1), 36-57. https://doi.org/10.2478/joim-2019-0031

Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011). General comment No. 13 (2011): The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence. https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/crc/2011/en/82269.

Eberitzsch, S., Keller, S., & Rohrbach, J. (2021). Partizipation in der stationären Kinder-und Jugendhilfe: theoretische und empirische Zugänge zur Perspektive betroffener junger Menschen: Ergebnisse eines internationalen Literaturreviews. *Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Soziale Arbeit*, 3, 113-154.

Engel De Abreu, P. and Wealer, C. (2023). Partizipation und Wohlbefinden aus der Sicht von Jugendlichen in stationären Einrichtungen der Kinder – und Familienhilfe in Luxemburg. In: *ARC – das Fachmagasinn fir Pedagogik a Sozial Aarbecht*, 02/2023, p. 19-21.

Erz, M. (2008). Warum wir uns über Beschwerden freuen?! Beteiligungsinstrumente in der Praxis. In: *Forum Erziehungshilfen*. 4 (S. 209–213).

Eurochild and Hopes & Homes for Children (2014). Deinstitutionalisation and quality alternative care for children in Europe - Lessons learned and the way forward. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/deinstitutionalisation-and-quality-alternative-care-children-europe-lessons-learned-and-way/.

Fortin, A. (2015). 9 clés des laboratoires d'innovation sociale. https://creativite33.com/2015/02/03/9-cles-laboratoires-innovation-sociale/.

Hemker, B. (2003). Beschwerdesteuerung: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen. In: *Forum Erziehungshilfen*. 4 (S. 212–220).

Hiller, P. (2003). Professioneller Umgang mit Beschwerden — ein beschwerlicher Weg. In: *Forum Erziehungshilfen*. 4 (S. 196–200).

Independent Care Review (2020). Retrieved from https://www.carereview.scot.

Kieboom, M. (2014). Lab Matters: Challenging the practice of social innovation laboratories. Kennisland.

Konstantopoulou, F., and Mantziou, I. (2020). Maltreatment in residential child protection care: A review of the literature. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience & Mental Health*, 3(2), 99-108.

Lausten, M., et Frederiksen, S. (2016). Do you love me? An empirical analysis of the feeling of love amongst children in out-of-home care. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 15(3), 90-103.

McCafferty, P. (2017). Implementing article 12 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child in child protection decision-making: A critical analysis of the challenges and opportunities for social work. *Child Care in Practice*, 23(4), 327–341. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2016.1264368.

Mitchell, M., Lundy, L. and Hill, L. (2023). Children's Human Rights to 'Participation' and 'Protection': Rethinking the relationship using Barnahus as a case example. *Child Abuse Review*, e2820.

Moore, T., McArthur, M., Death, J., Roche, S., and Tilbury, C. (2016). Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care. Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney. https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Research%20Report%20-%20Safe%20and%20Sound%20Exploring%20the%20safety%20of%20young%20people%20in%20residential%20care%20-%20Causes.pdf.

Moore, T., McArthur, M., Death, J., Tilbury, C., et Roche, S. (2017). Young people's views on safety and preventing abuse and harm in residential care: "It's got to be better than home". *Children and Youth Services Review*, 81, 212-219.

Strijbosch, E. L. L., Huijs, J. A. M., Stams, G. J. J. M., Wissink, I. B., Van der Helm, G. H. P., De Swart, J. J. W., and Van der Veen, Z. (2015). The outcome of institutional youth care compared to non-institutional youth care for children of primary school age and early adolescence: A multi-level meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 58, 208-218.

MAGALI DE ROCCO has a Bachelor's degree in Social and Educational Sciences and a Master of Arts in Social Work/Social Innovation. Since 2020, she has been working for ANCES, the Luxembourgish Association of Educational and Social Communities. Here she is mainly part of the AEF Social Lab.

MARZENKA KREJCIRIK holds a BA in Creative Writing & English Literature, an MA in Writing, an MA in Literary Translation, a PG Diploma in Translation & Professional Language Skills and an MA in Advanced Child Protection. She has been working for over 4 years for the General Directorate of Child and Family Welfare of the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth, where she now mainly works as part of the AEF Social Lab.

Postcard from Leon Fulcher

From Queensland, Australia

Brisbane is the port of entry for the State of Queensland

Kia Ora Tatau Katoa everyone!

"Australians all let us rejoice, For we are one and free; We've golden soil and wealth for toil; Our home is girt by sea; Our land abounds in nature's gifts Of beauty rich and rare; In history's page, let every stage Advance Australia Fair. In joyful strains then let us sing, Advance Australia Fair. We flew from Auckland to Brisbane, followed by a 90-minute drive to where my wife's brother lives.

Brisbane extends south to the Gold Coast and extends north to the Sunshine Coast. The coasts are noteworthy for their high-rise condominiums and apartments that are used as holiday places and hired out as Airbnb weeks for visitors from afar. Young people featured

prominently as employees in the hospitality industry. There were 'Staff Wanted' signs in many windows.

Hill walking in the hills above the Sunshine Coast offered restful times for reflection and remembering youthful memories from days in Scotland. Past visits to Cairns and Port Douglas in the far north of Queensland featured in the steady conversation.

We spent little time at the many Queensland animal sanctuaries and tourist stops to feed the animals or birds. We spent our time in a rural area where there was an extensive range of Australian bird life and bird songs. News of children dying in Gaza and Israeli intelligence inspired POTUS Trump to justify bombing missions again Iran.

Climate change has already had a dramatic impact on some parts of

Visiting a rural area about 90 mins northwest of Brisbane

Beautiful coastal vistas along the Queensland coast

Beautiful coastal vistas along the Queensland coast

ISSN 1605-7406

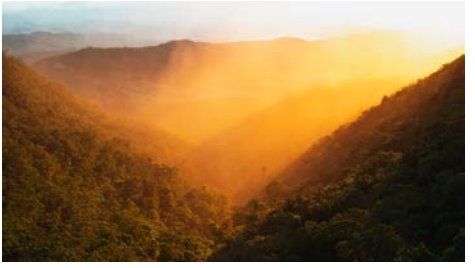
Queensland, with flooding in some places and wildfire elsewhere. Whether climate change related or not, a volcano eruption recently on the Island of Bali closed airspace over and around that tourist destination. The POTUS tariff policies have only begun to have an impact on life in Australia and New Zealand.

Our visit to Queensland followed the Australian general election in which the Labour Party gained a parliamentary majority, leaving the opposition National-Liberal coalition leaderless after the loss of parliamentary seats. It seems that politicians the world over are increasing defence budgets.

It was reassuring to see that farming is still active in Queensland, with both livestock and arable land producing well. Driving in Northern Queensland involves passing through kilometres of

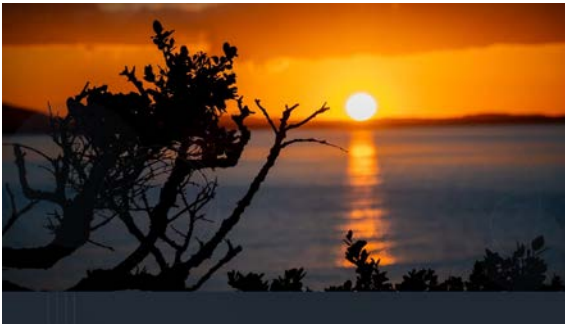
Beautiful coastal vistas along the Queensland coast

Farming on higher ground above the Queensland plains



Spectacular sunsets in the valleys and changing climate

sugar cane and processing plants for rum. Native forests retained further north are spectacular.



Sunsets near the sea along the long, straight highways

We returned from our Queensland visit feeling refreshed and recharged. While we were in Australia, the International Child and Youth Care Network at CYC-Net faced a financial crisis. While the acute matter seems to have been resolved, the long-term future must remain a high priority. Every effort needs to be made to highlight the professional learning and development opportunities available to North American and European child welfare and youth justice service agencies through CYC-Net. At the same time, each child and youth care worker needs to consider monthly support for CYC-Net and make full use of its assets!

Meanwhile, its back in my volunteer role with the Saint John Health Shuttle again as we take rural Tuai people into Wairoa for medical and pharmacy visits, along with supermarket shopping. Reconnecting with the community network is still fun. Visit Queensland! You will love it! We did!

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Go here for information on how you can help us

Mount Saint Vincent University

AMAL YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRE

ALLAMBI CARE

Otonabee Family Counselling Centre

Toronto Metropolitan University

The PersonBrain Model™

Lakeland College

kibble

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

RRC POLYTECH

Bow Valley College

Ontario Association of CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

Association Ontarienne des Techniques D'ÉDUCATION SPÉCIALISÉE

GIRLS & BOYS TOWN

MEDICINE HAT COLLEGE

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

Sheridan

Brayden SUPERVISION SERVICES INC.

Hull SERVICES

acycp ASSOCIATION FOR CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE

Shift

Seneca POLYTECHNIC

Tanager

HOLLAND COLLEGE

MacEwan UNIVERSITY

HomeBridge

HUMBER

BARTIMAEUS

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

University of Victoria

nscc

DOUGLAS COLLEGE

BOYS RANCH FOUNDED BY CAL FARLEY

waypoints guiding young people and their families

Information

Publishers
CYC-Online is an open-access e-journal published monthly by The CYC-Net Press

Correspondence
The Editors welcome correspondence at cyconline@cyc-net.org

Advertising
Only advertising specifically related to the Child and Youth Care profession will be accepted. Rates and specifications are listed over the page, or email

Columnists
Kiaras Gharabaghi, Hans Skott-Myhre, Leon Fulcher, Travis Sampson

Writing for CYC-Online
Please visit *https://cyc-net.org/cyc-online/writing_for_CYC-Online.html* for guidelines on author requirements, copyright and republication of past articles.

CYC-Online

July 2025
ISSN 1605-7406
86

Advertising in *CYC-Online*

	1 x insertion	3 x insertions	6 x insertions	12 x insertions
Size				
Full page	$250.00	$200.00	$150.00	$100.00
½ page	$200.00	$150.00	$120.00	$90.00
¼ page	$125.00	$100.00	$75.00	$50.00

Prices in US$ per monthly issue, per insertion. Full amount payable at first insertion. Deadline: 7 days before month-end

Material specifications

All artwork to be sent here
Files: Only TIF, PDF and JPG files will be accepted. All images should RGB at 300dpi resolution.
Fonts: All fonts should be embedded. We accept no responsibility for incorrect font rendering.

Sizing information

Finished Size	*Layout*	*Width*	*Height*
Full page	Portrait (5mm bleed)	150mm	200mm
½ page	Portrait Landscape	70mm 150mm	200mm 90mm
¼ page	Portrait	70mm	90mm