What is the Purpose of Fieldwork in Higher Education? The Example of Canadian Child and Youth Care

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Abstract

We reviewed expectations, program structure, and program policies from fieldwork programs in Child and Youth Care (CYC) higher education, finding that practices seem to be based on historical models and local exigencies rather than pedagogical intent or evaluation. We also reviewed the accreditation standards for fieldwork in Nursing, Counselling Psychology, Social Work, and Engineering, finding that each has practices that might be shared more widely, including an emphasis on quality, on outcomes, alignment of classroom and fieldwork goals, more clarity about learning in different types of placements, and more opportunities for innovation. Quality research on fieldwork is scarce, and fieldwork programs in higher education need more sophisticated evaluation and research designs, more emphasis on identifying and recognizing quality, and more attention to the harms that occasionally occur—to young people and to students—when things go wrong. These are important practices of accountability to clients and to the professions.

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Fieldwork in higher education programs represents the intersection of academic and professional expertise, and this should be articulated and recognized in the curriculum. While a number of professional fields have been reorganizing their fieldwork education programs and assessments of students to reflect this, Child and Youth Care (CYC) higher education programs in Canada have yet to seriously engage in a conversation about the purposes of fieldwork and how to evaluate quality. Where and how does excellence become visible – to ourselves and to others?

There are over 50 Child and Youth Care higher education programs in Canada, a recent increase in the number of degree programs, and soon to be four M.A. These numbers suggest some confidence in the field's shared expertise, even though there are surprisingly few conversations about this expertise in journals, magazines, or at conferences. There is little data, little evaluation, and few programs that publish about their educational practices. There is certainly literature about the profession of Child and Youth Care, but there is a dearth of evidenced-based literature regarding higher education practices.

If there is a shared conception of CYC higher education expertise, it should be evident in each program's fieldwork activities (we use the generic phrase 'fieldwork' to refer to the placement of students in practice settings, supervised by a professional and by an academic supervisor, usually with co-curricular academic classes). Fieldwork must be important because every higher education program includes it. Fieldwork is an educational site where programs give implicit and explicit approval for the varieties of professional practice; presumably there are standards of practice that are endorsed, facilitated or aspired to. Most programs have a co-curricular course in which students learn to think about and interpret their fieldwork experience.

All of these activities assume a shared understanding of how things should be done and what should be learned.

Even so, these assumptions have not been made visible, and here we review work we have done documenting practices in CYC fieldwork programs. First, we provide an overview of work comparing fieldwork documents and materials from CYC programs across Canada and a follow-up project comparing student evaluation and assessment criteria from programs in Ontario. We use this material to describe the variety of ways CYC higher education programs organize fieldwork experiences.

Second, we describe the paucity of good research about the effectiveness of fieldwork in CYC. Third, for comparison of how other professional fields identify competence we review the standards and expectations for fieldwork in Nursing, Counselling, Social Work, and Engineering, and we also describe what faculty from CYC higher education programs have said, when interviewed, about how they identify excellence. Finally, we propose some goals and activities for educators and researchers to respond to the challenges of identifying excellent higher education practices.

Fieldwork Practices in CYC

Keough (2016) briefly reviewed some of the literature in allied fields, like Social Work, noting that practicum experiences are widely used in professional fields and widely assumed to be crucial, yet some researchers are reporting harmful effects of practicum experiences on students '…including financial strain, increased substance use, somatic symptoms of stress, anxiety, negative impacts on sleeping, eating, and concentrating, as well as coping with stress by self-harming…' (p. 124). There are concerns about the quality of student experience and the

quality of graduates; many faculty are reluctant to fail students, even students who perform terribly. The qualifications of practicum supervisors are inconsistent and there are disagreements about what should be assessed.

Fieldwork is similarly valued in CYC, but we do not know much about the range of practices or the effectiveness of those practices. Keough (2016) and Snell (2016, 2017) studied practicum policies and policies from 31 CYC programs across Canada who were members of the CYC Educational Accreditation Board, and Snell (2016, 2017) further studied the learning outcomes from 48 course outlines describing fieldwork courses from 13 CYC diploma programs in Ontario Colleges. They found considerable variation in the organization, length, and structure of fieldwork programs.

There is a wide range of both hours and frequency of fieldwork, neither of which are correlated with each other. One experience may be as short as a few dozen hours or as long as many hundreds of hours. The total number of hours a student is required for graduation ranges from 300 to 1400. The length in years of the credential was unrelated to the number of hours required: B.A. programs averaged 718 hours while Diploma programs averaged 1166. These requirements also vary by geography: British Columbia diploma programs require an average of 300 hours while programs in other provinces require substantially more.

There are also differences in the structure, timing, frequency of supervision, and credit value. Concurrent, block or combinations of these two models are used in CYC fieldwork with the majority of programs using the concurrent model. Variations of block evolving into concurrent experiences are used more typically in senior fieldwork experiences. CYC degree programs favour the concurrent model, rarely sending students to block fieldwork experiences. A handful of programs require practicum in the first year, while the first experience for most

others is during semesters three or five. Diploma programs were more likely to provide weekly academic supervision, while B.A. programs provided 'regular' supervision. What 'regular' means varies widely.

The most common proportion of academic to fieldwork credit hours was 60/40, though one program has 97 percent academic and 3 percent fieldwork. There does not appear to be a consistent formula used to calculate practicum credits; in other words the number of credits in practicum does not align with the number of hours spent by students in placement. Regardless of the method of conversion of fieldwork hours to credit value none of the fieldwork courses examined by Keough or Snell calculated fieldwork credits using same formulas used by their academic institution to equate academic classroom hours to academic units.

Finally, Keough found that few programs had criteria for gatekeeping, that is, for determining when students were or were not qualified for a practicum experience. A few programs have an academic standard, but few have a professional standard. There is some limited evidence, consistent with research in Social Work, that in some programs students are moved on to a second practicum despite failure in the first one or despite serious troubles in the classroom.

Snell (2016) also studied practicum learning outcomes and evaluation methods used in 13 Ontario Diploma programs. She found similar variations in supervision expectations. Some programs have no face-to-face supervision with academic staff. Others do it online, one-to-one, in groups, in a seminar, or on an as needed basis. Some define supervision as any contact with a university staff member. Some programs assume that there should always be an integrative seminar attached to fieldwork, while others have none. Some programs assign grades not just to

the academic seminar but to the practicum itself, but in Ontario over 40 percent use a pass/fail or satisfactory/unsatisfactory rating having little or no impact on the student's overall GPA

The academic fieldwork faculty are part-time in many programs, and in some the work of organizing fieldwork is demanding and does not leave time for supervision. Few programs have full-time fieldwork faculty with the same status as other instructors or faculty. Their qualifications range widely, and their background work experience and educational credentials do not always include practice experience or, more specifically, CYC practice experience. Similarly, the expectations of agency supervisors do not always include a relevant academic degree, and many leave the qualification of the agency supervisor to the discretion of the agency.

In Snell's second study (2017), reviewing 48 fieldwork course outlines from 13 CYC programs in Ontario, program expectations of students were inconsistent. The learning outcomes used in these course outlines did not consistently reference practice standards such as the provincially mandated CYC Vocational Learning Outcomes (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 2014), nor the CYC domains of practice (Child and Youth Care Certification Board 2010) or use common CYC vocabulary, such as relational practice, life-space, resiliency, or anti-oppression. Even the word 'care' was often missing. The language used to describe practicum learning outcomes was not always the same language used in the evaluation tools. It is not clear that programs are describing and teaching the same thing, and it is not clear whether the variation is purposive or accidental. Snell also observed that the language in learning outcomes reviewed was not the same language used in the learning rubrics, nor was there evidence of nested learning outcomes pairing academic course learning with fieldwork application or learning. There was little evidence of scaffolded or intentional skill progression. Some learning outcomes appeared only in the first experience and then never again; others

appeared without any prior reference in the third fieldwork experience, and others occurred in all three outlines but used the same language and evaluation rubric, making it unclear if student expectations were increasing over time or were a single standard

We also know that there are wide variations in the occupations for which programs are preparing students, from child protection to counsellors in schools to community education to residential care. The preparation for these occupations varies widely, and we do not know very much about how the academic programs and practicum co-curricular courses are supporting and preparing students for these.

The meaning of all of these variations needs exploration. Is the variation accidental or pedagogically purposeful? Which practices are effective, and which are not? What is the impact of these practices when promoting students into more complex field work settings? Are these symptoms of a problem or evidence of useful diversity? We do not yet know whether programs are collecting data about outcomes, and we do not know what criteria is—or ought--to be used to evaluate these.

Effectiveness of Fieldwork

Like educators in other professional fields, CYC educators assume fieldwork is an essential component of preparing CYC students for practice. These assumptions are based on historical practices. There is only a small amount of literature about fieldwork in CYC but not very much research and, of that, no research on effectiveness. Allied fields have done a little bit better, though the quality of that research is ragged.

In those allied fields there has been some research on the challenges and problems of students. These include vicarious trauma (Didham *et al*. 2011), a too challenging learning

environment (O'Mara *et al*. 2014), critical incidents (Chen and Fortune 2017), 'difficult[ies],' (Baum 2011; Buck *et al*. 2106; and Foote, 2011), 'problematic' experiences (Gidding *et al*. 2003), costs versus benefits (Barton 2005), tensions (Marlowe *et al*. 2015), being thrown in the deep end and inadequate support (Kelly and McAllister 2013) and feeling over-burdened (Maidment and Crisp 2011).

In comparison to the study of problems, there is not yet enough study of quality in fieldwork, and the studies that have been done have many design problems. These problems include widespread use of convenience samples of students and convenience samples of programs, even for surveys (Cleak and Smith 2012; Fortune and Kaye 2003; Lofmark *et al*. 2012). Consequently, it is difficult to know what to make of the study findings. What is the reader supposed to learn from non-random sample of students when there is no way to know in which way they are non-random? How is the reader to know whether the one program sampled is similar or different than another program of interest?

A second category of problems is that in many studies no research design is described in any detail. A researcher may report conducting interviews, but no schedule for those interviews is provided, so the reader does not know whether the interviews were conducted during the practicum experience, how long after the practicum experience, or whether students had the same type of practicum experience. Few details of procedure are provided, including how open-ended data is analyzed and organized (Ferrier-Kerr 2009). The interview or survey questions are not provided nor they are minimally described (Turnbull 2006). An exception to this was a study by Chen and Fortune (2017) that compared student learning across five different types of practicum settings, where it was at least possible to think about the influence of professional setting on student learning.

A third problem is the under-specification of the unit of analysis. Fieldwork programs have a lot of moving parts, including the direct experience of the student on site, the student experience of and performance in the co-curricular course, the relationship between the professional supervisor and the student—its dimensions and qualities, the relationship between the student and the academic supervisor, the mutual influence between a student and other students in the co-curricular class, the variability of type of placement, the timing of practicum in the student's program, and the intensity and range of the experience. Unless the researcher is careful to specify what dimension and level the students are expected to account for, when students are asked in surveys and interviews to report on their experiences, there is considerable variation that is not usually specified; respondents' answers may not be about the same thing as other respondents, even when they are enrolled in the same program. We do not know if it is the program that is the target of the study, a component of the program, or the students themselves. Sometimes the researchers confuse the units of analysis composed of the students, components of the fieldwork program, the fieldwork program as a whole, and the professional academic program.

This problem is often connected to inadequate operationalization of theoretical variables and to the lack of triangulation in variable measurement. When students are asked in interviews and surveys about whether the fieldwork is contributing to the development of their competence, the meaning of competence is often not specified by the researchers (Salm *et al*. 2016, Parker 2006). It is too easy for one's sense of competence to be indistinguishable from a sense of one's own esteem. The researcher does not define which of the many definitions and measurements of competence is being enacted, in what dimension, and in what setting. Further, students in year two may be in the same research sample as students in year four, even though their idea of

competence ought to be different. Finally, opportunities are missed to triangulate these concepts. The student, the young people, their families, participants in the setting, the academic supervisor, and the professional supervisor are all sources of data about the competence of the student, and these sources are rarely used together to improve the validity of the measurement or built into the study as a way to contrast interpretations and professional judgment. An idea like competence can be triangulated over time as well, with measurements being done more than once in a student's progress through the program as in a study by Trent (2013).

There are many studies about student satisfaction. Here too there is little explanation of what satisfaction is and too little discussion or analysis of whether student satisfaction is important to pedagogy, important to learning, or whether satisfaction is an appropriate measure of fieldwork quality. Further, the timing of data collection about satisfaction may make a difference, since the standard of satisfaction probably changes during, immediately and after participation. Only one study, by Lee and Fortune (2013) included multiple data points.

Another variable that is too often under-conceptualized is learning. Counseling psychology expects documentation of personal, interpersonal, professional, and clinical skills, and many CYC programs use some combination of these, but more study is needed of the quality of this documentation and measurement and the range of competencies. Because the work settings are complex, the number of competencies is bewildering, and their application in any setting is equally complex. Further, we expect that in CYC programs there is also developmental growth—changes in the way we construct and understand ourselves and the world around us. We also expect existential change—change in how one finds meaning in experience. Fieldwork seems important to both of these in a professional program. We do not know very much about student experience of these and the explicit or implicit curriculum of these. One interesting

study, by Williams (2014), connected these latter issues to competencies, examining shifting identities, changing perspectives, and negotiating relationships. Williams interviewed 18 people, and so it was about their perception of these changes and of competencies rather than more direct measurement of the competencies themselves.

In regard to quality, the professional roles in fieldwork that deserve more attention about satisfaction are supervisors and educators. Asking supervisors and/or educators if they were satisfied with their practicum supervision experience may be useful. We do know something about the problems they have. For example, many studies examine supervisors' challenges with student practicum but do not explore if or how these challenges affect supervisor satisfaction. Difficulties include supervisors not being oriented to their role (Duteau 2012 Russell *et al*. 2011), not feeling supported by their agency or the educational institution (Domakin 2015), feeling silenced when expressing concerns (Ortlipp 2003), and not having time to adequately support a struggling student (Barton *et al*. 2005, Sowbel 2012).

Another intriguing gap in the research is that client voices are also noticeable absent from the evaluation of fieldwork programs and of student competence. One exception is the work by Hascher *et al*. (2007), which included primary students in their study of student teachers, to good effect. A patient would likely have much to reveal about how a stay at a teaching hospital and receiving treatment from a student nurse impacts satisfaction with her care plan, and so would residents of group homes, youth in a shelter, or students in experiential education programs.

We also do not know enough about the relationship between practicum student assessment and their professional assessment, and we have no studies that we know about of the validity of assessing fieldwork outcomes in general. This is related to the problem we described earlier, of the random distribution of programs that use ordinal grades for fieldwork performance

and programs that use pass/fail. As suggested in the work by Snell (2017), the lists of competencies and themes assessed in CYC fieldwork programs is varied, and we do not know if these are random choices, comparable to reaching into a bag and pulling out a few, or the end result of systematic study. We do know that there has not been any systematic study of how to document, measure, and assess these qualities.

Standards and Expectations in Allied Fields

Because of our interest in standards of quality, we reviewed the accreditation models of allied academic, professional disciplines in North America to see a) how they identified quality fieldwork programs, and b) how programs identify quality educational fieldwork practices. These disciplines included Counseling Psychology (CACREP 2018), Social Work (CASWE-ACFTS 2014), and nursing (CASN 2018). We also included the ABET (2018) model from Engineering, because principles from it were borrowed for the development of the Child and Youth Care accreditation model (CYCEA 2019). All programs to some extent rely on the reviewer/site visitor to embody a standard of excellence, and each accreditation model is an attempt to provide the right information and data so that the reviewer has accurate data and some kind of quality assessment can be made.

Counseling Psychology expects each program to assess four attributes of students: academic, interpersonal, personal, and clinical. All of these are at play in the fieldwork program, and each program is expected to document student competence and performance in fieldwork in in all four domains, including both formative and summative assessment of the student. In addition, each student is expected to receive an hour of supervision time each week with the professional supervisor. The professional supervisor is expected to have the appropriate

qualifications and demonstrate the appropriate competence. Further, each student receives additional supervision from an academic and another student who is training to be a supervisor.

What is *not* identified in the accreditation model are the particular attributes that students are expected to exemplify or criteria for accreditation. These are assumed. Faculty are expected to already know these. This is characteristic of a 'craft' model: The guild exemplifies the standard of competence, and the product of the guild is its own standard. In craft models the standard can change over time, but it is a shared standard.

Nursing too leaves the standards unstated; accreditation site visitors are expected to know the standard of practice. Unlike Counseling Psychology, the accreditation materials do not identify any concrete fieldwork practices or criteria like supervision, reflection, ratios, testing, evaluation, or portfolios. The reviewers apply their judgement to interpreting the practices of an individual program. There is no explicit description of the non-negotiables and negotiables. Presumably these are probably widely known, and because Nursing practice is complex, an exhaustive list would be quite an undertaking.

Instead, Nursing programs are expected to show where and how accepted nursing practices are acquired by students, and the accreditation process assumes an endogenous culture of competence and quality. How quality is measured is not explained but seems to depend on the explicit and implicit culture of the field, and these are assumed to be aligned. At the same time, Nursing academic programs are expected to demonstrate forethought and attention to what students are learning and where. For example, they are expected to map out which fieldwork sites provide which experiences. This is an empiricist model.

In contrast to Nursing and Counseling Psychology, Social Work accreditation standards are concrete and detailed about many things, such as how many hours of fieldwork are required

(700) and they require the program to have a policy about harassment. Yet there is little emphasis on outcomes or results. We might call this the agnostic model in that it is indifferent to empircal outcomes. When it is not concrete, the descriptions are sometimes self-referential and circular: 'The purpose of field education is to connect the theoretical/conceptual contributions of the academic setting with the practice setting, enabling the student to acquire practice skills that reflect the learning objectives for students identified in the Standards.' Like other programs, some qualities are assumed, and in Social Work these are especially true of value judgments such as 'relevant,' 'engagement,' 'anti-oppressive,' and how they are practiced. When these words are used the reviewer/site visitors use their own experience and judgment.

The expectations of Engineering programs are surprisingly similar to Counseling Psychology and Nursing. The reason for this may be that there are in fact standards for what makes a good engineer or a good nurse or a good counsellor. Like Nursing, Engineering programs are expected to use a systematic approach to student outcomes, that is, everything is supposed to be connected to student outcomes. One aim of Engineering accreditation that is unique is that they ask programs to document the alignment of objectives and curriculum. They are expected to understand and apply the known mechanisms of educating an engineer. An interesting application of these ideas has to do with capstone experiences, where close ties are expected between these and classroom education. Finally, there are high expectations for the activities of demonstrating quality. The ABET model is a continuous improvement model, and the idea is not just to have standards of quality but to demonstrate that one is collecting data for the purposes of improving quality. They are expected to show what they are working on.

Other professional fields, including Child and Youth Care, could and probably should adopt some of these practices. Like Counseling Psychology, there might be an emphasis on

fieldwork supervision quality and frequency over multiple dimensions like the personal, interpersonal, academic, and professional. Like Engineering, there be might focus on integration of curriculum with fieldwork experiences, drawing explicit ties between them and testing for competence. Like Engineering and Nursing, wemight want more clarity about how and what students learn in different types of placements. Like Counseling Psychology, Nursing, and Engineering, programs may need flexibility to allow for innovation and to chart their own educational pathways. Finally, whether we call them competencies, outcomes, attributes, skills, or values, an emphasis on results is important.

Again, all of these accreditation models rely on the reviewer/site visitor to embody a standard of excellence, and each accreditation model is an attempt to provide the right information to a reviewer so that an accurate and valid quality assessment can be made. It would be helpful to know more about the validity and reliability of site reviewer judgment.

Competence and Quality in CYC

The current CYC accreditation framework was designed to explicitly avoid the social work model of control and borrowed extensively from the engineering model of looking for forethought, continuous improvement, and demonstration of results. We have noted that a) there are many unknowns about what CYC programs are doing in fieldwork, b) what we do know about CYC fieldwork practices suggests that these practices vary widely, and c) we have little research or evaluation about the effectiveness of these programs, There is also a notable absence of ideas about the quality of fieldwork practice in Child and Youth Care accreditation documents. This model is evolving over time, so we asked educators who are involved in

accreditation to tell us how they recognize and identify quality in fieldwork, both in their own work and in accreditation activities.

Educators suggested first looking at the assessment tools that are used to evaluate students in practicum. The importance of ensuring assessments were done to evaluate practice with real youth, in real agencies, was raised, along with the need to look at the structure and process of such assessments. The educators we talked to thought that ongoing assessment should be a key component of fieldwork education and a requirement of accreditation. There was no consensus as to what an assessment tool should look like, but the educators suggested identifying and defining fundamental outcomes that could be incorporated into the various tools. Establishing alignment between the tools used to assess the student and the tools used to assess the practice is salient.

Relationships were also identified by the educators as an important component of fieldwork. Respondents thought the accreditation process should consider if and where relationships were developing in practicum placements. They spoke to the need for practica to provide opportunities for students to build, maintain and work through relationships. This refers to relationships with young people, as well as the connections between students and the professional supervisors and the academic supervisors. Child and Youth Care is often based on the practice of relationships, which requires 'attending to the co-created space between us' (Garfat and Fulcher 2012 p. 9). Academics thought that opportunities for 'relational practice' should be a non-negotiable standard of CYC accreditation.

As mentioned earlier, most CYC fieldwork programs have a co-curricular course associated with them, which is usually in the form of a seminar. Educators discussed the importance of seminars, particularly because they believe it provides opportunities for student

reflection and debriefing. Respondents suggested that accreditation look at the quality of these experiences, as well as how often they occur, when, and the methods being utilized. They noted that seminars are not the only place reflection and debrief occur, so there is a need for reviewers to be open to other ways of doing this. Supervision, in particular, should provide a space and time for reflection, so accreditation should question the frequency and structure of this schedule (by both the academic and professional supervisor). The educators we spoke with thought that having professional supervisors who were knowledgeable about Child and Youth Care, and more specifically had a CYC background, would be most helpful for the students. The opportunity for reflection between students was also identified as a critical piece.

Of course, the educators spoke about placements as an important part of assessing fieldwork programs. Little is known across Canada about how programs assess the quality of placements. The educators discussed the need for placements to be appropriate to the CYC field and linked to the profession, but also fitting for the particular community in which they take place. They realized that placements may look different, depending on the community in which they are located. How to evaluate quality, appropriateness, and relationships were questions the educators could not answer. They did suggest that programs adapt learning activities based on the different types of fieldwork settings to ensure that all placements result in powerful learning experiences. The educators also thought accreditation should consider how educational programs manage risks in fieldwork. Do program faculty accurately know the risks (to youth, to fieldwork students, to supervisors), and what do they do to address these?

These educators all felt that there are some fundamental concepts or outcomes, specific to CYC, that need to be specified--these are the non-negotiables. Educators noted that once those are in place, we can focus on whether and how those outcomes are being reached, keeping in

mind that this will require an understanding of programs and communities that vary across the country. A conversation about practice, as opposed to practicum, may open up the process of assessing whether the diverse range of CYC programs are meeting outcomes for accreditation. It is not clear that agreement among academics and professionals about non-negotiables is possible, but most people seem to think it is important.

Recommendations and Summary

We suggest beginning with the question of 'why.' Why do we use practicums as our model in CYC education? What are our aspirations, our goals, and our intentions? If we can identify those, then where do we find the evidence that we are accomplishing this purpose? What is suitable and relevant evidence? How do we know we are realizing these intentions and meeting our goals? How do we ensure the quality of CYC practicum education? Measures of quality are difficult to define. According to Tracy (2010), '[v]alues for quality, like all social knowledge, are ever changing and situated within local contexts and current conversations' (p. 837). The more important step to assessing quality in CYC education is for educators to engage in regular dialogue around what this means. There has been resistance from some CYC programs to the idea of accreditation, especially from a few degree programs, and for some this resistance seems to be an unwillingness to participate in processes of accountability to the profession.

For the accreditation process, for research and evaluation in the field, for program reviews, and for ongoing self-assessment, we need to improve the quality of the evaluation and research expertise within our programs, specifically, more attention to a) measurement issues with qualitative and quantitative data, b) more shared uses of data collection instruments and strategies, and c) more attention to sampling and the use of richer, more complex variables. As

is true with evaluation everywhere, there should be less measurement of satisfaction and more measurement of other dimensions of the experience. Development of some common hallmarks of a practicum would be helpful here, with attempts to identify common hallmarks of quality. Such criterion can be met in a variety of different ways and establishes a common pedagogical approach to fieldwork education (Tracy 2010).

It would be helpful if CYC programs across Canada would adopt some practices from the open data and open source movements. We should be sharing, publicly, our curriculum models and materials, including syllabi, assessment and evaluation devices, supervision practices, staffing expectations, and professional practice standards. We should be working toward the goal of ongoing data sharing across programs.

CYC fieldwork educators face many challenges that have not yet been taken up in assessment and evaluation. When researchers in other fields begin unpacking fieldwork, they find extensive trouble. For example, Finch (2013) found challenges with '(1) The quantity and quality of placements. (2) The perception of low failure rates on placement (and on social work programs more generally). (3) Practice educators' reluctance, inability, or difficulties in failing students on placement' (p. 54). We know from anecdotes that CYC programs also have difficulty failing students, sometimes because of the reluctance of supervisors but also because institutions may not allow it. Also, there are frequent incidents when program chairs overrule supervisors when students appeal their decisions. We know that some proportion of students have bad experiences, and some are harmed, though we do not know how many. Educators know stories of young people in care who have been badly served by practicum students, though we do not know how extensive these problems are.

When exploring what it means to do good qualitative research, Tracy (2010) uses the

analogy of a crystal. We can think of quality fieldwork in CYC in the same way, 'a crystal, with various facets representing the aims, needs, and desires of various stakeholders' (p. 849). CYC educators must come together and find common ground. Discussing, studying, and addressing these challenges openly will require a culture shift within and across educational programs, from privacy to openness and from competitiveness to collaboration and cooperation. We expect—and hope-- that educators brave enough to begin will be rewarded with improvements in their own practices and recognition from students, professionals, and the higher education community.

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