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with Children and Young People**

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Contents

Editorial: Have We Learned Something about Working with Youth in Group Care?	4
<i>Thom Garfat</i>	
The Dialectics of the New COVID Safety Movement	11
<i>Kiaras Gharabaghi</i>	
How can Child and Youth Care reconceptualize childhood to better support children’s rights in society?	18
<i>Steven Gibson and Tara M. Collins</i>	
Your “Lab” Notebook.....	27
<i>Doug Magnuson</i>	
Bullies and Bullied ALike.....	33
<i>Michael Ungar</i>	
The Pursuit of Happiness	48
<i>Hans Skott-Myhre</i>	
Self-Disclosure by Child and Youth Care Practitioners in the Workplace.....	58
<i>Shannon Cherry and Wolfgang Vachon</i>	
Lessons Learned: Teenagers, Trauma, Resiliency and Insight	70
<i>Larisa Jeffares</i>	
The Sun Never Sets	74
<i>Garth Goodwin</i>	
Postcard from Leon Fulcher.....	80
Information.....	85

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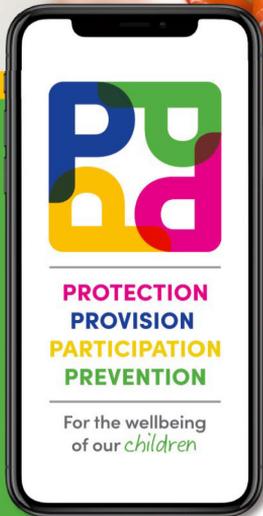
October 2020
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Have We Learned Something about Working with Youth in Group Care?

Thom Garfat

When the Covid-19 pandemic first began to affect our country (Canada) and the shut-downs began, I had numerous conversations with friends who work in the field – especially in group care – about how the young people might respond to the limitations, context, and restrictions which they were about to experience.

In general, the consensus seemed to be that the young people living in group care would have a difficult time with the restrictions / expectations – and would ‘act out’ in response to this change in external context. We talked about how to prepare ourselves for their reaction for we expected them to be reactive and that their reactivity would show up in their daily behaviors.

And now, six months later, our predictions have *not* proven to be valid. Many of my recent conversations with people who work with young people in group care suggest that the young people have not responded at all as we predicted. In many programs, it seems, young people are handling this crisis much better than we expected – indeed, many programs are



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

reporting that they are experiencing fewer struggles with youth than they normally do. Why is that?

Below are some thoughts, in no special order, from people with whom I have discussed this surprising phenomenon, about why young people are responding differently than we expected:

Sharing a lived experience

In this pandemic, young people and staff are sharing a common lived experience. In many ways it is no longer a situation of 'us and them', or even 'we', but rather a shared experience of 'us and it'. Many of our concerns are common concerns and we share in this together – unlike our everyday experiences working in care where it is 'us helping them', it is now more like 'us against it' (In Quebec, one of the government adverts calls it 'All against one. All against Covid'). Perhaps, while we frequently talk about how we are 'in this together', in this time we *really* are. Perhaps there is a difference in this common experience. Different than our normal understanding of 'being in it together'.

A reduction of everyday life stresses

As the pandemic has 'shut us all down', young people may be experiencing many less stressors in their lives than they normally do when we are living together. Appointments with therapists have been cancelled, home time has been eliminated, school (where many young people experience tremendous stress) has been eliminated. Many of the everyday life expectations on young people in care have been eliminated. Less stress equals less acting out. Perhaps, young people are relaxing some in this time of reduced pressure? For us, it may be more stressful but, perhaps, for



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

them it is less so. Perhaps the stress (as we experience it) is not so much as the stress they experience in their everyday lives.

Greater staff engagement in activities

Because the young people have not been going to school, appointments or home, staff have been more focused on being *with* the young people, involving themselves in activities and engagement with young people. After all, they have to do *something*. This engagement in activities with young people has increased the time and focus on safe relational practice and relationship development. In other times, staff might have been focussed so much on 'other therapeutic activities' that they had less time to develop real connectedness with young people in casual, 'hanging out' kinds of activities. While we talk about the 'therapeutic use of activities', perhaps we have, in this time, been engaging in activities for the value of the activities themselves? Perhaps activities have just been a form of safe engagement during this time.

Caring is more concrete and obvious

The core of our work is caring, and staff express that everyday in the actions they engage in for the benefit of the young people. However, our everyday actions of caring may not always be meaningful or obvious to the young people. In this time of the pandemic, actions of caring may be more obvious – sanitizing the living space, wearing masks, separating young people, etc. These actions of 'caring for and about you' are more obvious than our normal ways of expressing our caring – like intervention planning, etc. When caring becomes 'concrete' it becomes more obvious. And, perhaps, when the actions of caring are more obvious, they are experienced differently by the people to whom that caring is directed.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

A reduced focus on the ‘treatment’ plan

Normally, in our everyday interactions with youth, we are focussed on ‘helping them to achieve their goals’ as laid out in their ‘treatment’ plan. However, in this pandemic time, we are all focussed more on immediate safety and engagement than long term goals. This reduces the pressure on young people. They are more able to rest back and focus on the immediate. It also reduces the pressure on the staff to be constantly ‘on top of’ the youth’s intervention plan – less focus on making sure every interaction is focussed on the long-term outcome. Without this pressure to attain goals as soon as possible, we may all have simply relaxed a little.

Conclusion

The above are just some reflections but from them, I wonder about a few things.

1. Do we normally, in our everyday actions with youth, put too much pressure on them?
2. Are we not spending enough time on just ‘being with them’ to form the relational safety so necessary for them to begin to trust us?
3. Do we move too quickly to have them focus on change, on their goals?
4. Do we put too much pressure on ourselves to always be ‘on target’ and intentional in everything we do?
5. Do we not really share their life experience with them, and
6. Is just being with them more helpful than ‘treating’ them?



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

Their response during this pandemic might suggest that we need to consider these ideas.

One youth recently said 'hey, I am handling this better than some of the staff' – suggesting, perhaps, that in the shared experience the young person found a different way to consider the staff while recognising they were living a shared experience. I wonder if the staff had the same noticing.

Just wondering.

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Writing for *CYC-Online*

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In general:

- Submissions should be as close as possible to 2 500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
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The Dialectics of the New COVID Safety Movement

Kiaras Charabaghi

The term 'dialectics' has been around for quite some time. It was popularized (if by popular we mean unintelligible and unnecessarily complicated) by the German philosopher Hegel. Karl Marx picked up on the term in his work, especially in *The German Ideology*, but also elsewhere. He too made it unnecessarily complicated. Must be a German thing. Here is what I mean by the term: there are some phenomena in society that move in two opposing directions at the same time. Dialectics is a good way for exploring some of the contradictions, the tensions, and the absurd in the social world, including in the activities of institutions. One of the phenomena where dialectics can really help us make sense of things is the concept of safety. I am writing about this now, in October 2020, because the concept of safety has become paramount in many contexts where child and youth care practice is prevalent, now more so than ever because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the keyword used every day hundreds of times in schools.

In Ontario (and across many places in the Northern hemisphere), young people returned to school as of early September for the first time since schools had closed in mid-March. In preparation for their return, schools across the province started developing their safety protocols, and for weeks and weeks I listened to important people (government ministry people, school board superintendents, principals and teachers) have discussions



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

about ensuring the safety of staff and students. Public health professionals were of course also involved and providing extensive advice. Let me be clear: I have nothing but the utmost respect for the difficult work and enormous effort that went into preparing for this extraordinary school year. I acknowledge that everyone tried their very best to come up with ways to keep everyone safe once the young people return to the buildings. But after a while, I had to admit to myself that all this talk about safety was starting to make me feel very unsafe! And so I started thinking about that – why would I feel increasingly unsafe when all we are talking about is safety?

Here is the thing, expressed through the lens of dialectics: The nature of institutionally generated safety is inherently dialectic in that it generates the very conditions that make people (and especially young people, and even more so young people of particular groups) feel unsafe. Let me first focus on the concept of institutionally generated safety. This is not the same concept as community-generated safety. The purpose of institutionally generated safety is to establish an order that through its regulation of aesthetics, culture, movement and norms generates safety, primarily in the physical sense of that term. The outcome of institutionally generated safety is a product. Sometimes we refer to this product as a Safety Plan or a Safety Protocol. But whatever its name, it is still a product. Products are by nature static; once we generate a product, it doesn't change much. Products are also inherently designed for universality. We use the same product, even if we occasionally may have more than one version of that product, across an entire eco-system. The fundamental constitution of the product prevails across local or individualized adaptations. By way of example, consider the product used in most child welfare case management processes, often referred to as the Plan of Care,



or Care Plan. It is true that we write slightly different things into the Care Plan for different young people, but the template into which we write these things stays the same across all young people. This means that the logic of a Care Plan is always the same, involves the same dimensions of life, reflecting the same ideas about what constitutes care, and so on. It is, in this sense, a static product.

In the case of the safety plans or protocols that were created in relation to the re-opening of schools in Ontario, we can similarly observe that these were rendered as a product – static and with the intention of universal applicability across the whole school community. The obvious problem, of course, is that unlike the safety plans or protocols which are a product and therefore static, the concept of community is anything but static – it is instead highly fluid, a concept elaborated very eloquently by Zygmunt Bauman in his excellent book *Liquid Modernity*. Communities emerge and evolve constantly, with changing membership and associations, encompassing groups of people entirely or merely some aspects of people's identities. Moreover, unlike the safety plans or protocols at school, communities are not subject to the institutional boundaries of schools; in fact, communities always transcend institutional boundaries, existing both within and outside of those boundaries and constantly breaching the walls of institutions on their way through them.

So here we encounter not so much a dialectic, but nevertheless a tension: We are creating static products that we wish to impose on fluid communities as a way of upholding the order we institutionally require in order to generate the safety for everyone that we desire.

Things get considerably more complicated when we look more carefully at the anatomy of safety plans or protocols in schools, and in particular at



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

the built-in mechanisms to operationalize these plans and protocols. Let's explore what these mechanisms are.

The first mechanism is surveillance. All school safety plans and protocols in relation to the return to school during COVID-19 include a process by which representatives of the institution (administrators, teachers, etc.) observe the young people with a view of identifying their compliance with the basic elements of the safety plan or protocol. Are they wearing their masks? Are they doing social distancing? Are they staying in the classroom rather than roaming the hallways? The entire plan or protocol rests in the first instance on the practice of surveillance, since this is necessary to identify potential cracks in the order we require.

The second mechanism is the provision of incentives, or more commonly disincentives, to violate our required order. On the incentive side of things, we use a powerful mechanism called moral reasoning and reinforcement. We approach young people identified through our surveillance operation as potentially violating our order and speak to them about the moral imperative of caring for others by observing the safety protocols and wearing the masks, social distancing, and so on. We provide a normative compliance framework that, if accepted, provides the young person with the pleasures of inclusion and gratitude. On the side of disincentives we at the same time inform the young person of consequences that may have to be shouldered in the event of non-compliance with the requirements of our order. To maintain these as disincentives, we limit such consequences to relatively minor forms of punishment, and sometimes even merely public shaming.

We then move to the third mechanism. Here we pick it up considerably and move toward more openly coercive practice, most notably the practice of removing the young person from the eco-system altogether, either



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

through temporary suspensions or outright expulsion, usually graduating from the former to the later following repeat offenses. Ultimately, the order we require can only generate the safety we desire if we maintain the power to not merely manage, but to eliminate a threat to that order altogether. This is what suspension and expulsion are – the elimination of threat, real or perceived, to a required order.

Now all of this is fine and dandy, I suppose, because let's face it, we all want some level of order that generates a high level of safety to that the problems associated with this infectious disease can be contained. But now let's come at the concept of safety from the other side – not from the side of the institution, but from the side of community.

If we ask ourselves to identify the kinds of things that make us feel unsafe as we live in social eco-systems, I suspect we would identify precisely the things that characterize the mechanisms identified above: surveillance, moral imposition, threat of consequences, and the coercion associated with final exclusion. And here we can see the dialectics of safety in their full glory. While the institutionally generated safety plan or protocol requires certain mechanisms for its operationalization, it is precisely those very mechanisms that create the conditions for a lack of safety in the eco-system. From the perspective of the young person, it sounds like this: the institution seeks to ensure my safety by doing things that make me feel profoundly unsafe.

Now, this is not a new dynamic (or dialectic), but it is a dynamic (or dialectic) that is fully exposed in relation to COVID safety planning. I say it is not new because it describes perfectly the dialectics experienced every day by particular social groups in schools. In Ontario, this is what Black students experience every day; it is what Indigenous students experience every day. And very often, it is also what students outside of binary gender



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

constructions, and students identifying as LGBTQ2s+, and students with disabilities experience every day. By way of example, consider the issue of police officers in schools, which institutionally, are designed to enhance safety for everyone (!) by ensuring the integrity of the required order, but in practice have upset and deeply disturbed Black communities across Ontario and the United States, who feel threatened and unsafe knowing that the surveillance mechanism has been reinforced through the inclusion of law enforcement and all that this entails in the context of Police-Black Communities relations.

This dialectic has serious implications, specifically because, as I argued earlier, communities are fluid and emerge and evolve often (almost always) in resistance to institutional patterns. Gay-Straight Alliances in schools emerge as communities specifically because of the institutional failures to help students identifying as LGBTQ2s+ feel safe; informal groupings of Black Youth or Indigenous Youth, sometimes inappropriately and falsely referred to as gangs, emerge specifically because of the failure of institutions to speak to their thoughts about what it might mean to feel safe (or safer). Parent advocacy groups of parents with autistic children emerge as communities specifically because of the exclusions and indignities the institution bestows on autistic children and youth. In short, those left to feel unsafe in relation to the safety plans or protocols in schools (and across all institutions) form communities to resist the imposition of a required order on them. And they do this in the name of safety!

So here we have it: The more successful we are in operationalizing institutionally-generated safety plans and protocols, the more acutely we render the threats to safety within the (school) community, and the more that community works to resist the safety plans and protocols in an effort



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

to generate its own approaches to feeling safe within communities that are meaningful to them. Dialectics at work.

So what is our theoretical escape route? Well, this is something I am still working on, perhaps in the form of a book or a more substantial article coming soon; but in brief, at the level of theory, we have to engage the precise moment (my saxophone maestro/child and youth care theory buff Hans Skott-Myhre refers to this moment as *immanence*) where the dialectics emerge in the form of movements in opposite directions. This means that we have to theorize the meanings of institutionally-generated safety and community-generated safety more extensively, in order to understand how to design systems of safety that move from a linear dialectic to a much more complex (and likely circular, in accordance with restorative principles) form of safety driven by communities defining multiple orders in institutional settings that can be navigated to generate mutually reinforcing and fluid networks of safety rather than static products of safety that are really little more than rhetorical perversions of the Total State.

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October 2020
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How can Child and Youth Care reconceptualize childhood to better support children's rights in society?

Steven Gibson and Tara M. Collins

Introduction

The successful child and youth care practitioner (CYCP) should recognize not only the great potential of each young person they work with, but also the present-day strengths and capabilities that they possess. Often in doing so, the CYCP emphasizes the unique characteristics that allow each young person to thrive in their given environment, though we do not usually consider our notions of what a strong and capable childhood entails. It is indeed important to appreciate the individuality of each young person, though it is also important to be critical of how concepts influence and contextualize the way we think of and act towards the young people with whom we work. For those in the Child and Youth Care (CYC) field, there is a shared understanding of what it means to be a CYC, and in turn, how and why we engage with young people. Embedded in this understanding is a conceptualization of childhood unique to the CYC field, which inherently guides and informs our practice. However, we suggest that little of our time is spent defining and understanding the nature of childhood, which is most often acknowledged implicitly.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

In recent times, the realities of COVID-19 have been instructive of how conceptualizations of childhood are understood. It is another current example of how societies tend not to respect children and youth. It also highlights the critical opportunities for CYCPs to critically engage and support more respectful conceptualizations and practices to understand and implement children's rights. If our conceptualizations of childhood fail to recognize the place of children's rights, then our CYC practices will be adult-centric and oppressive, hindering our ability to work in the best interests of our young people. We should examine our decision-making processes and ensure CYC practice is consistently embodying anti-oppressive practice and a rights-based approach.

This column's narrow scope means it will not detail the various historical and contemporary conceptualizations of childhood, though some general themes will be briefly identified to examine traditional understandings of CYC, the influences of conceptualizations of childhood, and challenge the social constructions of childhood. COVID-19 offers a rare moment in time for us to slow down and be critical and self-reflective: a tenant of CYC practice and a relational CYC approach (Stuart, 2013; Garfat et al., 2018). Perhaps now is the time to answer Gharabaghi's call to consider a systemic approach to child and youth care (Gharabaghi, 2019) and understand the larger themes that influence the ways we are meeting with and considering young people.

Traditional understandings of CYC

Child and youth care practice, recognized as a historically diverse and evolving field, has long been defined by the intersecting relationship of young person, professional, and society. As time has passed and cultural attitudes towards child care has shifted, a few elements have typically



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

remained true about CYC and those who make up the CYC relationship. First, the young people involved in care are usually from a group which is experiencing oppression or have been deemed unfit to participate in mainstream societal institutions (Rizzini, 2006; Wells, 2008). Throughout the field's history, these populations have primarily been situated in the residential milieu, which has long dominated the scope of CYC (Stuart, 2013). Second, CYCPs have held an unfair share of power within the caring relationship. As well, the power dynamics that have dictated the structure of the field have reflected those of broader society. In many contexts, this has meant complacency "in its approach to centering the lived experiences of Indigenous, racialized, non-binary gendered, neuro-diverse bodies..." (Garfat et al., 2018, p. 8). Finally, society has been perhaps the most influential actor in determining the scope of CYC. Perhaps this is an obvious statement at face value, though it is a meaningful one to engage with, particularly as we are in the midst of social and civil rights movements which have once again highlighted our colonial, racist, and sexist systems, practices, and policies. Society at large, and in turn CYC, have not been defined by its inclusivity. Instead, it has long been entrenched in adult-centric systems and leadership structures. It is essential to now be critical of these systems, to envision a new, more equitable way forward.

James Anglin (2001), in comparing CYC to social work and other disciplines, notes the relational, one-on-one nature of the field. This is true, and something we should cherish - that we are in the lifespace of the young people we work with, building meaningful relationships. Though it is reductive to preclude our profession from stepping outside the bounds of the in-the-moment relationship, in fact, it is a disservice to the young person. We should now be acutely aware of the complex social factors that



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
20

are influencing the lives of our young people. A rights-based and anti-oppressive approach implores us to adapt and grow from our traditional practices.

Influences of conceptualization of childhood

With the adoption of the United Nations of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; United Nations, 1989), children began to be understood as being more than just belonging to their guardians (Hammarberg, 1990). This shift in the conceptual nature brought the concomitant expectation that the rights and needs of young people be respected and given legal value (Hammarberg, 1990). The CRC further articulates and cements the necessity of the best interests of the child as a primary concern of state parties, as well as those who provide services to young people (United Nations, 1989). However, contemporary conceptualizations of childhood often remain rooted in a traditional perspective which views young people as having limited capability and therefore having the need to be taught how to think and act (Shier, Mendez, Centeno, Arroliga, & Gonzalez, 2014). A tension exists within child rights literature, as well as CYC, balancing the need to protect the “weak, innocent and naïve child” with the objective of building capacity within young people to have a voice and participate in decision making (Peleg, 2018, p. 326).

We still experience a common theme in mainstream society of power imbalance between adulthood and childhood, which precludes respect of their rights and by extension their respect in society. This again, has been an issue historically interconnected with outdated conceptual frameworks of childhood. Reflecting upon terminology once used - mad, sad, bad, troubled, displaced, amongst others - it is clear to see that young people were not afforded their due respect. It is doubly concerning that the young



people we have labelled with these terms, and with whom we have often been hired to work with, have often been representative of populations victimized by colonialism and oppression.

It is certainly a common perspective amongst CYCPs that we have often had little political weight in relation to some of our related, perhaps more legislatively established disciplines. We want to quickly reject this as justification for why the field has not, or cannot, participate in advocating and challenging the powers that be. It is imperative as an ethical obligation to the young people we serve, that we do not simply accept being deployed at the mercy of political power. For example, we both have had professional and volunteer interactions (respectively) with populations experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. While these interactions sought to address the immediate needs of these people, through food and clothing programs, we recognize that these efforts involved little to redress the complex social factors that contributed to their marginalization. CYCPs often find themselves in similar situations, tasked with meeting the needs on the frontline without the ability - or simply time - to work towards systemic change. CYC practice rooted in a child rights-based approach must now be critical of how the field continues to wrestle with outdated conceptions of childhood, and the impact this has on the ability of young people to fully experience their rights and participate in society.

Challenging social constructions of childhood

While we are being critical of childhood conceptualizations, it is certainly worthwhile to take a step back and challenge the social construction of childhood. Though human development occurs on a continuum, with passages of time marked by meaningful rites and milestones, society views childhood as an entity separate from adulthood



remains in tacit agreement. Within our social construction of childhood, unchecked assumptions serve to further prohibit young people from participating in societal institutions, as well as entrenching them in harmful myths and stereotypes.

Considering the imbalance of power between childhood and adulthood, it is relevant to question various prohibitions on youth voice and participation. One clear example is the exclusion of young people in our democratic processes and lack of representation in our political systems. What justifies a voting age requirement within a jurisdiction? It is fair to ponder whether it is on the basis of capability, or if it is a means of maintaining adult-centric practices. There is growing literature which indicates young people positively engage when they are allowed to participate in meaningful ways. An example such as Aboriginal children in Northern Australia who have participated in envisioning new legislation for issues which are relevant to their lives (Doel-Mackaway, 2019). Furthermore, in isolating childhood from the entire human experience, we struggle to track trauma along the lifespan. While it is understood theoretically that childhood trauma is a risk factor for adult issues such as addiction, poverty, and homelessness, society often overgeneralizes young people as resilient beings. This has been accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic, in which public health responses have focused on protecting adult-centric economic activities such as dining out, shopping, and getting back to work. Through all of this, schools have been shut down and in many places parks and recreation facilities have been closed, and the hope seems to be that young people will simply bounce back from the difficulties of pandemic life.

Perhaps in reconceptualizing our understanding of young people, we must also challenge our social construction of childhood. In envisioning a



better way forward, the CYC field has the unique opportunity - as generalists who work across the lifespan of young people (Gharabaghi, 2019) – to support young people in experiencing the respect of their rights in society.

A call to action

CYCPs have a critical role to support the respect of children and youth and their human rights in society. This not only has implications in one-on-one practice but also to identify and challenge constructions and oppressions that perpetuate discrimination and disrespect of young people. This is a moment for CYC to adapt and meet the needs of young people (Gharabaghi, 2019). We not only need to recognize the ways in which we have failed to meet the standard of care our young people deserve, but also strongly and actively advocate for a better way forward. In doing so, we must reckon with our history as a practice, understand the power and influence of conceptualizations of childhood, and move to shift influence and respect to the honouring of children's rights in society.

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Your “Lab” Notebook

Doug Magnuson

If you have a CYC or social work degree you probably already know about writing down (recording) your work in fieldwork and in practice. Yet actual recording practices in the field are wildly uneven. Wilkins (2017) collected 244 records of social work supervision and found that there was enough information about what happened but little about how and why. This reporting is almost useless. It brings to mind the old, cynical observation that someone with 20 years of experience really has one year of experience repeated 20 times.

It is the why and how that makes your experience "reproducible," a scientific word that in our context means that the reader, including you, can later visualize what this experience was like, what you learned from it, how you might recognize it should it happen again, and what you might repeat doing or stop doing.

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Here we want to think about a type of recording done for ourselves and our own professional self-improvement as well as to buttress our own memories. One reason most of us quit doing this after our undergraduate fieldwork is over is that few of us have time to write about our work for an hour each day. The solution is to sample our experience. For example, I might choose one experience per week instead of writing about every shift. After a year you will have 40 to 50 experiences--a substantial number--in a form that cannot be altered as easily by time, memory loss, or subsequent emotional reactions.

Here are some ideas about how to approach this writing:

1. Pick an event/incident that happened at work; write out each person's point of view at each step in a way that makes sense from their perspective--not from yours. Can you imagine, in detail, why someone else acted the way they did? Then think about their perception of you. What would they say about your intentions and their perceptions of your actions?
2. Pick a practice principle, say, of empathy, or care, or protection, or anything else. When, how, and why did you practice this principle this day or week? Did it help or harm the situation? What do you want to learn to do better? What do you want to keep doing?
3. Try Howard Becker's (1998) machine trick. For a problem you are encountering at work, imagine a machine that can duplicate this problem on demand. What would have to be true to make this possible? Imagine the antecedent causes that have to be in place, and then imagine what might happen if some of these causes were



removed. Can you imagine an experiment in which the problem disappears?

4. Imagine an effectiveness expert was observing you at work. What would that expert say, based on those observations? Can you justify how you spend your time? If you like, you can ask a colleague to watch you and report back details on any behavior you like.
5. Imagine that your favorite writer about practice was observing you. What would that person say?
6. At work we are expected to document the dangers and problems that youth and we encounter. In your own writing, try documenting the moments that seemed to "work", experiences of joy – by you and/or by youth, and experiences when everything seems to make sense.
7. Write about the sequence of events that led to some unexpected success. Was that sequence causal or random? How do you know?
8. This is a variation on the machine trick. Imagine that your clients could get by without you. What would that look like? How far away from that goal are they now, and why?
9. More simply, what did I learn this week? What should I plan to do next week to be more effective?
10. Have these experiences happened to you before? What is similar or different? Are you different this time, or is the client or something else different?
11. Write out as many hypotheses as you can about the causes or interpretation of some practice situation. How would you test these? What type of data would help you decide?

The National Institutes of Health in the U.S. (n.d.), in their advice to scientists, says a lab book ought to include each day a "brief statement of



purpose." This simple advice can save trouble later trying to figure out why you wrote about a situation or why you acted in that way. This statement can precede each entry. You can also conclude your entry with a statement that summarizes what you learned or think you know along with simple goals for the next work shift.

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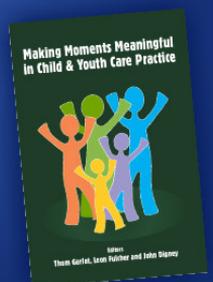
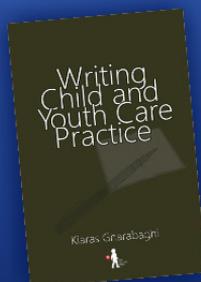
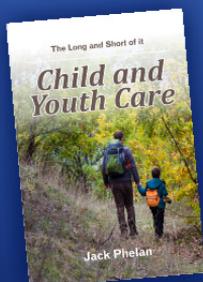
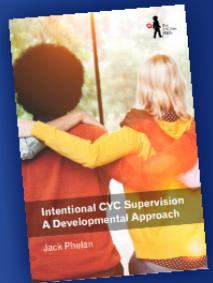
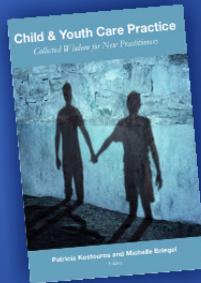
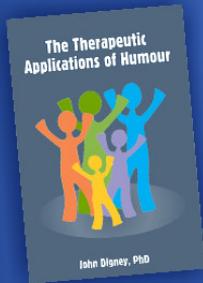
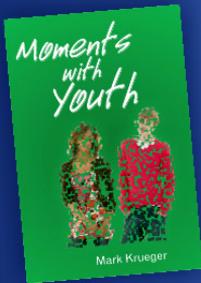
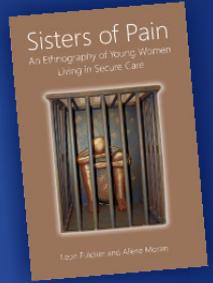
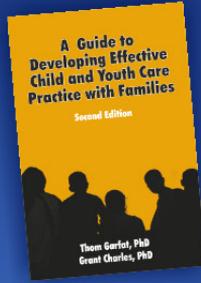
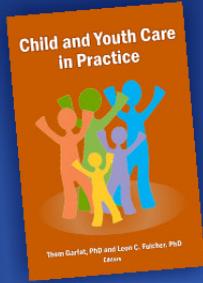
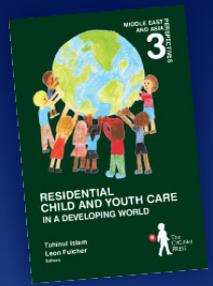
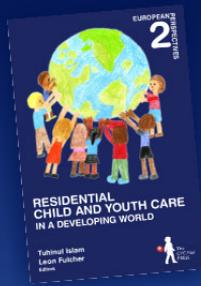
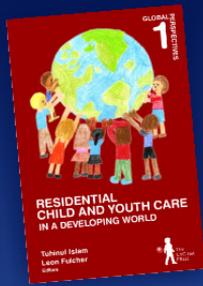
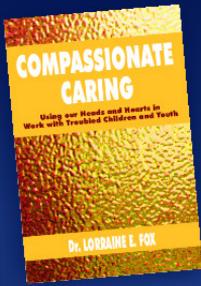
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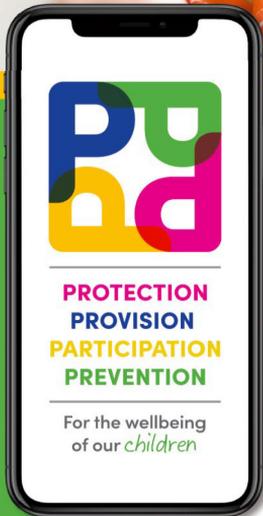

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The Covid 4P Log

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What is it?

The COVID 4P Log is a smartphone app that collects the anonymous views and experiences of practitioners and policymakers who are working to support children's wellbeing in the light of COVID-19.

Join policymakers and practitioners from many parts of the world, working to support children's wellbeing. Contribute to a study to help us to better understand the ways practitioners and policymakers responding in new, innovative, and in some cases, unprecedented ways.

How does it work?

Log your 2-minute response to one short question every day, for 8 weeks.

The questions are practice and policy-focused, and based on the '4P' human rights framework of protecting children, providing for their unique needs, enabling their participation in decisions that affect them, and preventing harm.

Then read the regular '*Learning Reports*' that will reflect what we're learning from you. We hope these will inspire change for children's wellbeing.

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<https://inspiringchildrensfutures.org/log4p>

Bullies and Bullied ALike

Michael Ungar

Geoffrey looked like a cuddly bear. A big mop of reddish hair that never seemed to be combed, freckles, a little fleshy around the arms and midriff in the way adolescent boys can get when their appetites are healthy, their bodies about to sprout, and their diet a seemingly endless snackbar of potato chips, softdrinks, and pizza, with the occasional green leafy vegetable snuck onto their plates.

You likely know a child like Geoffrey. A fellow student of mine, he usually sat at the back of my grade seven homeroom. He'd sit slouched, his legs spread, doodling. Most days he seemed completely inoffensive, just another mediocre student whom teachers might have forgotten about if not for his knack of finding victims for his cruelty.

I often find myself thinking about Geoffrey. Though I'm certain I'd have traded in my good marks if it would have made him notice me less, we were both to remain glued to one another. Geoffrey needed someone's shoulders to stand on. He needed someone that he could put down, intimidate and tease. He needed this 'someone' if he was going to find some way out of that mediocre cesspit that breeds hopelessness in lower-class white kids from stable rural communities. Geoffrey knew he was going nowhere. His solution, it seemed, was to defiantly make a claim to whatever fame was to be had close at hand.

I was an easy mark. I had been advanced a grade when I moved to Northern Ontario from Montreal just before I turned 11. I was a little smaller than the other boys the year Geoffrey and I met in my first year of Junior



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High. I did well at school. I liked to focus on projects as they came along. I was a volunteer reporter for a local newspaper. Most days, teachers liked me or at the very least could ignore me in favour of students who needed more attention.

The strange thing was that the families Geoffrey and I came from weren't that different. Geoffrey came from a working-class home with a mother at home most days. There were rumours that his older brothers got in trouble with the police, that his father was an alcoholic. I was from a working-class family that was creeping into the middle class. My father had never finished high school but was a gentle quiet man. We had our own secrets, though, ones far less public than drinking. My mother for years has coped with depression, a socially isolated woman who has lived vicariously through television and books.

But of course, Geoffrey didn't know any of this about me. Geoffrey's abusive behaviour towards me made the first three months of grade seven a long horrendous slog. Stomach aches didn't get me out of going to class. Hiding during lunch didn't avoid the taunts, punches and threats as I was regularly routed out of my quiet spaces and forced to be on the playground by well-intentioned rule-abiding teachers. I said nothing of course about what I was experiencing.

The children at the back of the class

I'd like to say that this was all one awful experience. I'd like to tell you that Geoffrey was eventually caught and disciplined for what he was doing to me and others. But that would not be entirely true. Instead, I'd like to thank Geoffrey. He planted the seed of an idea that would take another 25 years to bloom. You see, looking back at Geoffrey, I can now see that Geoffrey was not a bad kid acting bad, but a kid like me who each morning



October 2020
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rose out of bed and made the simple promise to himself: “Today I’m going to do whatever I have to do to survive!” And he did. He survived quite well given the few personal, social and family resources he had.

My long clinical career and a number of research projects have given me opportunities to meet many Geoffreys and their families. It has also helped me to understand Geoffrey’s victims, children like me who passively provided bullies with the sweetening that makes palatable otherwise bitter and hopeless lives.

The strange thing was that I’d gladly have shared with Geoffrey that which made me more respectable than him, but it wasn’t mine to share. The respectability I had found was more by coincidence than design. I had simply the talent to perform well at school. Geoffrey didn’t have academic talents. His path forward would have to be different. No amount of badgering was going to make him into what I was.

It can be challenging to intervene with children like Geoffrey. It can be even more challenging to convince those who control human and financial resources to put the money where it is needed and implement the few programs we know work with these children. Multi-systemic therapy, wraparound, family group conferencing, intensive and well-supported foster care, afterschool in-home supports, continuums of care, these are all ideas that now resonate with human service professionals that are experiencing success dealing with the most troubled children and their families. These approaches to our work share common elements: they are community based, integrated services, child-centered and family focused, and are socially and culturally competent, respectful of the unique contexts in which they are used.

Evidently, we know what to do to help. Programs to prevent violence in schools in particular are now well-known and the ones that work best are



of course those that take the most holistic approach, building communities of concern, giving responsibility for monitoring children's behaviour back to the communities and families and schools where these children live, play and are educated.

These resources work best, however, when we understand why they work. I have had hundreds of conversations with youth and their families through which I have heard over and over again about how children like Geoffrey use their standing in their communities as bullies to achieve the only successful and powerful self-definition that they perceive as available to them. I have also met many victims of abuse, both at home and at school, who have helped me to understand why it can be so difficult to play any other role than that of victim when confronted by children like Geoffrey.

For years, I have either worked with, consulted about, or studied children who present with the four D's: delinquent, dangerous, deviant and disordered. Each label clings like Velcro to children, on the one hand constraining their options, on the other providing them a perfect script for how to play out their vulnerability. It is no coincidence that children preform their identities in ever more creative ways.

The problem with labels

Taking my lead from children themselves, I resist labelling kids. I realize the diagnoses are a shorthand way by which professionals and other adults refer to children. But they are also totalizing. They define the child's life by one singular aspect of his or her narrative or life story. A bully is not only a bully. He is also the son who must care for a mother when she is tired and hurting from the abuse she has had to endure from a husband who drinks. The bully is also the victim, ever under surveillance, ever vigilant to the



October 2020
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truth others want to lay upon him. These are children guarded against the fact that they have few prospects for the future, that they are neither bright enough, strong enough, diligent enough, nor loved enough to succeed. If we put aside the labels, lay down the binoculars that we have been looking through backwards, appreciate the world momentarily from the point of view of these children themselves, we learn something about violent youth, and about their victims, and about what will work as effective ways of raising these children, that has eluded us in our conventional discourse. It all starts with hearing them talk about their lives on their own terms.

Geoffrey really wanted to be the class clown. He just couldn't quite pull it off. That's because there was a girl in our class who was a wise-cracking cussing angry girl who could, as sweetly as could be, kick a boy full force in the groin and then smile and step over him as he lay on the ground throwing up. Geoffrey, I think, wanted her power too. Hers was easier to get than mine. All he had to do to join her team was to be every bit as evil.

Geoffrey became known among the boys for his sexually explicit jokes, his accounts of his older brothers who let him peek while they had sex with girlfriends. He found in the pages of pornography the accounts he needed to shock my pubescent peers. All this made relationships with Geoffrey more complicated. After all, I wasn't the only one who had to steer clear of him. And yet, though we were trying like small sailing boats in a busy harbour to stay out of Geoffrey's wake, there was something that always pulled us to at least follow him from a distance and listen to his bathroom wisdom.

Confronting the bully

This strange relationship, and the harassment that went with it, might have continued for some time if it hadn't been for a strange convergence



October 2020
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of events. It was a day in late November and lunches were now more frequently eaten indoors in our basement cafeteria. There were french fries and I'd gotten myself a plate and sat down at the end of one of the folding tables arranged in rows across the parquet tile floor. I wear glasses now, and have since I was a young boy, but I never particularly liked wearing them. I would always take them off when I left class and fold them into their plastic case and then carry the case or put it into my school bag. Sometimes, during lunch, I'd put my glass case on my food tray. That's where it was that day — the day Geoffrey decided to annoy me once too often.

He came over mid-way through lunch, giving my tray a good bump, then turning around laughing, leaned over me and began to eat the fries. He just stood there eating. Not many, but enough to remind me how utterly silly I looked letting him do this to me. There were two or three other boys who had been walking with him when he banged my tray. I could see them now a ways off waiting in line for food, but clearly watching Geoffrey. It is all a bit of a blur what happened, but I remember that I got very confused in my embarrassment. My head felt hot, I was blushing red, my thinking clouded. Geoffrey ate from my plate for only a few seconds. Then, with one last shove, he walked away. I wanted so much to say something to him, and then when I said nothing, to leave, quickly. But I couldn't get up, as that would be more embarrassing. It would be to publicly admit he'd desecrated my lunch. So I waited, at least until Geoffrey and the other boys were safely in the line for food, their attention on ordering. I got up and dumped my tray and left the cafeteria, found my quiet spot out on the playground and forgot about the cold while I sat there on the school's back steps and tried to calm down. I was close to tears.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

That episode, like the rest of them, would have passed except that when the bell called us back to class I realized my glasses were missing. This was no small deal. My family didn't have much money and I had already broken a pair of glasses late the summer before. I'd pleaded with my parents to spend a little extra and buy more fashionable frames, even contributing some of my own birthday money to help with the cost. I feared now having to tell my mother about the glasses, but I frankly feared even more having to wear cheap frames that would make me look even more like a "browner" than I already felt. Evidently upset, I ran to my homeroom teacher and said I have to go back to the cafeteria to find my glasses. Of course, I must have dumped them in the garbage, I thought. Frantic, I ran to the basement and began to rifle through the leftovers of hundreds of lunches. I checked with the cafeteria ladies and they assured me the garbage hadn't been emptied. Thirty minutes of searching and no luck. By this point I was in tears. And that's when I figured it out. I kept going over and over in my head what could have happened to the glasses. It had to be Geoffrey. It just had to be.

I washed and went back to tell my teacher that I hadn't found them. I knew she knew I'd been crying. I told her I needed to phone home and tell my mom what had happened. She took me down to the office where the guidance counsellor was called and I was invited to phone home from her office. All the while I kept thinking this is going to be easier if I don't have to explain all of this when I get home.

I was torn, though, whether to take the blame for what had happened or to tell my mother that I was sure Geoffrey had taken my glass case from my tray. For the sake of my own survival I took the chance and told my mother what by that point I was certain had really happened. Geoffrey had been picking on me for months and had likely taken the glasses. The next



thing I knew, she was telling me to put the guidance counsellor, Mrs. Morrison, on the line. A few minutes later, Mrs. Morrison hung up. She said that she would do what she could to find my glasses. She asked me why I thought Geoffrey had taken them. I explained how he had been treating me. It felt good to drop the burden that I'd been carrying. She nodded. She listened. Best of all, she believed me.

Mrs. Morrison had me wait in her office. She said she was going to speak with Geoffrey. It would take a few minutes but she wanted me to wait. I said nothing. But I worried what would come next. What was I in for now? Trouble at home and more trouble at school? I just sat there again close to tears and fidgeted with my shoelaces.

Twenty minutes later Geoffrey and Mrs Morrison came in to the office where I was still sitting. I put down a book I'd picked up on a shelf next to Mrs. Morrison's desk. Something by Judy Blume I think. Neither Geoffrey nor Mrs. Morrison sat down. Mrs. Morrison asked Geoffrey in front of me if he had taken my glasses.

"No, I didn't do anything," he said.

She gave him a stern look and told him, "Fine. This is serious, though. Enough. The next time you bother this boy, this will go directly to the principal. No more chances. You understand?"

Geoffrey didn't look very big at that moment. Sort of flabby, his eyes were moist. I think he was confused. I'd thought he'd taken the glasses, but looking at him, I felt a little bit ashamed. Maybe he hadn't. It didn't really matter, though. They were clearly gone. My parents would have to buy another pair. I'd be yelled at or worse for not saying anything about Geoffrey earlier.

Strangely — and this is what confused me most — Geoffrey disappeared from my life after that encounter in the office. He never approached me



again. He never hassled me again. In gym class, a particularly awkward place where it was evident I was a year younger than the other boys, he never teased me. He never pointed in my direction in the shower room making me ashamed of my body. He let me be invisible. He didn't change mind you. There were other victims. But thankfully, I was no longer one of them.

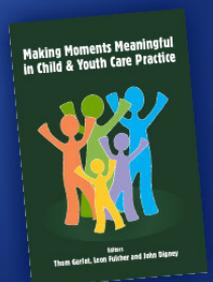
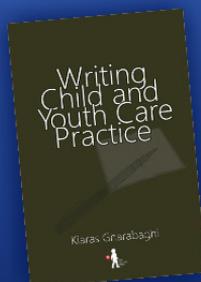
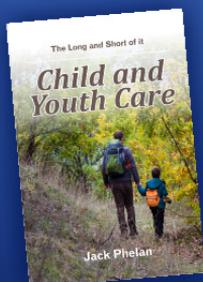
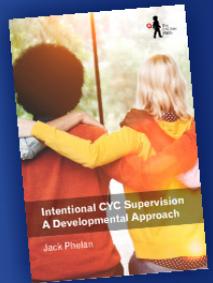
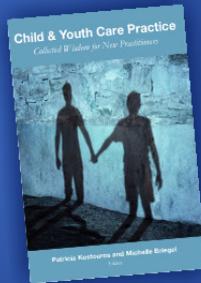
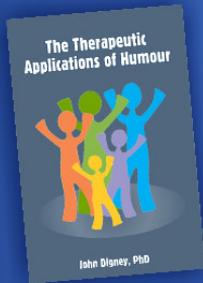
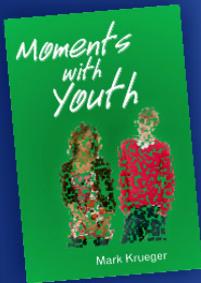
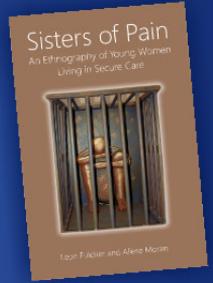
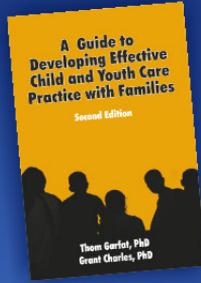
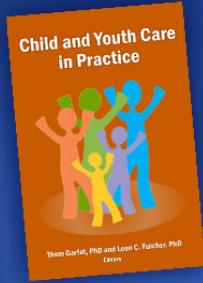
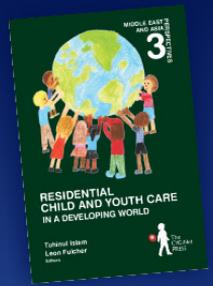
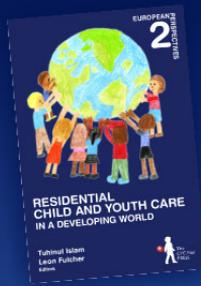
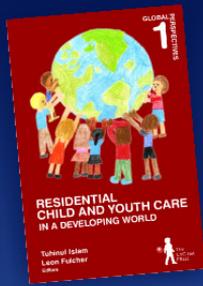
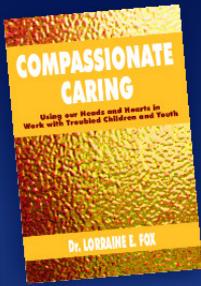
The easiest path to power

Geoffrey never intended to work very hard consolidating for himself a powerful identity, one that would be accepted by as many people as possible. With the help of the youth I now work with, I think I have come to understand better why Geoffrey gave up on me. I was simply no longer worth the effort. Geoffrey needed too badly to feel powerful and frankly, attacking me threatened the likelihood that he was going to survive. If he wanted pain and suffering he could find that at home. At school he had seized the opportunities available to him to feel every bit as powerful as he could be. This is very similar to what we already know about bullies, that their disruptive behaviour takes place in the context of environments that make the bullying possible. Instead we know we must change the environment in which children live to one which firstly, is better monitored. But that only deters the behaviour temporarily. It is far more important that we provide high-risk children with alternatives to violence that meet their needs and give them just as powerful a way of storying their lives as successful.

Mrs. Morrison was great. She defended me. She made Junior High easier. But she didn't take that next step and offer Geoffrey anything but a roadblock.



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Children's search for resilience

We now thankfully have the means to help children like Geoffrey. One way of understanding these children, one that I find useful in my work, is to understand them as searching for resilience, navigating their way to definitions of themselves as healthy as they can be. This has become the foundation of my work and guided me in the development of interventions with high-risk youth that can help us as parents, caregivers and professionals to engage better with youth without the resistance we typically encounter. Geoffrey taught me that children can change, or at the very least will adapt to survive. That episode in the cafeteria also taught me people like us here today can help. The lives of the children in our care can be made better.

Time and again in my practice I have found that children, when given a respectful space to tell their stories, talk about how adaptive their coping strategies are.

I have come to like children like Geoffrey. I identify with their desire to survive as best they can with what they have. It was much the same for me. Only kids like Geoffrey are hopelessly trapped by their lack of capacity to adapt in any way other than through their problem behaviours. Isolated in singular patterns of behaviour, they were headed towards extinction as much the great pandas of China.

Playing the Panda

Pandas have very little capacity to change. No matter where they are taken, they will eat only a few varieties of bamboo or perish. They simply cannot adapt, which is why encroachment on their traditional mountain territory has proved so fatal to their numbers. Not surprisingly, many of the high-risk youth that most resist changing their behaviours are also those



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

who have committed themselves to one way of living, one identity that brings with it the success they need to feel powerful. It's not that they can't change, it is that frequently their families, schools, communities and we professionals offer them no other more powerful identity.

In my experience most bullies, if we are to call them that, describe themselves as Pandas. In hearing their descriptions of their behaviour, I hear stories of resilience. I hear about victimized children who learn to victimize others. I hear about children with little sense of who they are or what they have to offer. I hear about lives lived in the neutered wastelands of secure suburbs where there are few risks, few rites of passage and even less attention to a child's need to impress others with grandiose displays. Oddly, we often forget that advantaged children bully too. They can intimidate through overt consumerism, keeping others in their place through the misguided notion that "I am what I can buy."

My description of bullies draws me away from understanding them as victims, victimizers or some combination of both. Instead, the bullies I meet implicate their families, schools and communities in the unfortunate drama that becomes their lives. They say that their behaviour actually has many benefits. In fact prevention programs that inadvertently discuss bullying as a way in which children gain power over others, may have the unintended consequence of increasing episodes of bullying in schools.

The problem then is one that schools alone are sorely inadequate to address. The powerful identity that the Bully finds at school is one that he or she transposes from one set of relationships to the next. We may be able to control the Geoffreys in our classrooms, but we don't change them unless they find other identities that are every bit as powerful as the one we ask them to shed. Fortunately, because children are embedded in matrices of relationships, the vast warp of positive associations and weave



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

of negative attention to be found in all communities can offer children endless possibilities to develop new ways of being themselves.

Of course, the other pieces of this puzzle are the victims, the children who are bullied. We have a responsibility to keep them safe, to create environments where they can flourish in ways other than as victims. I believe we are most effective when we help Pandas, those children stuck in their identities as worthless, to be better at navigating between peer groups. Bullied children, like I was, are far less of a target for bullies when they are able to take on multiple identities. When they have the capacity to define themselves clearly as something other than the victim that the bully needs, when they are able to assert “No, you got it wrong, that’s not who I am. This is who I am” then we see the resistance necessary to resist the role of victim.

Indeed, somewhere in this understanding of children’s search for a powerful story about themselves, we as helping professionals are going to find what we need to help better. Looking critically at our own paths to power and acceptance is a first step if we are to engage with children in an honest conversation about what works and doesn’t work when they search for resilience. Only then can we offer them alternatives that even a Panda might try.

* * *

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The paper was adapted from a Keynote Address delivered at the Guidance Counsellors Association of Nova Scotia Annual Meeting, Mahone Bay, October 24, 2003.





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The Pursuit of Happiness

Hans Skott-Myhre

Happiness is a warm gun
The Beatles

It is a well-worn cliché that all that parents want is for their children to be happy. The notion that happiness is a goal for one's life that should be sought and sustained over time underpins a great deal of our frustrated desires and momentary pleasures. Indeed, the [United States Declaration of Independence](#) holds that the “pursuit of happiness” is an “unalienable” human right and that it is the role of government to secure that right, along with life and liberty. The portrayal of happiness saturates our media with representations of happy individuals, families, and groups. Advertisements are centered on people who have achieved happiness by buying and using various products. Our media feeds on Facebook, Tic Tok and so on are filled with a seemingly endless stream of happy smiling, laughing faces. Our self-help bookshelves are populated with books and videos that purport to provide behavioral prescriptions and formulas for happiness.

There are even indexes of happiness based on [Bhutan's national standard of gross national happiness](#). This index was established in 1972 by the king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck who established it as a corrective to measuring national success by the gross domestic product. The idea was that sustainable development should take a more holistic approach that considers non-economic factors of well-being. While there is much to be said for looking beyond the economy for indices of societal



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

well-being, the use of the term “happiness” has unfortunate and possibly unintended implications when translated into the vernacular of high capitalism as it is practiced in the United States, for example.

The United States is by all indications a relatively unhappy place. While one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it ranks 13th in overall well-being. [A recent study by Forbes](#) indicated that more than half of Americans are feeling highly stressed and report having experienced a major life stressor in the past year. American’s are experiencing financial stress because their wages are not keeping up with inflation. The social media portrayal of the wealthy shows a way of life that is inaccessible to most Americans. However, the idea of the American Dream drives many people to see themselves as failures when they don’t achieve continuous upward social and economic mobility. Americans work more hours and take fewer vacations than any other developed country and have overall high rates of diabetes and obesity. In response to daily stressors they are heavily medicated and use an array of gadgets to “zone out.”

All of this said, there is a movement to increase the happiness quotient in the U.S. that is premised in the [Charter for Happiness](#). On the surface, the charter is a laudable document that calls for economic, environmental, and social justice as foundations for increasing happiness in the U.S. Unfortunately, a closer look indicates that the Charter makes no significant structural critique of the issues indicated in the Forbes report. Instead, the document suggests that change should begin with shifts in individual behavior that will then expand across society and create significant social change. While there may be some merit in the development of what Foucault called micro-politics, the conditions cited by the Forbes report may well make that a seriously compromised project.



Indeed, this is one of the problems that [Ian Parker](#) delineates in his critique of mainstream psychology. Parker suggest that individualizing suffering through diagnosis and treatment obscures the societal dysfunction underlying the proliferation of psychiatric disorders. The questionable worth of individualized psychiatric assessment and treatment is echoed in the Forbes report. The report indicates the overmedication of the population for psychiatric disorders, in combination with self-medication of suffering through illegal drugs and alcohol:

The rate of antidepressant use has surged 400% over the last decade, according to the CDC, though that may also be due to the heavy marketing of drugs like Zoloft, Lexapro and Paxil. The percentage of workers testing positive for illicit drugs such as cocaine, amphetamines and methamphetamines has increased for the second consecutive year in the general U.S. workforce, according to a 2015 workplace urine drug test of more than 6.6 million tests by Quest Diagnostics, a company that provides clinical laboratory tests on potential and/or current employees for companies. Some 4.7% of the general U.S. workforce tested positive for illegal drugs in 2014, compared with 4.3% in 2013.

While these statistics are 4-5 years old, we know that under pandemic conditions [rates of drug addiction, suicide, violent death, depression, and anxiety](#) are at record highs. The fact is that the U.S. is doing very well financially, but extremely poorly in terms of “happiness.”

Part of the problem, as I have mentioned, is the way in which we individualize the suffering we all experience as though we are the only ones who are anxious, depressed, perpetrating/witnessing/being the victim of violence, or increasing our use of drugs or alcohol, sometimes to the point of addiction. But we are not the only ones. We are not the bodies that have the disease, contrary to popular discourses on the biological, genetic,



and/or neurological explanations for our pain. Our anxiety, depression, violence, and substance misuse are the symptoms of a diseased ecology, not of our own individual malfunction. The prevalence and proliferation of our suffering is an indication of a toxic environment. It is an environment in which the young people we serve live at constant risk. While we pay lip service to the levels of risk in their communities, schools, and homes, as a society we still manage their lives at the level of each individual child. We see their anxiety and PTSD as individualized responses rather than as an emotional and psychological pandemic. But I would argue that our suffering is a kind of pandemic. As the Saigon puts it in their song [Bullets 19](#)

*A day before Corona hit, I read an article that read
200 shootings in Chicago predicted for tomorrow
But what I didn't see was politicians all over the screen
Talking 'bout a vaccine, stopping kids from getting hit with them hollow
But are bodies in Baltimore less important 'cause they poor?
They don't call for an uproar?
It's not an emergency when your board could count more
People that die from guns without going off to war
If we added up the numbers from ghettos across America
There's more deaths than the virus, and where is all the hysteria?
Niggas is social distancing, we playing our part
But when it's over, I hope my kids can go play in the park
You know why? You know why?
Tell 'em
[Chorus]
Our children shouldn't have to run from bullets
Our children shouldn't have to run from bullets*



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

To live in a society in which we choose from day to day which pandemic we feel we have to fear is to some degree untenable. And further, to feel as though whatever the threat is, if we are not fully ensconced in privilege, we will be at some level disposable bodies. We survive or die epoch to epoch, from the crack to the opioid epidemic, from AIDS to COVID 19, from school to police shootings, from sexual assault to sexual trafficking, from poisoned water to wildfires, and so on. And during it all, we hear the constant call to stay strong and improve ourselves, to be resilient and beat the odds, to constantly self-improve. We are strongly encouraged to pursue happiness relentlessly in the face of a world of hurt and suffering.

Colin Wright calls this “toxic positivity,” which is term he says he stole from queer theorist Jack Halberstam. Toxic positivity is the idea that aspirational happiness is tied to conventional (read capitalistic) notions of success. That is, our path to being happy requires us to behave within highly normative standards. Within our highly competitive and individualized society, this means to demonstrate stoic resilience in the face of generalized conditions of fear, pain, and suffering. Wright suggests that this is toxic, in that it denies the actuality of our lived experience in which we are not necessarily resilient or stoic, but can be often overwhelmed with feelings of anxiety, sadness, and anger. While our “sunny and upbeat society” calls on us to overcome these negative emotions, the actual conditions under which we are living make that at some level unreasonable. The question that Wright asks is whether there is some possibility that the “negative” has transformational capacities in and of itself. Does failing to succeed under current social conditions offer hidden alternatives not premised in social demands for denial and obfuscation of our collective suffering?



This is extraordinarily difficult when everything around us promises us that if we just work harder or seek endless self-improvement we can experience what Wright calls “endless modes of intense pleasure and fulfillment.” This is certainly the promise offered through social media, politicians, our schools, and in many cases our CYC institutions and programs. We can overcome our suffering through compliance with the algorithms of global virtual capitalism. If we can just get the right therapy, the correct drug cocktail, the proper behavioral regime, find the self-help site that actually fits us, follow the rules, bend ourselves into the portrayal of success presented to us on social media, or simply act “happy” i.e. fake it till you make it, then happiness and success will be ours.

However, as [Deleuze](#) points out this is actually not a formula for success, but a path to indefinite postponement, in which we will never actually arrive. Instead, we will be inducted into a cycle of self-production that increasingly alienates us from our own desires and perhaps more importantly from our connection to each other. Deleuze refers to this as the shift from the individual to the “dividual.” The dividual’s role in society has little or nothing to do with someone’s creative capacities or personal desires. Instead, a dividual is simply a marketing niche designed to be activated as a cog in the broader machine of capitalist production. In our own work, we can see this in the emerging use of terms such as emotional or social capital when referring to the young people we engage or even our fellow CYC workers. In a term, our capacity to feel, love, and connect can be commodified. To be alienated from each other brings intense feelings of loneliness. To be alienated from our self makes us even lonelier. This is a kind of emptiness that no pursuit of happiness can remedy.

Obviously, this emerging and proliferating world of the social is a disaster for a field premised in living relations. If we build our programs and



institutions in ways that promote the endless pursuit of narcissistic happiness, we will be complicit in producing a set of social relations that is both bereft of actual human feelings and infinitely lonely. Because the machinery that produces this kind of disaster in our social ecology is operates largely outside our conscious awareness, it may well appear as though we are pursuing emotional and mental health. We will be aspiring towards personal betterment and self-actualization. But the actuality is that we will be functioning in opposition to everything we think we are doing. By individualizing and idealizing the pursuit of happiness, we will be missing the actual point of relational caring.

Happiness is like so much else in our world, a commodity. This is to a large degree the implied parody of the Beatle's song I quoted at the beginning of this column. So, what is the alternative? Is it to simply indulge pain and suffering? Not at all. The alternative is to acknowledge that we share collectively in a malaise premised in a damaged and toxic social environment. We cannot repair this ecology by isolated individual acts of striving. It needs to be done collectively.



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October 2020
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To work together as a community has a certain emotional resonance that I would argue is far more powerful than individual happiness and perhaps a bit more attainable. When we come together in ways that help us to understand that our suffering is not an individual pathology, but an indication of our alienation from one another, then new worlds become possible. CYC is uniquely positioned for this work, provided we don't fall into the traps of the neo-liberal capitalist machine.

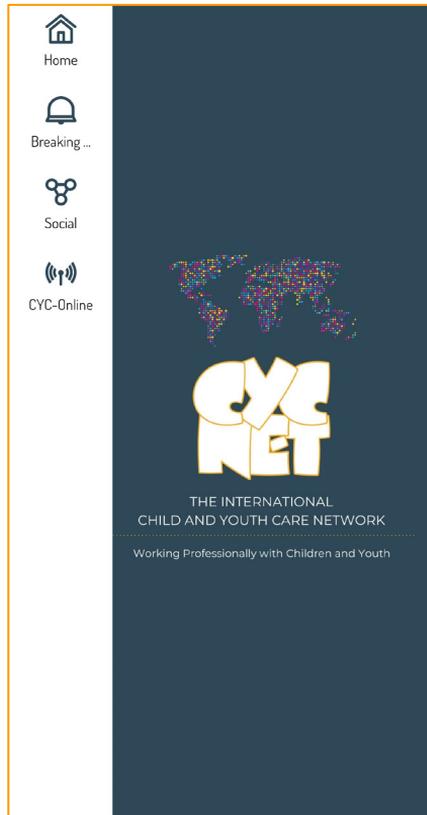
We can't go back into a world that is past, but we can go forward into a world that hasn't been. Sometimes we forget that society is not out there, but right here. We are society. We built this social world and we are accountable for that, just as much as we are accountable for the toxicity that we are producing in our physical environment. We can take steps to remedy our effects on the physical environment and I would argue we can take steps to remedy the increasing toxicity of our social ecology. But we must do it together through relational care. That is to say we need to care for each other as though our lives depended on it – because they do.

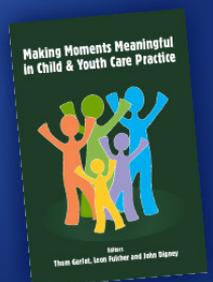
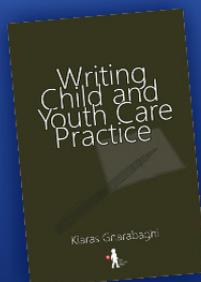
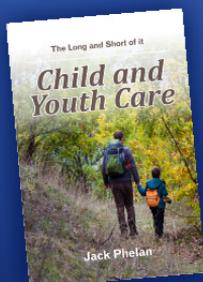
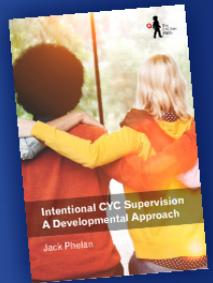
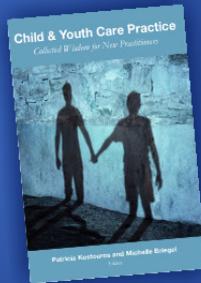
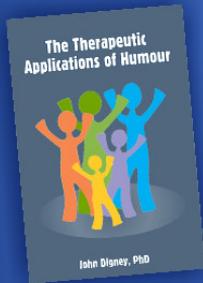
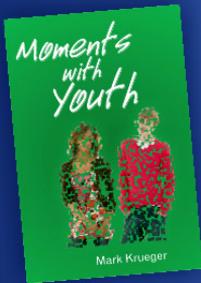
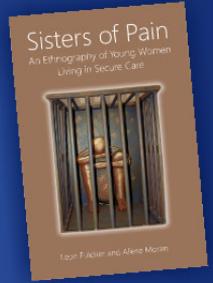
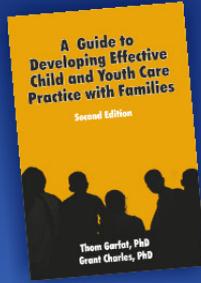
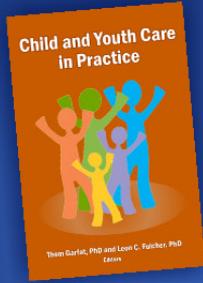
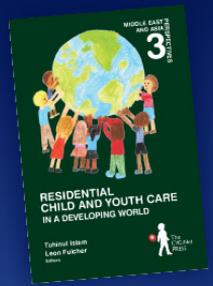
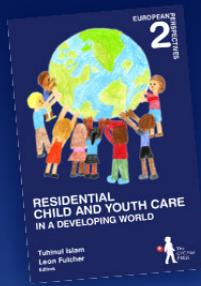
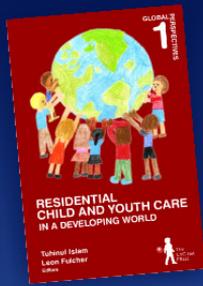
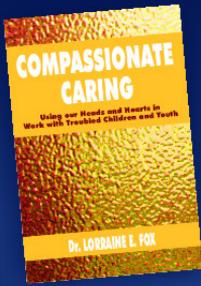
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Self-Disclosure by Child and Youth Care Practitioners in the Workplace

Shannon Cherry and Wolfgang Vachon

This is the third in a five-part series of articles which explores what disclosure of child welfare lived experience does to and for Child and Youth Care (CYC). Using the two author's personal experiences with disclosure and discourses of disclosure in allied fields, this series examines the broader contexts of "disclosure" in CYC; the politics and use of disclosure; disclosure in the workplace, particularly with young people; the recent embracing of "lived experience" which we see at times slipping into pushing for people to disclose; and then ending with an article exploring ideas of power and privilege as they relate to disclosing.

Introduction

This article is the third in a series of five considering what child welfare lived experience (CWLE) disclosure does for and to Child and Youth Care (CYC). In our first article, the primary goal was to situate and contextualize CWLE disclosure in CYC using both of our experiences with disclosure as a launching point to future discussions regarding this topic. In our second article, we looked at the politics and culture of disclosure in CYC and elsewhere (with a focus on mental health systems). In this, our third article, we analyze CWLE in the workplace and how this may impact the young

people served. Continuing to use our personal understanding of disclosure, while leaning on work done on this topic in allied fields, our intention is to provide an examination of disclosure in the workplace, how disclosure impacts and/or potentially benefits the workplace and how all of this is related to the young people we serve.

We know that there are Child and Youth Care practitioners from care (CYCPfC) working in a variety of milieus. We know some of them personally, while learning about others from people we know. As discussed in our first article, we understand that there are some CYCPfC who are more inclined to disclose while others are less disposed. The dichotomy of choosing to disclose or not to disclose in the workplace is not a simple or straightforward decision (Marino et al., 2014). Choosing whether to disclose is about weighing through the many pros and cons and coming to a decision that best works for the individual, including the perceived benefits of sharing for the recipient and impacts on the larger workplace. Disclosure decisioning is a process that evolves over time and is likely to differ from workplace to workplace and person to person, as personal, professional, and contextual agendas shift.

Disclosure in the workplace

Earlier in my career, I (Shannon) did not disclose my CWLE in any professional context. Having spent an entire childhood being defined by it, I was tired of the label. It did not then feel like the superpower it does now, but something I should keep hidden. The boundaries I had been taught in school echoed in my practice; I kept anything personal about me private, my boundaries were thick and impersonal. Occasionally, among my closer peers, I would disclose about my CWLE when not disclosing started to feel



like a lie. I was often met with surprised expressions and responses like “Oh, I would never have guessed, you’re so ... articulate ... so put together ...”

What was it about me that made my CWLE so surprising? I wondered if it was really that hard to picture the young people we work with as well-adjusted adults finding their way into the world, securing meaningful employment and doing an effective job. Or was it just that rare to meet a CYCPfC? Up until participating in *Tuning into CYC* (Wolfgang’s PhD. with CYCPfC) I had never knowingly met one myself.

When it comes to disclosure in the workplace, women are more likely to self-disclose than men and academics less so than non-academics (Crozby, 1973). How one is grounded in their practice also impacts their decisions around disclosure. For example, psychotherapists who are grounded in humanistic and feminist practices are more likely to self-disclose (Marino et. al., 2014) than those grounded in other approaches. It would be interesting to see if these ideas hold true in CYC and if the type of disclosure has any relevance, for example CWLE.

As my career and academic goals begin to collide, I find myself disclosing my CWLE more frequently. Sometimes I do it for shock value, to witness the surprise my colleague or supervisor may have. This move to shock seems to sit in the realm of declaring, as discussed in article two. I easily disclose if I am trying to bring meaning to a conversation, like when I announced (declared) to a group of 50 colleagues I had grown up in child welfare so that we could begin discussing how to support young people currently in child welfare in schools. I have even disclosed in a job interview when I thought it would give me a shoe in (I did not get the job).

Disclosure is tricky in the workplace. You can never guess someone’s biases or understanding (Chadoir & Fisher, 2010; McIntyre, 2019). Once you disclose, your actions may be defined by this new identity people



understand you to have. I once overheard someone whisper to a friend “Oh, she’s like that because she was a foster kid”. I am not sure what trait they were referring to, but it did not feel positive. There have also been occurrences where my CWLE has endeared me to others as they too recognize it as my superpower. Disclosure can generate feelings for the person being disclosed to (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010) and it tends to lead to more positive feelings toward the discloser (Omarzu, 2000). These are relevant considerations for the CYCP in deciding whether to share elements of themselves, including being conscious of the potential for manipulation through instrumental applications of disclosure with the intention of specific emotional responses from the young people we are working with.

Our perception is there’s a cultural shift regarding disclosure of lived experience(s) in the social services, including CYC. The shift is from stigma to recognition and moving at times towards celebration. In this cultural change we perceive more practitioners deciding to open up spaces to share aspects of their pasts.¹ Whereas historically people may have been marginalized, dismissed, rejected, or not hired if they had a history of particular lived experiences and identities, in some quarters there is now an intentional seeking out of some experiences. For example, several hospitals and agencies in the UK and Canada actively recruit people to work in mental health services who have lived experiences with mental health services (Conchar, & Repper, 2014; Dorset Mental Health Forum n.d.). This is a stark contrast from a conversation Wolfgang had about 15 years ago with someone whose mandate it was to recruit people who had lived experience(s) that would be parallel to those the organization served

¹ For more on this, see our second article *The Politics of Disclosure by Child and Youth Care Practitioners with Child Welfare Lived Experience* in Issue 259 of *CYC-Online*.



(mental health challenges and addiction primarily). Even though this person's job was to actively seek out potential employees and their salary was paid by the organization, she advised potential applicants not to disclose anything about their lived experiences of mental health challenges, mental illness, or addiction in their resume, cover letter or interviews. Her perception was that while the organization stated they wanted "lived experience", those doing the actual hiring rejected such candidates when they applied.

This organization now posts on their website that they are actively recruiting people with "lived experiences" of mental health challenges and/or a history of addictions as a way to "walk the talk" and thereby "demonstrating to other employers that people do recover" (while these are direct quotes, we are not publicly disclosing the name of the organization). They have a Human Resources person prospective employees can contact for support with their application. In addition to recruitment, they run a (confidential) "affinity group" for self-identified employees with a history of lived experiences of mental health challenges and addiction and discuss this group at all new employee orientations. We recognize that what is posted on websites and actual hiring practices may still not align completely; however, the public declaration is a significant change from 15 years ago.

We have not identified many similarly explicit moves in CYC, although there are a few emerging examples. We are starting to see people with CWLE take on positions related to their experiences. For example, Jane Kovarikova, a child welfare researcher and former "youth-in-care" recently became the board chair for Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions (formerly known as Children's Aid), in Ontario, Canada – the first person with CWLE to hold such a position in Canada that we are aware of. John Seita, who



lived in the child welfare system in the USA, has worked in child welfare for many years and co-edited *Growing up in the care of strangers: The experiences, insights and recommendations of eleven former foster kids*, a book of essays authored by people “from care” who work(ed) to change child protection services. Many boards of youth serving agencies are recruiting for lived experience related to their mandate or targeting youth to join their boards (Ramey et al., 2017), and some agencies, such as youth shelters, community hubs, and outreach programs are starting to intentionally hire people with parallel experiences.

Disclosure to young people

In contrast to workplace and employment situations, I (Shannon) almost never disclose my CWLE to young people. If I do choose to disclose, I assess whether the disclosure has therapeutic value, and I ensure that it is not about me or driven by my need to share.

Early on in my career, I was once asked by a young person what I knew about foster care. I had been having a difficult time connecting with her as she pushed me and other staff away. I had been working with her for a few months before she asked me what I could possibly know about her situation. I answered her honestly and immediately the relationship shifted. I have long thought of this story as an example of an effective therapeutic use of disclosure. I have much different feelings about this story now. I remember the moment well and my intentions were to offer an opportunity to bond, but now I wonder how much of it was about power and I reflect on how relieved I was when she was no longer so difficult to work with. I can count on a single hand how often I have disclosed my CWLE to young people in nearly two decades of professional practice.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

Wolfgang remembers talking with two young people who were both facing a very difficult life change which there was no way to avoid (not about living in care). I shared with the two of them a story about my own experience with this same life change. I think the disclosure was useful for each of the young people as it allowed us to speak openly about preparing for their impending changes; I could share some things that were effective for me and things that were not. I could also speak about some of the lasting impacts. My disclosure facilitated a conversation that I don't think could otherwise have happened. No one at my workplace was aware of the history I shared. I was self-conscious and concerned that if it became public there could be negative professional implications, consequently I asked them to keep it a secret (something that Shannon also did in the story above). One of the two young people never spoke of it again. The other person would regularly allude to the discussion, they would subtly refer to it when other young people were present and seemed to particularly enjoy discreetly reminding me of "our secret" when my colleagues or supervisor was present. They never actually revealed our conversation to anyone else that I am aware of, yet it was always present. This request to ask them to keep my history a secret was, of course, unfair to them (and myself). The conversation may have ultimately done more damage to them than the benefit of sharing my experiences. It was a difficult lesson that I hold dear and one which continues to inform my approach and thinking about disclosure, these many years later.

Because of the impacts I was seeing on this young person, our relationship, my relationships with other youth, and my own emotional responses, I started to think much more about disclosure. I spoke with a few trusted colleagues about this situation, read more on the topic, and came up with my own personal guidelines regarding disclosure. Whenever



I am drawn towards sharing something personal about myself, I start by reflecting on who the disclosure is for. This has two elements. First, will this disclosure benefit the young person? Meaning, is there some sort of relational, healing, therapeutic, or other beneficial element—for the young person or family member—in my sharing? I want to be able to articulate what good I expect from sharing, declaring, or disclosing this aspect of myself. The related flip-side of “who the disclosure is for”, is how much of this is about my needs? Meaning, am I doing it because I am not sure what else to do, I feel helpless, I’m frustrated, reacting emotionally, or I just want to “connect” (such as to feel cool or feel a part of)? Finally, I also ask myself if I am prepared to have this information shared with everyone else this person knows. Am I okay with their friends, their parents, other professionals, my colleagues and supervisor knowing these things about me? Since I no longer ask young people to keep my secrets, I need to be prepared for them to share my stories.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
65

These guidelines are my starting point. Answering the above questions to my satisfaction does not necessarily mean I will share. I may still choose not to talk about elements of my past, for any number of other reasons; however, if I am not okay with the answers to these three points, I don't disclose. If I am unsure, I may have a conversation with colleagues or a supervisor to gain their perspective (and I always tell students and new practitioners to have a conversation with their own supervisor before they disclose anything of significance). If one is not ready to speak with co-workers and their supervisor, it is likely they are not ready to share.

No matter where or how I (Shannon) disclose, I am only open to sharing my previous status as a young person from care. I never share what brought me into care or the context that kept me there for nearly all my childhood. It is personal and never feels relevant to the work I do. Often, the person I have disclosed to will ask follow up questions, wishing for me to disclose more. Many have asked me bluntly why I was in care. It is curious, the nature of wanting to know more, to lean in with interest around stories of disclosure. I wonder if it is the nature of the CYC to ask follow-up questions or if it is the context of the disclosure. The acrimony I sometimes feel about further questioning rarely gets in the way of my choice to disclose.

Conclusion

While we perceive that CWLE self-disclosure likely has positive impact in CYC and that CYCPfC are in a position to offer worthwhile contributions to their work sector, little empirical research has been done on the long term impacts that self-disclosure may have in workplaces (Marino, et al., 2014) and certainly none that we know of has been done in CYC or related to CYCPfC. Workplaces seek out specific experiences in their hiring, this is



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

starting to include lived experiences. Individual CYCPs may look for work related to their lived experiences and might choose to disclose in order to be hired at those locations. Once in the workplace individuals may develop personal guidelines regarding sharing aspects of their lives, which they then need to align with the policies of the organization. CYC workplace disclosure is context specific. Where one works, how far along they are in their career, the nature of their experiences, and who is the recipient, in addition to a multitude of other variables will encourage or discourage one from disclosing, sharing or declaring their lived experiences.

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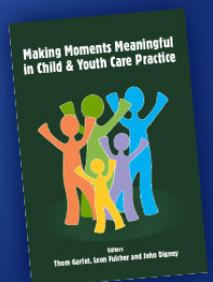
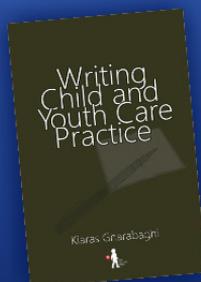
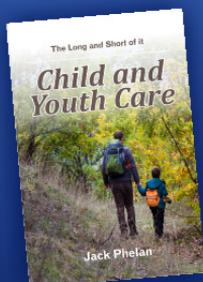
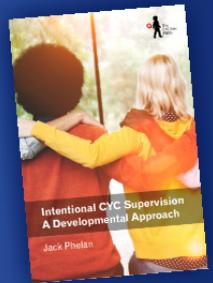
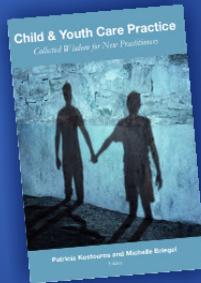
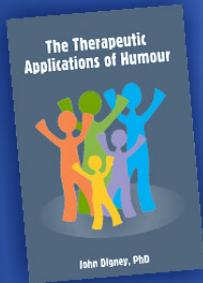
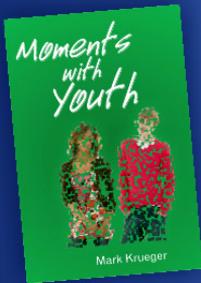
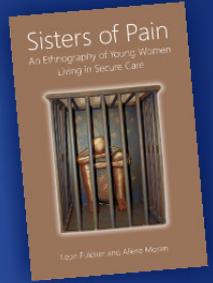
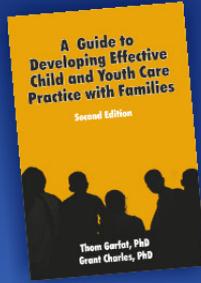
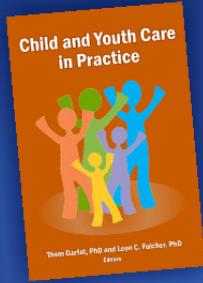
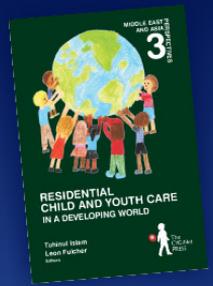
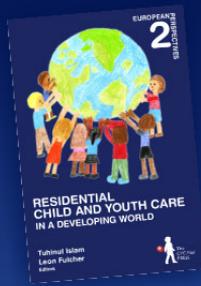
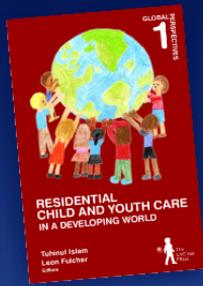
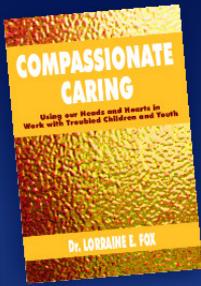
WOLFGANG VACHON has been working with children and youth for close to three decades including those who are street involved, LGBTQ+, survivors of trauma, minoritized, living in detention, and other forms of state care. A significant part of his practice focuses on using arts which has led to developing dozens of plays, and other arts-based projects. Wolfgang teaches Child and Youth Care at Humber College, and is currently completing his PhD in CYC at the University of Victoria. Wolfgang is a host of CYC Podcast: Discussions on Child and Youth Care (www.cycpodcast.org).



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October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
68



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Lessons Learned: Teenagers, Trauma, Resiliency and Insight

Larisa Jeffares

Covid-19 restrictions have given me the time to think, walk in nature and engage in self-reflection in a deeper, less time-constrained way. They have also afforded me the time to connect in a different way with my kids and my husband. These new treasured moments occur amidst longing for extended family, fun activities with friends, sports, the normalcy of what was and the anxiety of what is. I am left experiencing gratitude and saying the occasional swear word. This time of consistent adaptation and letting go has afforded me a slower schedule, a schedule that allows for time to write, to remember the beginnings of lessons I am only now understanding and to consistently build habits that are helping me to let go of historic regret. As I engage in the life moments brought to me by COVID-19, I am often reminded of the lessons I learned early in my career. Many of these lessons were taught to me by teenagers who were impacted by terrible life experiences and traumatic, paralyzing pain. These teenagers were people who survived, moved forward and contained their pain in their young bodies. I am reflecting upon times when I was working in a treatment center, group homes, in community programs that support people experiencing homelessness, as a caseworker for high-risk youth, an assessor for Children's Services and working with sexually exploited youth. I



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

was hired to support, counsel, enact legislation, care for, protect, provide basic needs, teach and listen. Connecting with each one of the precious humans entrusted to my care was, at times, incredibly intense. Yet, with each experience I shared, the kiddos taught me how to live and how to be present. In many ways, my engagement with these teenaged people prepared *me* for a pandemic. Here is what I learned and thankfully have remembered.

1. Candy picnics - driving with nowhere to go while listening to loud music keeps people safe and happy.
2. Find ways to live in the moment - breathe, notice, be present. It matters greatly!
3. Share stories - listen and connect with your heart.
4. Simplicity heals – simple, connected moments create the ability to heal complex pain.
5. Forgive – we are all human and each one of us has a story.
6. Love really can heal the world. The word doesn't necessarily need to be spoken, it is ineffable and can be shared through presence and relationship. Love changes those who experience it.
7. Play, be silly, laugh, let go ... rinse and repeat! Being whimsical is not a destination, it is a state of being. Be curious, nurture yourself and others and one day whimsical will become you.
8. Be in nature – ride your bike, walk, listen to the birds, smell the air. The rhythm of the forest will gently give you what you need.
9. Cook outside, the food tastes better.
10. Stand firm in your feet, feel the ground beneath you, sense yourself always and listen with you heart. Rigidity is avoided when you hear with your heart.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

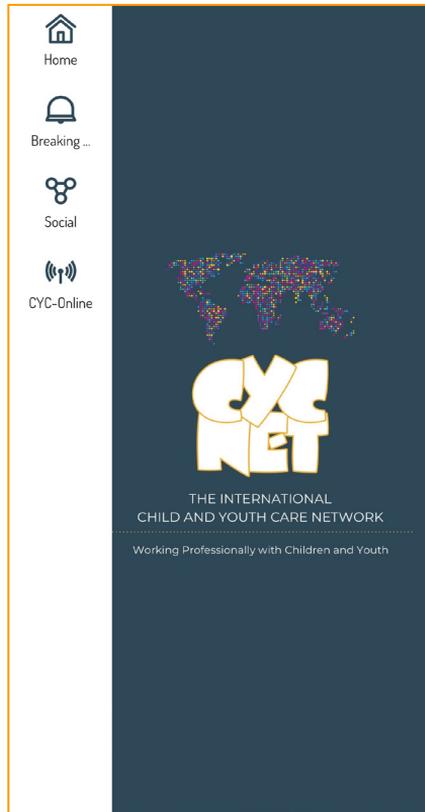
11. When you help someone find healing, you heal. This is compassion's gift.
12. Babies, children, teenagers, adults, seniors, homeless people, politicians, people in pain, angry people, people struggling with addiction, people in jail, lawyers, doctors, business owners, people making poor choices, teachers, social workers, counselors, people of all faiths and nationalities and sexual orientations, atheists, garbage collectors, people without work, people who are overworked – all people matter. Human beings matter! In whatever roles you play in this world never forget that all humans matter as much as you do!

LARISA JEFFARES works in private practice as a Child and Youth Care Counsellor. She uses a connection to nature through forest hikes and a variety of somatic practices to support the people she serves. Larisa enjoys almost any activity that connects her to nature, yoga and qigong. She lives in Edmonton with her husband, two sons, two birds and dog named Ned.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

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The Sun Never Sets ...

Garth Goodwin

The sun has been down for an hour and a half now as summer gives way to fall one minute a day. Dessert was taken by the light of the oil lamps, the kind found in every frontier home be it a sod hut or a swank Victorian confection in the good part of town. The dark is a new kind of dark, more intense, definite black. One hundred years ago in 1920, the oil lamp was standard in most homes, certainly rural ones. Electrification did not come to the prairies until the early 1950s. One hundred years prior in 1820 oil lamps were the latest thing bringing lamplight to the streets of London and allowing for a new way to light the vast spaces that then took hundreds of candles to illuminate. It is pure nostalgia to use lamps but also practical in the rural areas as the power could go out at any time and a back-up system is appreciated. Things historical are top of mind for this writer now as personal living has become purely basic, the mechanics of living in place not all that different from the experience of most people two hundred years ago. That this issue invited FICE, International Federation of Educative Communities to collaborate is very welcome. The last time anything similar happened was August 2016 when the 2nd World CYC Conference, CYC-Net was joined in Vienna by FICE, then holding its 33rd such world conference in co-sponsorship.

This composite image (over the page) attempted to illustrate the group at one of the lunch breaks. The extent of the collaborations had more to do with sharing venues and facilities for the annual meetings of the respective groups and then enjoying presentations from members of both at the



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
74

conference itself. It is only four years later, and the unknown is whether this can never happen again in quite the same way.



There are no masks, no distancing and well, no travel to a foreign capital to meet, mingle and enjoy life. In fact, the only possible collaboration currently is between these pages or on some digital platform with tons of planning. Even individual meetings and conferences have been postponed or cancelled outright. The remarkable thing for me is that group above minus the few who straggled or stepped out or were taking the pictures represent all those interested in child and youth care and able to attend in 2016. Certainly, there are more who work with youth at risk out there and in quite expansive international and national organizations who may have added perhaps another twenty or so bringing the total to around 100. This reminds me of the often-noted fact that the capacity size of Mrs. Astor's ballroom in New York defined society at the time as being 200 people. This column supports and encourages such efforts at collaboration and



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
75

through the history of the child and youth care movement considers future implications.

Thom Garfat has often told me I am the historian for the child and youth care movement. It was more to the point that I was a champion for the movement, using desktop publishing and web publications to promote it and its volunteer photographer. I do not recall that much history as such from my perspective of the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations. Much effort went into the constitution and values and ethics which produced many pages of lists of guidelines, good intentions and so forth. The Council could not consider membership in FICE, invited or intended as their membership fee outstripped our budget. The organization was viewed as elite, for educators with deep pockets or access to them. One event stood out for me at a conference in Toronto with members from the sister organization in the United States, NOCCWA at the time. National Organization for Child Care Worker Associations. The Council meetings were over, and the group had gathered to discuss a North American collaboration around an initiative and just went ahead and set the thing up. I did not get it and noted over the years that followed, the entity was referred to now and then but did not exist otherwise. Aside from choosing the host province for the bi-annual conference, the Council did a lot of discussing, some resolving, defining the field and so forth but little else. There was a reluctance, members tended to be provincially centric in outlook and being safe were the order of the day. One of the founders of the Council, Thom Garfat along with Leon Fulcher came up with the notion of a Clan Gathering inviting child and youth care people from around the world which ultimately lead to the creation of CYC-Net and the World Child and Youth Care Conferences. This is a collective effort to offer child and youth care literature, research, teachings, publications and essays from any



child and youth care practitioner/professional who can do the writing and make it for the conferences. Thom Garfat at the 16th Canadian National Conference used his closing keynote to introduce the word *tribe* for a description of the entity when child and youth care folk gather. And gather they have with enthusiasm and modest numbers. One surprise this week was the recognition of Child and Youth Care Week by the Province of Saskatchewan as The Observer noted: "This year the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network is hosting a socially distant vehicle parade and presentation in Regina on August 14."² There once was a CYCASK but no longer as it would require members from each region in the province to incorporate. So, falling back on the youth may make sense as they have more numbers, funding and organized activities. Child and youth care work is unique for its diversity. Employment settings can be private, for profit, non-profit. Philosophies of practice can be informed by a few hundred years of history or as recently as a contemporary start-up drawing upon years of personal life and work experience, years of study through to the Doctoral level. Many, probably the majority only practice applied or frontline caring only for a few years before moving on into sister professions in education, social work or psychological counselling. A minority stay on the frontline in direct practice with youth at risk. They deal with the constant tumult of change in clients, colleagues, employers, compensation, theories and workplace politics to the point of seeking some respite through learning and fellowship with the tribe of child and youth care professionals.

² https://www.carlyleobserver.com/news/local-news/august-10-14-proclaimed-child-youth-in-care-week-in-saskatchewan-1.24183809?fbclid=IwAR0YhmPgMxOtpDIQLxy4TV4FJfIFx3y__KnmMtPoyoAyfMSCmLiLHaalU



If there is a certainty it is the world will need an infusion of caring, indeed waves of caring in the post pandemic era. Here now in the thick of the battle we are just now beginning to come to terms with the degree of change being endured. For child and youth care professionals this no news is good news aspect may turn out to be a shining hour in terms of practice. FICE members, Emmanuel Grupper and Shachar Shuman in their survey *Residential care centers during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A survey of 13 countries* concluded: "Nowadays, after this experience of the last several months of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have new and updated proof of the necessity and effectiveness of residential child and youth-care institutions in protecting children in care and operating essential services for vulnerable children and youth populations during severe crisis situations."³ When I reflect upon the 200,000 in the USA and 9300 in Canada who have passed with the weight of the trauma of that loss being passed on in families concerns me as the child of an orphaned parent who grieved his entire life. Certainly, many are resilient and move on but for some this will shape generations. More immediate are the graduates of 2020. Not only did they miss ceremonies and grad balls, they may miss getting their toe on that first rung in an economy that has stumbled and fallen. Culturally, nothing has happened since spring, bricks and mortar high streets and malls have gone bankrupt, many of them catering to the middle and upper middle classes. It is like the social has been rinsed out of living, distanced at 6 feet of space and threatening understanding, empathy and caring in some surprising ways. The skill set of child and youth care professionals to use compassion, empathy, positive thought and relational behaviour may

³ https://69cdfc06-367f-42ef-a9d1-da0b3d4b4ff0.filesusr.com/ugd/e21452_6ecf151babfe4801b3add2890eaaf54c.pdf



be exactly what is necessary for the times that are coming. We cannot be grounded forever, we will need to gather and engage to recharge, recreate and perhaps share those happy accidents in discussion that lead to significant learning.



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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

Inside New Zealand's closed borders

Kia Ora
Kotou
Katoa

and Warm
Greetings to you
all! New Zealand
remains one of
the few countries
in the world with
closed borders.
Very little
international
travel now



***International Travel has changed dramatically with
airplanes parked up in deserts!***

happens except for New Zealanders returning home after being overseas – for sometimes lengthy periods. International travel and active exposure to the Covid-19 virus means that most people are staying home.

It has been over a year since I boarded an airplane for international travel. I sometimes think of the people who have continued travelling, but with empty airliners parked up at airports or in dry desert places, airline staff have been placed on furlough or made redundant. The travel industry commentators say it will be months or even years before international travel returns to its pre-Covid-19 era. International conferences have been cancelled or become virtual events entirely.



October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
80

Living an hour's drive from the nearest shops and stores, I have followed the public responses to Covid-19 lockdown with interest. Panic buying reached altogether new heights with toilet paper, bread/flour and milk being frequently mentioned bulk-buying items. Is it ok for us to smile at the thought of metaphors associated with toilet paper and being scarred?

It has been interesting to watch different international news providers covering the way Covid-19 has altered social life activities for many, whether avoiding café's,



The very notion of touch has required almost daily re-assessment



Shopping for basic commodities has been challenged dramatically by worried folk

bistros and restaurants or protesting against health and civic bi-laws about social distancing and face masks at pubs and sporting events. New Zealand has only in the last week reduced the country to Alert Level 1, opening up sporting events, pubs and restaurants to public access and support.

Elsewhere we note that large sporting event centres have been transformed into alternative uses. Some basketball stadiums have become voting centres. Others have been turned into emergency hospital

facilities or temporary morgues. World-wide, Covid-19 has altered life as we knew it. We follow with interest how events in the countries with the world's highest death rates shape our lives world-wide in the next 12 months. New Zealand doesn't need to build a protective wall.



Going to a pub or restaurant was impossible for some; others ignored the worries



Large public events were prohibited; centres used as hospital wards or mortuaries

What does all this mean for the safeguarding of children and young people in care, all around India, in southern Africa, or Texas, Florida, and Arizona? My fear is that without careful attention being paid to the developmental needs of children and young people, it is too easy totally absorbed with all this Covid-19 business. Team members can get focused on what is happening in the silo where they live and work, potentially influenced by social media misinformation. Workers living with the fatigue associated with long hours working on the front-line of child and youth care may struggle and find themselves making moments less meaningful with young people than opportunity events provided. Remaining vigilant to the daily needs of all youths in our care is important.

It has been interesting to see how quickly pre-school and school-aged children have adapted to using Zoom, Skype, Teams or other virtual televieing medium to keep in touch with their friends. Virtual classrooms have now given way in New

Zealand to back-to-school classrooms with more social distancing built into the curriculum than before. Children and young people still find ways of learning and engaging with their friends, opening new challenges for care workers!



Religious gatherings have been dramatically altered with Zoom and Televieing

What challenges might we face in our work with children or young people today that in some small way, or even bigger way, makes relational moments meaningful and nurtures personal achievements. Reinforce personal and community vigilance instead of individual rights!



Daily challenges to make moments meaningful and nurture hope for children



A big shout-out to all health workers - worldwide - at the Covid-19 front line!

Information

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October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406

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Kiaras Gharabaghi, Jack Phelan, Hans Skott-Myhre, Leon Fulcher, Doug Magnuson, Tara Collins, Garth Goodwin

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- The style of a paper is up to the author
- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
- We are willing to work with first-time authors to help them get published
- We accept previously published papers as long as copyright permission is assured
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October 2020
ISSN 1605-7406
86



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October 2020
 ISSN 1605-7406
87