Child and Youth Care in Practice

Thom Garfat, PhD and Leon C. Fulcher, PhD

Editors

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The CYC-Net Press

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Child and Youth Care in Practice
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Hanging In: Child and Youth Care in Practice

As the field of Child and Youth Care has evolved, it has become increasingly possible to find applications of a Child and Youth Care Approach in a variety of settings all over the world — in daily community work and direct practice settings, in education and training, in management and supervision, in outcome recording and research as well as in policy-making. As we demonstrate in the opening chapter of this volume, Child and Youth Care involves a way of being in the world. It is more than a set of techniques, a label attached to practitioners, or a way of thinking about working with children, young people and families. It is, rather, about how one chooses to be in the world with others. As we have said elsewhere Child and Youth Care practice is about:

<div align="center">

How you are

Who you are

When you do

What you do

</div>

The term Child and Youth Care is, for us, a broad, encompassing and relevant term for all of us who are, as they say in the United Kingdom, working 'at the coalface', in direct work with children, youth, families and those who support them. It includes then, for us, Child and Youth Care Workers, Foster Carers, Educators, Social-pedagogues, Justice Workers, and all who are engaged in this work. It is not limited by job title but is, rather, inclusive by function.

As you read through the chapters in this book, do not look just at what the authors are writing about — but let yourself notice 'how' they are doing the work they are doing and 'how' they are writing about it. Notice

the presence, the rhythmicity, the being with people, and the focus on the relational. And while these are, indeed, identified as being Characteristics of a Child and Youth Care Approach, they are also characteristic of a particular way of being with people when one wants to be helpful.

In this volume you will find material from Canada, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and South Africa which illustrates something of the broad geographic expanse of Child and Youth Care practice. The areas of focus cover everything from youth work and residential care, foster care, management and supervision, to the use of theatre, football, and activity-based interventions all of which highlight diverse areas of practice.

Note especially the chapters on Outcomes that Matter which, through direct links to the therapeutic use of daily life events (a defining characteristic of CYC practice) demonstrates a framework for recording and reporting about the weekly achievement of resilience outcomes by children and young people in out-of-home care. In this it connects the CYC approach to being with young people to a system of recording important outcomes of that work.

In this, as in many of the other chapters, we see how the Child and Youth Care approach is influencing other 'areas of practice', like recording, observation, evaluation, activity planning, teaching, research and, literally, all aspects of our work with children, youth, families and others. If you are doing the work described in these chapters, in a manner that reflects the underlying principles, then you are engaged in Child and Youth Care practice.

Like all forms of helping, Child and Youth Care remains in a state of continuing evolution. We hope it stays that way — for if it were ever definitively captured in writing then it would mean that our field of practice had become static. That would stifle the creativity and flexibility which children, young people and families need from us in an ever-changing world.

Read carefully the 1st chapter on the *Characteristics of a Child and Youth Care Approach* before reading other chapters in this book. This introductory chapter provides you with a framework for reading the other chapters and, through knowing this chapter well, the others come into even clearer perspective. As you come to know the characteristics, you will be able to identify them, even when they are not made explicit, in the rest of the chapters.

As mentioned earlier, Child and Youth Care is in constant evolution — which means that the future will be different than today. Many of the

chapters in this volume hint about that future through proposing new ideas, as new ways of thinking are evidenced and as new conceptualizations of practice appear. While reading through this volume, let yourself wonder '*if this idea was taken further, what might be the result?*' The future is not only yours to dream about, it is also yours to create.

We are grateful to all of our colleagues who have contributed to this volume. Many of the writings here were originally published in the Canadian journal *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* (24 1/2) and we are grateful to *RCYCP* and the individual authors for allowing their reproduction here. The authors worked hard to create their own special contributions which illustrates their commitment to supporting Child and Youth Care Practitioners — the world over — to address the ever changing demands of our field. And, as leaders and innovators in the field, they demonstrate the potential inherent in the field.

Read and enjoy.

Thom and Leon

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Characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach

Thom Garfat & Leon Fulcher

Abstract: *This chapter updates the characteristics of a Child and Youth Care approach as previously defined in the literature and practice of the field. Recognizing the fluid and ever-changing nature of Child and Youth Care practice, 25 characteristics of contemporary Child and Youth Care practice are identified.*

Introduction

Child and Youth Care workers are ideally situated to be among the most influential of healers and helpers in a person or family's life. That statement represents our basic orientation towards Child and Youth Care (CYC) practice.

It was not that long ago that the work that Child and Youth Care Practitioners do was considered a sub-profession and the workers themselves were considered simply to be extensions of other helping professionals[1], most commonly Social Workers (Garfat & Charles,

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1   In their investigations into why foster care placements succeed or fail, Sinclair *et al* concluded that "*foster care is certainly seen as benign. Its carers are commonly seen as 'the salt of the earth'. However, they are neither acknowledged as responsible parents nor treated as responsible professionals*" (2005: p. 233).

2010). But with the passage of time and the evolution of a distinct method of practice, Child and Youth Care (CYC), and CYC Practitioners, have come to be recognized as possessing a specific expertise and a unique approach to working with children, youth and families (Fulcher & Garfat, 2008; Garfat and Fulcher, 2012; Garfat, 2004a). It is worth noting how the European profession of *social pedagogy* accommodates "service provisions such as child care, youth work, family support, youth justice services, secure units, residential care and play work – services that to British [or North American] eyes, appear somewhat disparate" (Petrie, Boddy, Cameron, Wigfall & Simon, 2006, p. 21). A CYC approach addresses the same wide spectrum of services for children, young people and their families.

A CYC Practitioner's position in the daily life of another person, or their family, allows her to intervene proactively, responsively and immediately to help the other person and/or other family members to learn new ways of acting and experiencing in the world (Fulcher & Garfat, 2008). There is no other form of intervention which is so immediate, so grounded in the present experiencing or, one might say, so *everyday*. This immediacy of intervention creates in-the-moment learning opportunities (Ward, 1998) allowing the individual to experiment with new ways of acting and experiencing as they are living their lives. CYC practice is not oriented around temporally spaced and infrequent visits to an office where the 'client' meets with a therapist who has no experience of that individual's everyday life. Rather it is based on being *in-the-moment* with the individual(s), experiencing with them their life and living as it unfolds (Baizerman, 1999; Winfield, 2008).

Child and Youth Care practice is based on helping people live their life differently as they are living it (Garfat, 2002). It is a focused, timely, practical and, above all, immediately responsive form of helping which uses "applied learning and daily uses of knowledge to inform more responsive daily encounters with children or young people" (Fulcher 2004, p. 34). It is immediate and focuses on the moment as it is occurring. It allows for the individual to learn and practice new thoughts, feelings and actions in the most important area of their lives – daily life as they are living it.

A number of years ago, Garfat (2004a) identified characteristics, drawn from the literature of the field, which were thought to define a CYC approach to helping. This set of characteristics was subsequently updated by Fulcher and Garfat (2008) when writing about the applicability of a CYC Approach in Foster Care work. Some of what follows is based

on those earlier efforts. In this chapter those earlier descriptions are extended, based on continuing experience and changing realities in the field. CYC practice is a rapidly evolving field and constantly changing approach to working with people (Garfat, 2010).

A shift is also made in this chapter from using the term Child and Youth Care worker to the term *Child and Youth Care Practitioner,* a shift which further represents the evolving nature of CYC practice as expressed in the literature of the field (Gharabaghi, 2009; Phelan, 1999; 2009). This reflects the growing expansion of the field into all areas of service and implies inclusiveness, a joining together, of all who work in the field. Thus, one might be, for example, a CYC worker, a CYC instructor, a CYC family worker, a CYC trainer, a CYC researcher, a CYC Supervisor, etc. What binds them together as CYC *Practitioners*, is the CYC approach to their work. Thus, CYC Practitioners are connected by how they think about and carry out their work. CYC is, after all, an 'approach' or a way of working and being in the world with others.

Relational Child and Youth Care Practice

It is common in the field to speak of *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* in which the focus of attention is directed towards 'the in-between between us' (Garfat, 2008) or as it is reframed here, the '*co-created space between us*'. As Bellefeuille and Jamieson noted "relational practice is a dynamic, rich, flexible, and continually evolving process of co-constructed inquiry. In this type of inquiry, meaning emerges within the 'space between' the individual, family, or community" (2008, p. 38). This is a central feature of effective CYC practice. This *co-created space* represents the 'hub of the wheel' around which all other characteristics of practice revolve.   We often call this co-created space between us *the relationship* and this involves more than just 'having a relationship' (even a good one) with the other person. Rather, it means that the Practitioner is constantly attending to the *co-created space between us*, wondering — for example — 'is it a safe place?', 'is it a learning space?' or 'is it a developmentally appropriate place of experience?' The focus, then, is on the characteristics of the co-created relationship, not on the individuals in the relationship.

This focus on the '*co-created space between us*' ensures that the CYC Practitioner remains attentive to the mutuality of relationship, recognizing that both parties to the relationship create and are influenced by it (Fewster, 1990, 2001). Stuart has said the "the relationship is the intervention" and this focus on the relational helps to ensure that the CYC

Practitioner maintains this focus (2009, p. 222). Smith's re-thinking of residential child care arrived at similar conclusions, arguing that "building appropriate relationships and using these to help children as they grow up is the primary endeavour" (2009, p. 120). In the following, some 25 *characteristics* of a Relational CYC approach are identified and highlighted.

Characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach

Participating with People as They Live Their Lives. Child and Youth Care involves *being with* and participating with people in the everyday moments of their lives. Whether it is with a family in their home as they are doing dishes or playing soccer with a young person in the community park, or chatting with a homeless youth on the streets of a major city; whether it involves hanging out with a mother in jail, helping a supervisee learn a new skill, pausing at a desk with a student, or participating with a young person in a church activity; whether it involves being in the sandbox, on the football field or sitting with a child as she falls asleep after a difficult day – CYC Practitioners involve themselves in all aspects of the daily life of the people with whom she or he works (Fulcher & Ainsworth, 2006; Hilton, 2002; Smart, 2006). When a CYC educator, for example, encounters a student in the cafeteria in a college setting, that educator responds to the student from a CYC perspective. When a CYC Practitioner on the streets encounters a young person, that worker remembers, as a CYC worker engaging with this person, to interact using the characteristics of a CYC approach. The worker attends, for example, to a young person's relationships with the other inhabitants of their street life. Central to a CYC approach is the idea that if people can change how they are, in the minutia of their lives, then change will be all the more enduring for their relationships are central to who they are and how they are in their world.

Rituals of Encounter require that CYC Practitioners give conscious thought to the ways in which they engage with another. This involves giving respectful attention to important protocols associated with engaging with someone from cultural traditions that are different from one's own (Fulcher, 2003). Simply trying to understand, as well as contemplate different relational starting points can present major challenges. One's own personal experiences of acculturation and socialisation impose taken-for-granted assumptions and a cognitive mindset that is not

easily altered. Rituals of encounter between Practitioner(s) and children or young people have developed through cultural protocols. The meaning a child or young person gives to culture — including youth group or gang culture — is constantly evolving as they seek to understand and adapt to their current predicament and any new living environment or experiences. Each encounter requires that a *cultural lens* be included in a CYC Practitioner's essential toolkit of competencies. Like transitional objects, rituals of encounter strengthen purposeful communication.

Meeting Them Where They Are At. Meeting people 'where they are at' (Krueger, 2000) involves being with people where they live their lives but also more than that. It means accepting people for how they are and who they are as we encounter them. It means responding appropriately to their developmental capabilities, accepting their fears and hesitations, celebrating their joys and enabling them — without pressure — to be who they are in interactions with them (Small & Fulcher, 2006). As Krueger said, interventions must be "geared to their emotional, cognitive, social, and physical needs" (2000, n.p.). Just as a forest guide must meet others at the beginning of their journey, so does the CYC Practitioner meet the other "where they are at" as they begin the journey and then move on together from there.

Connection and Engagement builds from the notion that if someone is not connected with another, and/or if one cannot engage with him or her in a significant way, then the Practitioner's interventions cannot be effective (Garfat & Charles, 2010). It is unacceptable to blame 'the other' when they are unresponsive; it is the Practitioner's obligation to work towards such connection. All too often, a failure to connect or engage gets rendered as a diagnostic justification for 'what's wrong with the other person'. Relationship is the foundation of all CYC work and connection is the foundation of relationship (Brendtro & du Toit, 2005). The Practitioner connects with the person, and then engages with them as they live their lives. Helping a young woman nurse her child, assisting parents to prepare the garden, teaching a young man to shoot a basketball ... all such engagements are powerful when one is connected in relationship with.

Being in Relationship is not the same as 'having a relationship'. Everyone has relationships but 'being in relationship' means engaging with the other person in a deep and profound manner which impacts both

young person and helper (Gannon, 2008). A CYC Practitioner recognizes that they live in a relationship with a person where each has contributed to making that relationship what it is (Fewster, 1990). It also means engaging in relationships and being in these relationships over the course of time. Relationships build up a history and that history continues to shape the relationship and our being in that relationship. Writing about UK social work practices with young people in care, Thomas came to similar conclusions about the importance children give to relationships including "the continuity of this relationship, reliability and availability, confidentiality, advocacy and doing things together" (2005, p. 189). As Fewster said, "Being in relationship means that we have what it takes to remain open and responsive in conditions where most mortals — and professionals — quickly distance themselves, become 'objective' and look for the external fix" (2004, p. 3).

Using Daily Life Events to Facilitate Change. Child and Youth Care work involves using the everyday, seemingly *s*imple, moments which occur as CYC Practitioners live and work with people to help them find different ways of being and living in the world (Maier, 1987). These moments — as they are occurring — provide the most powerful and relevant opportunities for intervention for change. Whether it be an opportunity-led event (Ward, 1998) with a child in a residential program or foster home, a life altering moment in working with a family (Jones 2007; Shaw & Garfat, 2004), a brief encounter on the street (Apetkar, 2001), or a simple exchange in a rural college classroom (Shaw, 2011) — the moment, and it's potential for powerful change, is seen as central to a CYC approach. Child and Youth Care Practitioners are, in essence, defined in their work by the way they make use of these moments.

Examining Context requires one to be conscious of how everything that occurs does so in a context unique to the individual, the helper, the specific moment of interaction and the history of such interactions (Krueger & Stuart, 1999). While some elements of context may be the same (e.g., national and regional policies, agency philosophy, regulations, physical environment, etc.) other elements of context (e.g., cultural traditions, personal histories of being cared for, previous relationships with adults, developmental stage, etc) vary with the individual interactions between CYC Practitioner and the other person (Fulcher, 2006). The interaction, for example, between a university student and a CYC instructor is contextualized by the meaning of education to both

participants, the power in the relationship, the structures and expectations of the university, the philosophies about education and everything else which impacts on the moment of interaction. Thus, no two contexts can ever be the same and the CYC Practitioner is constantly examining all these elements so as to 'understand the moment' more fully.

Intentionality means that everything a CYC Practitioner does is done with a purpose (Molepo, 2005). There are few 'random' actions or interventions. It means thinking consciously about what is required for the other to be comfortable with intentional attempts at making connections. All the Practitioner's interventions are planned and fit with the regularly reviewed goals established with the young person and/or their families. When a community-based CYC Practitioner meets with a family in their home, it is important to decide how each individual will be greeted on arrival, who will be greeted first and how one will be with them. A CYC Practitioner facilitating a training program needs to decide how the group will be greeted, how individuals might be singled out for attention, etc. No matter where CYC Practitioners work, what they do is always intentional. This does not mean that one abandons spontaneity. But even in the moment of spontaneity, the Practitioner continues to reflect on their intention(s) in the moment. This is, in essence, reflective CYC practice.

Responsive Developmental Practice means that the CYC Practitioner attends to the relevant developmental characteristics of the individual (Fulcher & Garfat, 2008; Maier, 1987). Rather than simply reacting to their behaviour, she or he responds to the person's needs in a manner which is proactively consistent with their developmental stage and needs (Small & Fulcher, 2006). Here one considers development not from a chronological perspective but rather from a capacity perspective, thus enabling the Practitioner to consider the person as an individual with strengths and challenges in different areas since nobody develops consistently across all areas of their potential. When thinking of families, the Practitioner also considers their developmental stage and potential, recognizing that not all families develop according to some predetermined plan.

Hanging Out means that much of the CYC Practitioner's time is spent doing apparently simple, everyday (yet extremely important) things with people (Garfat, 1999). To the outsider it may seem as though nothing is

happening. A walk in the park or sipping tea with a family; kicking stones with a young person; chatting in the corridor with a student; or leaning on a street lamp chatting with a homeless girl — all may seem like 'doing nothing' when, in fact, these may be the most important of activities. During such moments and experiences of 'hanging out' one is investing in the work of building relationships of trust, safety, connectedness, and intimacy. And this takes time — something often missed as finance controllers scan quickly through monthly and yearly accounts. These are the very types of relationships which are necessary if the Practitioner is to become a significant and influential person in the life of others (House of Commons Select Committee, 2009; Redl, 1951).

Hanging In means that the CYC Practitioner does not give up when 'times are tough'. Rather, one hangs in and works things through, demonstrating commitment and caring for that child, young person or parents and family members (Gompf, 2003). This is especially so when working with young parents who are placed together with their children in care. The traumatized child or young person in a foster home who is struggling, the Aboriginal youth seeking to re-connect with cultural traditions, the student who is failing to grasp a concept, the parent who keeps slipping back to their old ways of behaving, the research subjects who find difficulty appearing for the interviews — for CYC Practitioners these are signs of the need to *hang in*. It requires that one be patient and move at the other's pace rather than the Practitioner's own pace (Fulcher, 2006). Equally, when the times seem good, the Practitioner does not automatically assume that 'all is well'. Steckley and Kendrick (2008) highlighted implications associated with 'holding on' while 'hanging in'; signaling the importance of safe forms of restraint as extreme examples of this characteristic. One must recognize that when the times are good, set-backs may be just around the corner. After all, learning and changes take time.

Doing 'With', not 'For' or 'To' refers to how CYC Practitioners engage with people, helping them to learn and develop through doing things with them. This does not deny them the prospect of learning and growing through doing everything for them, especially when they are capable of doing it themselves (Delano & Shaw, 2011). Nor does one stand back and do things to them (such as ordering them about). Ultimately one remains engaged 'with' people through the process of their own growth and development, walking alongside them as a guide. This process of

'doing with' requires the Practitioner's ongoing commitment to the *co-created space* between Practitioner and other, monitoring the changing characteristics and experience of that co-created space (Phelan, 2009). Whether it is in supervision, with a family in a rural garden, or engaging in any other activity — the constant focus is on being and doing *with* the other.

   A Needs-Based Focus assumes that everything one does, is done for a purpose (Hill, 2001). That purpose is to meet personal or social needs. When one helps a person to find a different, more satisfying, way of meeting a need then the previous way of meeting the need (usually an undesirable behaviour) is no longer necessary (Maier, 1979). Thus, it becomes easier for that person to let go of such behaviour. The young person who belongs to a gang may be meeting her need for belonging. A husband having an affair may be meeting his need to feel valued. A young runaway may be meeting a need for safety. The student who 'acts out' in class may be meeting a need to be noticed by others. As CYC Practitioners, the task is to help people identify their needs and to find more satisfying ways of meeting them.

   Working in the Now means that the CYC Practitioner remains focused on the 'here and now', on what is happening in this moment, especially between the Practitioner and the other person (Phelan, 2009). Such an orientation on the present builds from the assumption that '*we are who we are, wherever we are*'. In the present, one carries with them the past as well as expectations about the future (Winfield, 2008). If a person can change their way of being with another or other(s) in the present, so too can they more often generalize that behaviour to other situations in their life. Past experiences can become even more important learning cues in the here and now. Similarly, expectations about the future or future consequences can also change through new lived experiences in daily life events as they happen.

   Flexibility and Individuality refers to the fact that every person and family is unique. All of one's interventions must be tailored to fit the person and/or family as the Practitioner understands them (Michael, 2005). This means that the CYC Practitioner is flexible in their interactions with each person, recognizing that there is no one approach or intervention which fits for everyone, or applies in all situations. Just because the last time the Practitioner responded in a particular manner when engaging

with a person from a different culture, does not mean that all people from that culture will respond in the same manner. Just because one young person liked a joke when they were in pain, this does not mean that another young person will respond likewise (Digney, 2007). Just as CYC Practitioners are individuals, so it is for everyone with whom they work. Thus, CYC Practitioners must be ever flexible, preparing to modify their approach and way of being as appropriate with each unique individual they encounter. From this flows the contemporary reflection that '*one size does not fit all*' (Naidoo, 2005) and therefore 'group interventions' where every child or young person receives the same consequence for similar behaviors make little sense.

Rhythmicity refers to the shared experience of engaging in a synchronized, dynamic connection with another or others (Krueger, 1994; Maier, 1992). Rhythms of coming and going, rhythmic rituals of acknowledgement, patterns of play amongst children, simple repeated gestures of greeting at the door of the family home, special handshakes on the street — all are examples of the rhythms in which one might engage and experience with people. Connecting in rhythm with people helps to nurture and strengthen connections and a sense of 'being with' that person. While working, regardless of location, a child and youth care approach invites one to pay particular attention to the rhythms of that person's, or that family's life, thereby strengthening opportunities to enter into rhythms of connectedness and caring with them.

Meaning-Making refers to the process a person goes through in making sense of their experiences (Garfat, 2004b; Steckley & Smart, 2005). An action occurs — one interprets it according to their own way of making sense of things — and then acts according to that perception. The other person in any interaction does exactly the same. Thus, two different people may respond very differently to a simple gesture because of what it means to them. What is important is not 'what one meant to say' but how what the Practitioner says (or does) is interpreted by the other person. Saying hello, for example, to one young person on the streets may be interpreted as a gesture of inclusion, while to another it may signal betrayal. A male offering to shake hands with a woman of one culture may be interpreted as a gesture of equality, while to a woman from another culture it may signal invasion and disrespect.

Reflection is the process one goes through when thinking about one's work: What have we done? What are we doing here? What might we do in the future? The effective helper is a reflective helper, always contemplating about whether there are better ways, or how one might do things differently (Winfield, 2005). As the Practitioner intervenes in the moment, she questions why she is doing what she is doing and after the intervention is over, questions why she did what she did. In preparing for the next intervention, one might ask: 'Why am I thinking of doing this?' 'What is influencing me to think like this?' or 'How might my various actions be interpreted by the other person?' This continuous process of reflection before, during, and after an action (Schon, 1983) helps the CYC Practitioner to stay constantly focused on acting in the best interests of the other.

Purposeful Use of Activities. Jack Phelan (1999) has argued that one of the essential tasks of CYC Practitioners is to arrange experiences for people. The Practitioner arranges "experiences that promote the possibility of new beliefs for the people we support" (Phelan, 2009, n.d.). The Practitioner attempts therefore to facilitate learning opportunities in the everyday. Such learning opportunities and the purposeful use of activities enable children and young people to experience safe places where new experiences can happen and important learning can be nurtured. One learns about and takes into consideration a person's previous experiences in anticipation of how new experiences might offer the potential for growth (Phelan, 2009, n.d.). For example, someone who has never experienced being cared for may experience this through a learning opportunity and planned experience arranged ─ even engineered ─ by the CYC Practitioner. As Karen VanderVen (2003) has said, the purposeful making of a water bomb can change a life and certainly no one knows more about the power of experiences than she does.

Family-Oriented. There was a time, not that long ago actually, when family was not considered to be a part of the child and youth care field. Indeed, CYC workers were often encouraged to think of family as 'the enemy' ─ the cause of the problems in the child or young person with whom they were working (Shaw & Garfat, 2004). Now, however, CYC Practitioners recognize that family is important (Ainsworth, 2006). Families ─ including extended family members, clan or tribe ─ are ever present. The student in the classroom carries the expectations of family

and extended family members with her. The young man on the street carries 'family'—even if only the ideal family—in his head. Families with whom CYC Practitioners work are not only present but so, too, are the families and extended families of the parents. Also present are the family and extended families of the CYC Practitioner, whether working the floor, or engaging in supervision. The competent Practitioner is ever mindful that there is no such thing, really, as helping in the absence of family and extended family members. This is because family—in whatever form or traditions—is always with us and also with each person the CYC Practitioner encounters (Garfat & Charles, 2010).

Being Emotionally Present. Mark Krueger has been perhaps the greatest advocate in the CYC field for 'being present' (Krueger, 1999). Whether with children, young people or adults and families—*being present* remains a central feature of how CYC Practitioners work. While difficult to describe, *being present* is an experience most will have had with another and in relations with other(s). This involves allowing one's Self to be in the moment with the other or others (Fewster, 1990). At some level, of course, one is always 'present'. This is because, for however one presents oneself, this is in fact who they are [22]. But 'being present' in the relational sense involves the CYC Practitioner making a conscious effort to make her or his 'Self' available and self-evident in the moment, focusing with immediacy on the other. When I am with you, I am *with you* and not somewhere else! My thoughts and affections are connected in *being with you in this moment*. Ricks (2003) has argued that one of the most important aspects of relational practice is for the Practitioner to be present with the other while simultaneously being present with self.

Counseling on the Go. Unlike other forms of helping, a CYC Practitioner does not meet with someone for a counseling session at a scheduled time and place (although that does happen occasionally). The counseling which occurs between a CYC Practitioner and the other(s) occurs through fragmented interactions, trusting that the ability of the other and the skill of the CYC Practitioner will continue to connect

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2   At the start of the 20th Century, writers such as Cooley (1908) referred to this as the 'Looking Glass Self'; Laing (1961) spoke of 'Self and Other' while Goffman (1959) and Blumer (1969) wrote of 'symbolic interactions'.

such moments together into a complete process (Krueger, 1991). Some refer to aspect of this CYC characteristic as 'life-space counseling' (Redl & Wineman, 1952). Here the important role in which each relationship history (referred to earlier) impacts on present and future prospects for facilitated learning. As Varda Mann-Feder (2011) explains, these moments of connected interaction are often more powerful than traditional approaches to 'talk therapy'.

Strengths-Based and Resiliency Focus. The CYC Practitioner is, in some respects, a skilled hunter. She seeks out the strengths of the other(s) in whatever context she encounters them. She admires, for example, the resilience of the street youth and their ability to survive in a dangerous world. She identifies strengths in families who think all is lost. She appreciates and rejoices in a student's determination to master a difficult concept. This focus on strengths and resiliency enables others to also experience themselves as competent and worthy (Brendtro & Larson, 2005). Quite often this may represent the beginnings of a new experience of self for many of the children and young people with whom CYC Practitioners work. Gilligan (2009) claimed that resilience is about doing well in adversity. As CYC Practitioners reframe their thinking towards a strengths-based and resiliency orientation, they not only empower the children and young people with whom they work, they are also empowered themselves.

Love, as Zeni Thumbadoo (2011) argues, is present in powerful CYC moments with (an) other. She goes on to assert that love must be present when real connections are made between self and other. This is not, of course, a sexual love but a love of (an) other as a human being in the Ubuntu sense of "*I am because you are*". Thumbadoo (p.197) further asserts that "caring and love intermingle in the encounters" between CYC Practitioners and others. While Thumbadoo writes from the South African context, her words are echoed elsewhere. Mark Smith (2011, p.192) claims that "child and youth care – in contrast perhaps to other professions or aspiring professions – is irredeemably a practical, moral and relational endeavor. As such, it is fertile ground for the growth of love". And Whitfield has said that "love is the most healing of our resources" (1989, p. 133). CYC practice is, in this sense, an act of love and loving – one holds others dear, one cherishes their being, and ultimately one acts in the context of love in a non-exploitative manner.

It's All about Us refers to the fact that, ultimately, one's successes or failures with other people are profoundly influenced by who CYC Practitioners *are* themselves, and as Burford and Fulcher noted there is "an important interplay between the diagnostic characteristics of residents and the patterns of staff team functioning found in any residential group care centre" (2006, p. 202-203). It is only through a deep and active self-awareness that they can be reassured that his or her actions are in the interest of the other(s) and not simply the CYC Practitioner meeting their own needs, or that working over any length of time with particular young people may impact directly on a Practitioner's actual *state of being* (Mattingly, 2006). 'It's all about us' also refers to the fact that one is not operating alone. The plural pronoun 'us' refers to everyone involved in helping another person grow and develop. This holds for all CYC Practitioners, whether their titles be Foster Carer, Kinship Carer, Birth Family member, Young Person, Social Worker, Teacher, Therapist, Manager, Play Group or Youth Group leader, Peer Mentor, Distant Relatives, Clan or Tribal members, etc.,. Each has a role to play. The more everyone is working together, unified and not 'us' and 'them' — the more successful everyone will all be in supporting developmental outcomes for the people with whom we work. Abraham (2009) refers to this a 'Team Parenting'. Milligan and Stevens (2006) spoke about this as collaborative practice. It is thus argued that the CYC approach is holistic, ecological and inclusive. Ultimately, "*We're all in this together!*"

Conclusion

The field of Child and Youth Care has expanded beyond its origins in residential child care to encompass youth work and a wide range of practices within child and youth services. Child and Youth Care Practitioners are found everywhere — from the most isolated rural Isibindi projects in South Africa, to the halls of college and university academia. Practitioners can be located using a CYC Approach from the streets of large urban cities to isolation wards in children's hospitals; and from the tundra of northern Canada to the mountains of Bulgaria or Borneo. It is a worldwide practice — especially across the English-speaking world. Child and Youth Care Practitioners can also be found working in non-English-speaking places where political and economic histories may have introduced English patterns of health and social services administration, as well as in places looking to 'English-speaking countries' for examples of *best practice* in the delivery of health and welfare services to children, young people and their families. The activities of

international NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) have also contributed to the extension of Child and Youth Care Approaches through recruitment of health and welfare services employees to provide care for children, young people and families in the so-called Developing World.

Twenty-five Characteristics of a Child and Youth Care approach have been identified. Each has appeared elsewhere in the literature and will have been spoken about in practice circles across the field. This is the first time that all 25 Characteristics have been located in one place so as to articulate an expanded description of a Child and Youth Care Approach. Additional characteristics of a CYC Approach are anticipated as the profession develops its own scholarly traditions, its research capabilities, and its political voice in social policy circles.

It is anticipated that Child and Youth Care Practice, by its very nature, will continue to develop as this fledgling profession gains parity with its nearest 'relative' the Western European and Scandinavian profession of Social Pedagogy (Petrie et al, 2006). Child and Youth Care closely parallels the European traditions of Social Pedagogy while focusing on children, young people and their families. Child and Youth Care Practice and Social Pedagogy Praxis have developed through parallel histories since the middle of the 20th Century — although each locates historical antecedents which are much earlier. Child and Youth Care offers much to the profession of Social Pedagogy, including parallel professional standards and competencies. Both CYC Practice and Social Pedagogy are also quite different from social work, teaching, nursing and counseling, even though they draw from similar knowledge bases. The distinguishing feature is to be located in the practice, or praxis (theory-into-practice).

Experience in the field shows that a CYC Approach may find ready applications in direct care work with people of all ages across the life span of development, and in all settings (See VanderVen, 1992). As noted from the beginning, the Child and Youth Care Approach represents a way of being and working in the world. It is, therefore, about how one does what they do, not a question of what one is called or where they are located.

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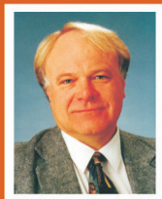
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