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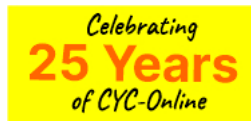
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CYC-Online 300 FEBRUARY 2024

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## CYC-Online and Me

Graham McPheat

The lifetime of CYC-Online, with the first issue going all the way back to February 1999, runs in fairly neat parallel with my own introduction to and engagement with Child and Youth Care more generally. So reflecting on the occasion of the 300th edition of CYC-Online inevitably prompts some self-reflection on my part.

Working in residential child care in Scotland since 1994, I had never encountered the term 'Child and Youth Care'. The individual words were all of course familiar, but not the concept of the profession as it exists in North America and beyond. More worryingly, between 1997 and 1999 I was seconded to undertake a Social Work qualification and encountered little on that programme that truly spoke to or related to my experience of work in residential child care. It was great to be paid to be a student for two years and I gained another qualification, but it didn't give me what I was really looking for.

That all began to change in 2001 when I enrolled in the first intake of students on the MSc Advanced Residential Child Care programme at University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Mark Smith, a name familiar to regular CYC-Online readers, was the programme lead and had developed the curriculum from scratch. Crucially, he looked beyond the boundaries of Scotland and practice norms that existed there. In the first set of classes, which were about perspectives and contexts of practice, the content included international models/traditions of practice. This marked my first introduction to Child and Youth Care.

One of the first pieces we were asked to read was "Central themes in Child and Youth Care" by Mark Krueger which had appeared in Issue 12 of CYC-Online in January 2000. It had previously been published in the Journal of Child and Youth Care in 1991 but I suspect that its becoming available via CYC-Online made it more accessible to an international audience. Looking at that article today, with Krueger's review of the Child and Youth Care literature as it existed at that point, and his

identification of the central themes within Child and Youth Care, I can't help but underestimate how important and influential it was for me at that time. In complete comparison to the bulk of the literature I had been exposed to via my social work degree, here was content that spoke directly to my practice in residential child care. Coming from your Centre. Being there. Teaming up. Meeting them where they're at. Interacting together. Counselling on the go. Creating circles of care. Discovering and using self. Caring for one another. It perhaps didn't use the term residential child care, but the relevance was 100% none the less.

More was to follow. We also got to read "Child and Youth Care: A unique profession" by James Anglin. It's at this point that the vagaries of my memory become evident as I would have sworn we also got this in that first class in September or October 2001. However, I see now that it appeared in Issue 35 in December 2001 of CYC-Online so it must have been a few classes later before we got it. What I do know for certain is that this felt even more relevant to me as Anglin embarked on his comparison of Social Work and Child and Youth Care. His conclusions in that piece, about the deceptive nature of the similarities between many Social Work and Child and Youth Care programmes, still feel as true today as they did then.

My enthusiasm about what I was being exposed to knew no bounds. Having already acknowledged the fallibility of my memories from 20-25 years ago I do absolutely remember using those pieces by Krueger and Anglin, and I'm fairly sure some work by Jack Phelan also, in staff development sessions with my residential child care team. I have vivid memories of copying and distributing those articles and then using them for discussion about our work and our approach with the children and young people resident in the home. We were using this material about child and youth care and using it to develop our practice and the care we were providing, and I can remember clearly the positive responses from various members of staff. And that says something as we have all probably been in the position of being the person who returns to work from a training or education event enthused about what we had learned to be greeted with some degree of cynicism by colleagues as we try to share our learning and new ideas with them.

Now more than twenty years on and leading a Child and Youth Care distance learning Masters programme, the significance of CYC-Online is no less than it ever was. Any of our Strathclyde students, past and present, reading this will be familiar with the pieces I've mentioned here as we still use them as part of the orientation to Child and Youth Care. What's even better is that as the repository of articles now extends to 300 issues worth of material, the range of voices and backgrounds present in CYC-Online is increasingly diverse, speaking to the challenges of practice across a range of settings and cultures. It is heaven sent for us as we debate the similarities and differences across international boundaries.

And to finish, it also feels like CYC-Online is needed more than ever. Certainly, in the context of UK, the challenges facing those working with and trying to support the most vulnerable children and youth are more significant than at any time I can ever remember. The importance of a publication such as CYC-Online, giving voice and space to the sector and promoting the relational, authentic care and love that all children and young people deserve can't be underestimated. In our programme that draws students from across the globe, what quickly becomes apparent is that in any given cohort there are a range of territories and cultures represented, but once conversation and the sharing of ideas begins, everyone wants the same for the children and youth they are working with and supporting. Genuine love, care and well-being.

Thanks to CYC-Online for promoting that global message for the last 300 issues and here's to the next 300!




THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK (CYC-Net)

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