Chapter Title: Kindness: caring for self, others and nature - who *cares* and *why*?

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Bio: Tracy Hayes teaches primarily on the Working with Children, Young People and Families undergraduate programme, drawing extensively on her experiences as a professional youth and community development worker. She is also a Doctoral Researcher in the Department of Science, Natural Resources and Outdoor Studies researching the relationship that young people have with the natural environment. She takes a playfully narrative approach to her work, embracing creative methodologies, particularly reflexive auto-ethnography, creative non-fiction and story-telling. She enjoys being, and playing, outside.

Abstract

This chapter will make use of a friendly, narrative style that invites participation from the reader, to explore caring for self, others and nature, as encapsulated in the notion of kindness. It begins with a fable, a short story that serves a moral purpose, which is based on my empirical research with 'looked after' young people. This fable shares the experience of one young male, centrally placing him within the discussion, and it is utilised in stages to explore the concept of care. It adopts an interdisciplinary, contextual approach to literature, drawing from geography, environment and nature; youthwork; experiential, outdoor and adventure education; child/adolescent development and play; storytelling and creative writing; philosophy and psychology. The fable is based on one of many 'magic moments' that I have experienced as I have explored young people's relationship with nature. The chapter argues that we need to be able to pause, reflect and extract meaning from these specific moments. In this fable we can see that care is relational, situational and complex; it includes intrinsic elements of human development. Fables, a form of creative non-fiction, are an evocative and moral way of conveying the learning from these moments. The chapter ends with an invitation to the reader to pause and consider what care means to them.

(188 words)

Key words: Caring; care; kindness; interdisciplinary; young people; creative non-fiction; story; relational.

Introduction

Kindness is a behaviour defined by ethical characteristics including a pleasant disposition, care and concern for others, and is demonstrated by acting in a friendly, helpful, considerate manner (Oxford Essential English Dictionary (OED), 2011). In some cultures, it is known as a virtue, and in others as a value; I see it as a moral stance. We can be kind to ourselves, to others and towards nature. I will now be kind to you, the reader by explaining my approach to this chapter, which adopts a friendly, narrative style to explore caring for self, others and nature. It is informed by both social and natural science and presents a philosophical, conceptual and empirical discussion. Like many concepts, for example sense of place, care is defined, conceptualised, theorised and applied '…across different disciplines in different ways' (Convery, Corsanne and Davis, 2012: 1). Consequently, I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach, which I will explain in more detail later. My language is deliberately evocative, provocative and multi-faceted; it is '…scholarship [that] reaches toward an audience, it cares. It wants to make a difference…' (Pelias, 2004:12). It is written in response to calls for more '…diverse, challenging, exciting, creative, and interdisciplinary work' (Kraftl, Horton and Tucker, 2014). Like many researchers exploring the slippery stuff of the social world (for example, Macartney, 2007; Wood, 2007; Jones, 2000/2008) I often feel constrained within traditional forms of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Therefore, this chapter takes a boundary-crossing (Ellis, 2004) integrated, yet fully-contextual approach to both empirical research and to literature, drawing from the wells of geography, environment and nature; youthwork; experiential, outdoor and adventure education; child/adolescent development and play; storytelling and creative writing; philosophy and psychology.

The chapter begins with a fable, a short story that serves a moral purpose (OED, 2011), that invites reflective contemplation, but not judgement; it is based on my empirical research with 'looked after' young people. This fable is then utilised in stages to explore the concept of care, before finally being placed within a wider context that invites the reader to also question what we mean when we use the word care. The story is one of many 'magic moments' that I have experienced as I have explored young people's relationship with nature. I am exploring how young people make sense of outdoor experiences that have been provided for them as part of a targeted, specifically funded intervention. I am curious as to how these experiences impact on their perception of their own health and wellbeing, and on their desire to look after (to care-for) outdoor spaces, which in everyday terms we call 'nature'. My research is interdisciplinary (or transdisciplinary), in that I have made use of an integrated blend of disciplines from the outset (Kessel et al., 2009); this is not surprising in view of my earlier training, first as a natural scientist, then as a social scientist. This particular piece of research has arisen from my previous practice as an environmental youthworker, and aims to discover what it is that we need to do to make sure our work is effective – so that young people and practitioners find value and meaning in their experiences, and there is an increased awareness of the need to conserve our natural environment.

My research has involved spending time with young people and practitioners participating in a number of different projects, across a range of settings: urban, rural and coastal; from the south-east to the north-west of England. All of the young people were aged between 11 and 21, and had been identified as having specific needs that would benefit from a targeted intervention, with pre-determined outcomes. This included young people with special educational needs / disabilities (SEN/D); young people classed as NEET (not in employment, education or training); young people following an alternative curriculum, both within statutory education (schools and colleges) and in alternative, community-based education; young people attending community-based youth clubs, and visiting residential outdoor centres; young parents; young people in care/preparing to leave statutory care. As I write this chapter, I reflect on the young people who have participated in the projects that have been included in my research; although they are far from a homogenous group, indeed, they are a wonderfully diverse and eclectic group of young people, what they share is the experience of exclusion, of being marginalised from the mainstream world. As a result of this, many of them have experienced considerable unkindness and a lack of care: I have no wish to inadvertently repeat that in the way that I interpret and write about my research, which again reiterates the need to take an interdisciplinary approach to gain a more holistic understanding.

My findings have highlighted a need for playful, creative and emotional approaches that allow young people to feel comfortable *being* in nature, rather than always *doing* things to, in and for nature. The natural world can be perceived to be a magical and enchanting place for children; indeed, many of the activities we offer as practitioners actively encourage this as they are based on imaginative play. However, as children grow older and develop an awareness of the state of the natural world, they begin to understand the urgency of the need to protect it, and as a consequence, the 'magic' often disappears to be replaced by more serious considerations and concern. In my approach to addressing this, I have been inspired by writers such as Rachel Carson (1962/2000), to create fables designed to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue in an engaging and understandable way. This has also necessitated challenging more traditional forms of research and writing, by embracing more 'stylish' approaches (Sword, 2012), primarily by making my work accessible through avoiding technical jargon or overly academic language, and maintaining my focus on practical applications and everyday language.

The moments used for my fables are ones that I have perceived as epiphanies, turning-points or an address (Moules, et al. 2014). They have proved to be the defining moments that have made me stop, wonder and question in an attempt to extract meaning (Denzin, 2014). They are the times when I have felt bothered by something, have become 'troubled' (Meyer and Land, 2003). When this happens I take care to critically analyse each specific moment, to carefully avoid it being merely 'a nice story'; it is so much more than that. It is an opportunity to '…illustrate facets of cultural experience…make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders' (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 3). Like most of my magic moments, there was nothing momentous, or out-of-the-ordinary about this particular

experience, indeed it was arguably, its very ordinariness (Ross et al., 2009), its routineness (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), its everydayness (Horton and Kraftl, 2006) that made it so special. It occurred in the early stages of my empirical research, and it is one that has sustained and nurtured me throughout. I offer it to you here and now in story form and invite you to slow down your mind and let my words sink beneath your skin (Hustedde and King, 2002) so that you may also reflect on the meanings of this story, and consider how to relate this approach to exploring your own experiences. This particular story is dedicated to Liz, the pseudonym chosen by the young man at the centre of the story, and utilised to address moral and ethical dimensions of empirical research. I will tell you more about him (and that) later, but for now, let me share his (our) story.

"But Tracy, I don't get it. I hear Londoners who come here on holiday, I see them looking at everything, I hear them say "wow! Look at that mountain, that lake, wow!" But I just don't get it. I don't see it - I think it's cos I grew up here, it's just normal, nothing special. I don't say wow…"

His voice tails off as his thoughts drift to another place. "*I do,*" I reply, "*I live here and I still say wow – nature is so wonderful. What do you think it would take for you to say wow*?" Looking at me sadly, shaking his head, he responds, "*Nothing, I just don't get it. I don't feel the 'wow thing'. It's just outside. I do that all the time, I like being inside…*"

Our conversation moves on through a discussion of some of the things planned for this residential weekend: a combination of two types of activities. First, being trained by me to be a peer mentor to support other young people who are in statutory care, preparing to leave or who have just made the move to independent living. Secondly, to participate in a number of adventurous outdoor activities, facilitated by colleagues. Discussion widens to include the other young people sitting in the back of the mini-bus alongside us, with topics ranging across music, film and sport. We arrive at the centre and settle into our designated spaces: separate rooms for boys and girls, with leaders in between. Dinner is served, eaten and the table cleared, then we head out for an evening walk. Each participant has been equipped with walking boots, waterproofs and head-torches. It has been raining and the ground is sodden and heavy underfoot. Feet in badly fitting boots, slip, trip and stumble, accompanied by squeals and laughter. Two of the young men offer me their arms, jokily giving support to the 'old mother' of the group…

We stop part way up the fell. Each person is placed by my colleague in their own special spot, to experience the quiet of the fell on their own. The more nervous ones are reassured that we are nearby. Then we wait. After a while, ten minutes or so, we gather them up and make our way back down the fell, to a space where we can reflect on the activity and share our experiences. And then it happens, the word escapes his lips "*Wow! What's that*?" He is pointing to the top of the fell, to where a gentle light is appearing. "*That's the moon,*" my colleague explains, "*The moon is rising behind the fell and casting its light across the top. If we wait a bit,*

we'll see the moon." We wait and watch, then again I hear it, softly as if forming part of an involuntary breath: "*wowwwww*". Quietly, we return to the centre. Talking later about the experience I gently ask him, "*Do you know what you said, up there on the fell*?"

He doesn't, he is unaware…

The ellipsis points at the end of four sentences within this story signify places at which to pause and focus the conversation; this approach conceptualises place as somewhere to stop, rest and become involved (Tuan in Cresswell, 2015:35). There are other places (and topics) I could have chosen (for example, home making/breaking; silence; gender/sexuality) and I encourage you to consider which you would have chosen if I had not made this choice for you, if I had left you alone to interpret the story in your own way. Instead, I facilitate the exploratory process by asking specific questions, a process which culminates in addressing the story's final thought. In doing this, I am embracing the trend for '…conceptual approaches to closely align with the nature of changing bodies of knowledge in a fluid social world … conceptual understandings are better understood as transition points rather than endpoints' (Milligan and Wood, 2009:2). In the hermeneutic tradition of 'questionableness' (Nixon, 2014), the chapter will end, not with conclusions, but with more questions to encourage further contemplation. I make no apology for this: the world is full of messiness (Huestedde and King, 2002; Jones, 2008) and does not fit within 'neat' conclusions; I believe it is morally wrong to pretend otherwise.

A brief introduction to Liz before we explore the story: at our time of first meeting, he was 17 years old and had been in statutory care since the age of six. We met through my role as a researcher responsible for evaluating a Cumbria-wide service for young people who were identified as being in care, or having just left care. The service had the espoused aim of easing their transition to independent adult life; occurring during the phase of life that sees a shift in focus away from being in care and towards caring for self. This transition is something acknowledged as being of international concern, resulting in disrupted education and poor social outcomes (Rogers, 2011). He informs me that he has several siblings, most of which he does not see, or have contact with. I do not pry, or seek background information from colleagues; as a professional youth worker I prefer to get to know him on his terms, learning about him as and when he is ready. However, I have met one sister, who also engages with the project where I am based. I do not know her so well; she is more reluctant than him to join in with activities. He is a gentle person, openly conflicted about his sexuality, and very unsure about his future; he is conscious that his time in care is coming to an end, and that he is moving towards independence and a less supervised kind of life. Unlike many 17 year olds who look forward to their 18th birthday with great anticipation, he views it with trepidation as it will mean that his visits with his mother will no longer be supervised. He shares that he is not ready to face this alone; action by his social worker ensures that this is delayed until he is ready. I enjoy his company, he has a well-rounded sense of humour, and a seemingly never-ending bank of funny train stories to share with me: things he has seen or

heard or experienced whilst travelling. When he found out about my research project, he was determined to be included and was one of the first young people I interviewed; part of that research conversation is presented within this story. In the mini-bus, on the way to the residential, we had talked about what I was doing, with him asking me lots of questions about the why (purpose) and how (methodology), which had prompted his first remarks.

I don't say wow…

Wow, a universally recognised word uttered as an exclamation of astonishment, admiration, awe, wonder or joy. Liz, in the moment, on the bus, does not feel any of this, more a sense of bewilderment, and I perceive a feeling of loss, of sadness. This small three-letter word represents the effect of these emotions, as explained by Fuller (2006) they excite our imaginations, enhance '…our capacity to seek deeper patterns in the universe' (Ibid.: 2) and provoke reflection and contemplation. When we encounter something that we perceive to be new or very different, it surprises us, it causes us to wonder. Descartes (trans. Voss, 1989) identified that this happens before we know whether this object/thing will be of any use to us: it is a spontaneous and intuitive response to something different, something wonderful. Focusing on wonder as a way of exploring this, Fuller explains that wonder is a form of heightened interest, which '…momentarily suspends habitual ways of looking at the world and instead lures people into new and creative engagement with their surroundings… wonder induces receptivity and openness. It prompts us to become more connected with the wider environment' (Fuller 2006:12). Liz currently lives in what most people consider to be one of the most beautiful parts of the UK, and yet he does not appear to notice or appreciate this. It is generally accepted that early experiences in nature are important for developing an awareness of, and a connection to nature (see, for example: Chawla, 1990; Waite, 2007; Dunlap and Kellert 2012). This is nothing new: in 1956, Rachel Carson encouraged parents and carers to take children outside, highlighting that 'A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful… full of wonder and excitement […] Daily, intimate, sensory experience is essential to keep that wonder bright for a lifetime…' (Carson, 1956: 42-3). The most effective way for this to happen is through companionship with a responsive adult, however what happens to the young people who enter adulthood never having experienced nature in this way? Who helps them to discover the wonder and then keep it bright (Carson, *op.cit.*)? I have written elsewhere about the importance of playfulness in addressing this, (Hayes, 2015; 2013) however it takes more than a playful approach: it takes kindness and care.

Retracing our steps to the start of this section of the story, Liz's choice of wording to describe those who do say wow as 'Londoners' is interesting. In this one term he encapsulates an extreme sense of 'otherness': London is a very long way from the west coast of Cumbria where Liz spends much of his time. Applying a number of geographical concepts (see suggested further reading): as a place it is spatially, temporally and culturally distant and different, and the people who come from there are different to Liz: there are '…vast distances in knowledges, needs, modes of being and experiences' (Jones, 2008: 200). If we chose to apply socio-cultural concepts, we could consider the added dimension of how 'Londoners' are perceived as different: more affluent, mobile, professional – visitors coming to gaze in

wonder at the landscape, or second-home owners who make living unaffordable for many or adventurous types keen on ticking off yet another mountainous peak. However, those are complex topics and issues to savour and explore elsewhere. Here it is sufficient to say that Liz sees them as 'other', as unrepresentative of him and his life: they are distinctly different.

Unlike Liz, I did not grow up in Cumbria; in my early adulthood I lived and worked near London, and two of my grown-up children currently live there. Cumbria is a place where I have chosen to live, moving to make a permanent home after many years of holidaying here. I feel a kinship with the 'Londoners' who say "wow": at the time of the encounter I had been resident here for less than a year, and even now I am still regularly surprised by what I see around me. Liz has not yet had the chance to choose his home: he started life within a family home which was abruptly disrupted and disturbed when the children were removed from the care of their parents. Separated from parents, and siblings, he was placed elsewhere, in homes and with people that were chosen for him. Within a later conversation he confides, *"I remember being taken into care. No one told me anything except,* 'you have three minutes to pack'." Conscious of how long it took me to carefully pack the numerous boxes that I filled with my treasured belongings (particularly books, teddy bears and toys from my childhood, and my children's), and paid to have safely transported north to Cumbria to enable me to meaningfully set up my new home, I am shocked at how little he would have been able to take with him. Three minutes? This was all the time he was given to gather his belongings before being taken away in a police car to a 'family' he did not know. I am deeply troubled by this, and find myself wondering what would I grab if that was all the time I was given? Not having lived his experience, I am unable to find a specific answer to this question, yet my emotional response allows me to imagine what it may have been like and to empathise. Responding to his words, his story, I feel a sense of loss and sadness – interwoven with gratitude for having the luxury of time to pack. I share this with you to further your understanding of the context for this story and to enable you to test out your personal response to it (Smith and Smith, 2008).

Liz was given a social worker, although he did not know what one was, who informed him "You will now be in care until you're 18 years old". That did not mean anything to him either, he was too young to understand. This marked the beginning of his life in care: being placed in a new house, away from people he knew, with few belongings, little comfort or sense of belonging. No wonder he does not say "*wow*" when he steps outside. He does not see the inauthentic, romanticised, rural idyll (see, for example Jones, 2000; 2008; Valentine, 2001) that we (as in me and the 'Londoners') do. His view is very different to ours; whilst we are gazing in awe at a landscape that has been commodified for our pleasure and leisure (Valentine, 2001), he is looking at a much rawer, gritty and disturbing space, where bad, unkind things happen to children like him.

It's just outside. I do that all the time, I like being inside…

Outside/inside; insider/outsider are complex terms that invite us to explore through metaphorical, philosophical and geographical concepts (see for example, Bachelard, 1958/1994). Here we are going to accept the everyday usage of Liz. Like many people (young and old) Liz spends much of his time indoors, either in his foster home, on the train or at college; he also volunteers at a local charity shop; you could say that his life is full of indoor learning. There are numerous studies, theoretical and empirical that highlight our concerns about how little time westernised children and young people spend outside (see for example: Louv, 2005; White and Stoecklin, 2008; Ridgers, Knowles and Sayers, 2012). As explained in detail by Palmer (2006), this is one element of what is seen by many as an alarming deterioration in children/young people's understanding and appreciation of the world they live in. In her book she urges us (people who facilitate learning, whatever our defined role may be) to enable children and young people to play outside more. This viewpoint is substantiated by research; for example, in 2012 Sigman reported some alarming statistics which highlighted that by the age of seven, the average westernised child will have spent the equivalent of one whole year of 24 hour-days watching screen media; by 18, Liz's age, this increases to the equivalent of three years' worth (Sigman, 2012: 8-9). Having spent time with him, he does not appear to conform to this; he has an old style phone, which, unlike others within the group, tends to stay out of sight (perhaps he may be embarrassed by it?), however he demonstrably enjoys spending time with people, engaging in conversation and eye-contact. He actively seeks out opportunities to participate in activities – both indoors and outdoors.

In the mini-bus he was quick to inform me that he liked being indoors, but in a later reflective conversation, he contradicts this, telling me that young people "*… think they're a lot safer indoors, in their own surroundings. But actually you're a lot safer outside*". Is this a result of the training we have provided as part of the peer-mentoring programme? He has learned about the need for risk assessments, professional boundaries, and appropriate behaviour. He has a greater awareness of what we, as facilitators of the experiences, actually do and an insight into why we do this the way we do. This appears to have altered his perception - although perhaps it may be because he knows me better, feels able to share more sensitive memories and thoughts. As an adult I am unable to confidently explain this, so I choose to accept it as it is, with all its messiness in relation to my empirical research. In this moment of speaking with me, Liz appears to feel safe, which is what matters most to me.

Jokily offering support to the 'old mother' of the group…

In this moment, I have to ask myself exactly who is supporting whom? Looking back on the experience as I write this chapter, I remember the feeling of wet mud, clinging to my boots, sucking them under and causing me to wobble; the firm grasp of hands, appearing on either side gripping my arms to keep me upright; the shrieks as one of my helping hands (standing

to the left of me) slips in his badly fitting, borrowed boots, nearly taking me with him. This is quickly followed by laughter and reassuring words, "*You're safe Tracy, I won't let you fall.*" I recall looking up at the earnest young face to my right, it is Liz, and I recognise that his slight build is highly unlikely to hold me (and my much more considerable weight), should I fully lose my footing. We pause, then linking arms, three of us slowly move forward together, more stabilised than when we were walking alone. Ahead we can just about make out the shapes of others in the group: the experienced outdoor leader and other young people. They do not appear to be struggling as much as us, striding confidently out across the muddy field. Our physical closeness enables us to talk and our conversation is relaxed and humorous; we tell each other silly childish jokes and they refer to me as the old mother of the group. The following day, on their return from the activities they have undertaken with my colleague (I stayed behind to mark their coursework), they respond to me greeting them at the door with the remark "*Oh, look it's Old Mother Hubbard.*" I laugh as I move to switch on the kettle to make them a drink. Even now, several years on from the experience, I remember the warmth – both emotional and physical - between us and I realise that I miss their company; we have all moved on in very different ways. I wonder what they remember from the experience.

Rousing from my reveries, and returning to the story, an unintended consequence from losing my footing was the opportunity for them to show how much they cared about me, and in this instance, they cared-for me: we were moving towards being in a reciprocal, caring relation. Like Pyer (2009), in her study with young people who are wheelchair users, I am conscious of the potential we have as researchers to affect others. Is it fair to allow a caring relation to develop, when our time together is time-limited; particularly for those who lives have involved many transient relationships? Would it be kinder (for them and for me) not to show this type of care? I agree with Pyer (2009: 215), with regards to duty of care '…sometimes there are legacies that ethical researchers must endeavour to deal with', which I am attempting to do through critical and theoretical reflections to identify the learning to take forward. Also, it is only with the benefit of hindsight that I realise the importance of humour and laughter within these experiences; like Macpherson (2008), this was not something I set out to explore, and yet the more I read and reflect on my 'magic moments', the more I listen and attend to voice recordings and transcripts of interviews, the more conscious I become of the *funniness* involved.

Considering my role, I am very adept at holding coats, taking photographs, and providing support for those who wish to be adventurous; in many ways, I would describe myself as adventurous, certainly in terms of my research and teaching, however this does not extend to risky physically strenuous activities. I prefer adventures that are slower, more gentle and inclusive (Hayes, 2014) usually accompanied by my teddy bear (Hayes, 2015) or bunny rabbit (Hayes, 2013)! On this particular residential experience, I was happy to play the supporting role, although also highly conscious that the aim of the project was to encourage independence. I felt a tension between two apparently binary positions: wanting to *care-for* these young people, who have experienced a lack of care in their lives; and caring *about*

them, in a less involved, more professionally detached way, that acknowledged the restrictions inherent in our roles. Noddings (2013) clearly elucidates this distinction by describing caring-for as '…an encounter or set of encounters characterized by direct attention and response. It requires the establishment of a caring-relation, person-to-person contact…' (Ibid.: xiv). She asserts that it is impossible to care-for everyone, we do not have sufficient time or resources for this. The awareness of this distinction can help us to be more effective in our work. My colleagues are adept at caring about people, and they take great care to organise activities so that risk is managed in a way that allows for risky activities to be enjoyed; their role does not allow them to care-for the participants, they adopt a less emotional stance. I take care to avoid these activities; and yet I embrace the equally risky world of emotions, and prefer situations where I am able to care-for people. Self-awareness, including why we choose to do certain things and make particular career choices, is integral to working effectively.

As highlighted by Marschall (2014: 518) within a study of children's experiences following the divorce of their parents, the dominant discourses around care have developed from the normative perspective of the nuclear family, and '…draw on general and rather implicit assumptions of caring as a unidirectional, linear and causal process of caregiving from parents'. As we can see from the story in this chapter, and from Marschall's own research, this is not really the case: care is not a linear, one-way process, it is relational, situational and complex; it includes intrinsic elements of human development such as attention, love and kindness, as well as care. Attempting to address these needs is therefore not easy, it is so much more than just 'give and take'.

He doesn't… He is unaware.

Despite his earlier protestations, Liz says the word 'wow' twice. The first time in surprise and curiosity, directing our attention to what he has seen. The second as an almost involuntary breath, an instinctive, intuitive response to what he has encountered. It is nothing particularly exceptional or unexpected, however it is the first time that Liz has noticed it, has paid attention to it and wants to share it with us. He was transfixed by the moonlight – he could not see the moon as it had not risen high enough, however it cast its light and its shadow over the fells. He had spoken of wanting to stay on the fell and watch it until morning. But the clouds descended and the moon disappeared, the moment passed into memory. As identified by Sissay (2012), in general the "… great moments of childhood are recalled through family members"; my efforts to capture it within a fable can be seen as an attempt to make up for this absence. If we consider the role of the practitioner, as the facilitator, co-participant and interpreter of experiences, we have a privileged 'insider' role that allows us to share these magic moments. I suggest we have a duty of care to ensure that we do this.

And yet as we recall those moments of childhood, we are looking back through time, through the eyes and awareness of an adult. As identified by Jones (2003: 34) when doing this 'Our

imagination needs to work with our memory and we need to recall the feelings and emotions themselves, as far as is possible, as well as narrative accounts of events'. Does it matter if the memories that Liz shares with me may not be entirely, historically accurate? Does anyone care that his account may be contradicted by other family members, or people in positions of authority responsible for his care? Is this an important dimension of empirical research? Not to me, because I am interested in his perception of his experiences as shared by him.

Like health professionals (see for example, Bray et al., 2013) practitioners of outdoor experiences need the ability to show kindness and compassion through caring-for, in addition to more professional skills and knowledge. In Bray et al.'s study into the role of professional education in developing compassionate health practitioners, they identify compassion as a core value which represents '…responding with humanity and kindness to each person's pain, distress, anxiety or need […] respecting and valuing people as individuals and responding to them in ways that appreciate the human experience … (Ibid., 2013: 481). Although their study focused on what we recognise as the health service (i.e. nursing) their findings are applicable to our more general wellbeing and to the role of other practitioners. Kindness encapsulates the relational reality of caring, its reciprocity, responsiveness, attentiveness and care.

Care… who cares, about what, why, when, where and how…

Retracing my steps once more to the title of the article, so many questions may be generated by one very small, taken-for-granted word: care is an everyday word, with an everyday meaning – or is it? Like much in life it all depends on how it is applied (OED, 2011): as a noun it implies serious attention, thought, caution, protection, worry or anxiety; as a verb it signifies concern, interest, affection, liking or willingness – for example, would you care to accompany me as we explore this word further? We can join it to other words, and become careless, careful, carefree, carer, caregiver, caretaker, careworn; we can care for, be cared for, care about, be cared about, come-in-to-care, be in care, prepare to leave care and become a care-leaver. This last role is a lifelong one: as highlighted by Lemn Sissay (2013) who states "I am a care-leaver for the rest of my life. It's not something I get over or avoid. It's who I am." This one aspect, which is not of our own making, becomes embedded within our identity, a socially constructed part of who we perceive ourselves to be. At this point I am reminded by the words of Lorde (1984: 120-1), to take great care: when we are forced to focus on one part of ourselves, categorised (labelled?) by an 'externally imposed definition' this one part of our identity may presented as '…the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self… this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live…'. We are so much more than that one part. We need to look beyond the traditional, hegemonically-derived roles of care-giver (parent / carer / practitioner) and cared-for (child / young person) by emphasising that this is a reciprocal process, involving practices that are actively negotiated and adjusted by both sides, across space and time. The balance may shift from 'side to side' depending on the specific situation and context, but each 'side' is of equal value in this process of caring, of recognising and attending to each other's specific needs, demonstrating

kindness. This is the relational reality, it is 'inherently dynamic and interrelated at all levels' (Spretnak, 2011: 1).

To be *in care* means that you are no longer cared for within your own family, or by a family member, or even in your own home, you are in the care of your local authority, in statutory care, in that space that someone else calls home, and tells you to do the same when you are placed there. This is very different. In the UK, it has been reported (see for example, Rogers 2011) that the main reasons for children coming into care are abuse/neglect (60%) and 'significant family dysfunction', typically related to alcohol and/or drug abuse (10%). If we accept Noddings' argument that we learn to care through watching and modelling the caring practices of others, combined with opportunities to '…have supervised practice in caring' (2013: xviii) then it becomes even more important to consider our own practices. By allowing them to care-for us, we are supporting their development; this is not a sign of weakness on our part, but a very important lesson for life and part of a reciprocal caring relation. In Rogers' study, young people '…described how they had felt isolated, abandoned and in some instances betrayed by their care givers during and following the period in which they became care leavers' (Rogers, 2011: 417). Her research concluded with a powerful statement that what young people most associated within the challenges of leaving care, was the 'removal of emotional support (more than practical support or advice)' (Ibid.: 423). It is vital therefore to take full account of the importance of emotions, and look to provide '…enabling research environments, encounters and exchanges' (Ross *et al.* 2009:605). In this way we can prioritise the development of caring relations, so that young people are both cared-for and cared-about, and are enabled to care-for themselves and others.

Returning once more to the story to explore the 'otherness' of those who say 'wow', I am approaching this word in the footsteps of Jones (2008: 196), seeing it as a way of sidestepping the '…adult agendas which seek to colonise and control childhood' by favouring an approach that acknowledges '…the background field of ethical, methodological and ontological fabric of any academic endeavour'. The 'Londoners' of which he speaks, are adults (and their accompanying children) who have come to 'look', to walk, and are symbolic of those identified by Haywood (2012, page 23-4) as having created the 'Lake District': each '… circular journey undertaken on foot has become an important constituent of the Lakes' transformation from undifferentiated 'space' into 'a place'." This is not Liz's place, this is the place constructed by adults, who by their very nature of being have very different ways of understanding the world than children or young people do. Liz is in transition between these two states of being, betwixt the worlds of childhood and adulthood. As identified by Valentine (2003: 38) this boundary crossing when '… childhood ends and adulthood begins is obscured by the luminal period of youth'; this is part of an ongoing process that shapes and defines a person. I believe that if we are going to attempt to understand what happens during this transitional phase, it is best to adopt a boundary-crossing approach to research, drawing from an interdisciplinary perspective that enables us to use the theoretical concepts and research methods that are most appropriate to the questions we want to address. Taking care

as a specific example: this is a concept that invites a holistic approach; as a written word it may be small, and appear insignificant, however in its application and practice, it is multi-faceted and complex, resulting in a variety of potential interpretations. To explore this within the boundaries of one particular discipline would necessitate ignoring the very nature of it; limiting our ability to understand and make sense of it. However, it is important to note that this is an approach that invites critique and reproach, as it is widely acknowledged that '…integrating the findings from different methods or different disciplines in anything other than the most superficial of ways is challenging' (Kessel et al., 2009: 32). My response to this is that this can challenge can be best addressed by presenting findings in a storied form, which maintains the complexity, avoids the '…implicit reductionism in unidisciplinary work' (Ibid.; 37) and allows different interpretations depending on the perspective (discipline and preference) of the reader.

Life is an innately emotional and spatial process (Jones, 2005). How can we effectively provide support during youth, when as articulated by Jones (2008) we are forced to acknowledge that, as adults, even though we were once young people, we can no longer fully understand the world of young people. I have to acknowledge I am rapidly approaching my mid-century, and as such I am very different to Liz, I have all the baggage of adulthood with me. Recognising this difference serves to emphasise the importance of actively listening, of attending to, empathising with and caring about what Liz is saying, and also to the way I respond. I need to be conscious of normative, adultist expectations of how young people should be, how they should care, and what they should care about. Relating this to my research: if we want to encourage young people to care about nature, and to demonstrate this through practical ways of caring for nature, we need to allow them to do it their way, not ours. And this requires us to take time to notice how they do this, for example Liz's slow, easily-missed moonlit 'wow': I noticed it because I was paying close attention, I was sharing the experience and ready to respond. This is all part of the caring process. I share this with you, the readers of this chapter with the aim of providing something more meaningful than a simple report of my research observations. With regard to Liz, this is a call to witness, to '…share and deeply empathize with pain and suffering—the negative (although it could be applied to joy and love—the positive) and otherness— without fully knowing it' (Jones, 2008:206).

Research presents us with a number of epistemological, methodological, ethical and political challenges (Jones, 2008), particularly when it involves those that are 'other' than us, for example: children and young people; those identified as 'care-leavers' and those of us who are not. However, it also presents us with a number of ethical and moral challenges which need to be addressed. Some of these challenges can be viewed as problems, in that after due consideration it becomes clear what action should be taken (Banks, 2010); others are more problematic and present as a dilemma in that whatever action is chosen, it involves some breaching of ethical principles. The choice is based on ethical reflection that includes a full contemplation of our morals and values, involving emotional as well as cognitive processes.

As elucidated by Banks (2010: 12): 'Ethical reflection is a process of mulling over, questioning and appraising a matter relating to human, animal or planetary flourishing'. This combination of personal responsibilities (for example, codes of practice and ethical guidelines) together with personal values (and moral codes) is fundamental to the process of caring – we need to be moral to respect the wellbeing of those in a caring relation. It is not just about knowledge, it is more about receptivity, feeling and sensitivity (Noddings, 1986/2013) which contribute to awareness and understanding. From this stance we can work from an informed perspective that enables us to be more effective in supporting others to learn – and to learn ourselves – to be kind to ourselves and each other. Fables are one way by which we can communicate this in a way that bears witness to experience, respects otherness and conveys a moral lesson: they are a method for demonstrating care.

Narrated stories, such as the one within this chapter, are a vital way to develop our awareness of the ways in which different caring practices are experienced. The storied-form allows us to engage with the emotional dimension of the experience, placing the central emphasis on the young person, on how Liz perceives himself and his position, his place in the world. The interdisciplinary nature of eliciting, interpreting and presenting research in this manner allows us to explore the experience in a more complex and holistic way, enabling us to learn so much more from it than would be possible from a more singular approach. By then embedding this discussion within a wider discourse that explores the concepts of care and caring, the focus shifts away from Liz and towards us, and to what we can learn from this, and meaningfully apply to our own situations – to our place(s) in life. So who should care about others, about nature? We *all* should, because as explained so wonderfully by Spretnak, (2011: 4) '…all entities in the natural world, including us, are *thoroughly relational beings of great complexity, who are both composed of and nested within contextual networks of dynamic and reciprocal relationships'*.

Within one of my final conversations with Liz I asked him what would be his best outing outside, where would he choose to go, and he replied: "*My Perfect Place? I would go where the moon is rising, just sit there and look at the surroundings.*" At the very heart of my PhD is a commitment to care about how things are experienced, articulated and interpreted, so that what we offer to young people is effective at meeting their needs, as well as our own and the needs of what we call 'nature'. I recognise that this commitment causes me to get 'bothered' and 'troubled', and at time to get angry; but that is because I *care*. However, I now recognise that as well as getting angry, I have found a lot of humour in my research; there have been silly moments, funny moments, times shared with young people when we have laughed so much we have struggled for breath; magic moments when the mutual recognition of the absurdity of a situation has left us speechless, yet noisy with laughter. I feel the need to go back and revisit these 'fragile' moments (Macpherson, 2008:1083) in a more mindful and careful way.

Writing this chapter has caused me to pause, reflect and extract meaning from this research encounter; this process has enabled me to reconsider my research from a number of different perspectives. Although there has been movement in recent years towards adopting a more interdisciplinary, creatively interpretive approach to research, this is still seen as controversial, arguably undisciplined, and is not generally accepted by policy makers as a credible method. There is still a political preference for more traditional, quantifiable and, in my opinion, simplistic methods, which ignore (or at the very least limit) the complexity, the nuance, the *messiness* and *funniness* of what we are studying. I find this unethical and more to the point, unkind to those we are studying. This is an area that warrants further research and publication: we need to keep up the momentum of challenge, and to promote more caring, humane ways to conduct and present research. As stated in the introduction, and argued throughout this discussion, kindness is a behaviour defined by ethical characteristics, demonstrated by acting in a friendly and considerate manner. Therefore, I end by kindly inviting you to pause once more, to remember Liz, and to consider what does care mean to you – and why?

Suggested Further Reading

I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach to this, supporting some of the concepts explored within the chapter.

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Clough, P. (2002). *Narratives and fictions in educational research*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
Wyatt, J. (2007) 'Research, Narrative and Fiction: Conference Story.' *The Qualitative Report* 12 (2) Pp. 318-331 Online. Available: http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12-2/wyatt.pdf

For more on relational reality see:
Spretnak, C. (2011) *Relational Reality: New Discoveries of Interrelatedness That Are Transforming the Modern World*. Topsham, ME: Green Horizon Books
Other suggested readings are contextualised within the chapter and included in the reference list.

For more on emotional geographies see:

Davidson, J.; Bondi, L. and Smith, M. (Eds.) (2005) *Emotional Geographies*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited

Also of note for its inter-disciplinary approach: Burkitt, I. (2014) *Emotion and Social Relations*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

For more on cultural geographies see:

Horton, J. and Kraftl, P. (2014) *Cultural Geographies: An Introduction*. Oxon: Routledge

For more on social geography see:

Valentine, G. (2001) *Social Geography: Space & Society*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited

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