

TOWARD A RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF YOUTH RELATIONSHIP CUSTODY FROM AN ADLERIAN FRAMEWORK

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The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has recently recommended the use of relationship custody in youth custody facilities in Ontario. There is no clear definition of relationship custody or recognition of the theory that underlies it. A thorough analysis of the available material on relationship custody indicates that a strengths perspective as well as a positive psychology approach underlie the relationship custody model. This paper connects relationship custody, strengths perspective and positive psychology to Adlerian theory and posits that greater consistency to Adlerian theory would strengthen the relationship custody model. A new definition of relationship custody is presented.

Keywords: Relationship Custody, Individual Psychology, Strengths Perspective, Positive Psychology, Youth Custody, Rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

In 2014/2015, 17,752 youth entered the Canadian correctional system and on average 1,040 youth were in a custody facility on any given day (Statistics Canada, 2015, p. 2). Although Statistics Canada does not maintain the recidivism rate, the consensus is that the reoffending rate for youth is too high (Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, 1998). These statistics highlight the high stakes involved when working with the youth population. A reduction in the number of youth entering custody facilities and in recidivism rates could have significant positive effects on youth in the correctional system, social welfare, and community development.

Adolescents constitute the most at-risk populations who become involved in a disproportionate amount of crime during their teenage years. As criminologists have long noted, teenagers commit crimes and engage in other delinquent acts to meet an exigent social

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need (Moffitt, 1993) and ultimately age out of their delinquent activities (Sampson & Laub, 2003, 2016). Alfred Adler (1992/1931) also implicitly hinted at the mimetic functions of crimes committed by adolescents, and using the proceeds from their crimes as a way of impressing their peers. Adler theorized repeatedly throughout his writings that adolescents who do not learn how to cooperate with others and contribute in socially useful ways may go on to life of crime, alcohol abuse, and other useless ways of achieving a sense of superiority. Adler suggested a number of strategies to facilitate social cooperation of youths in a community. He recommended that children be taught ballroom dancing in schools as a way of cultivating mindfulness; he advocated that teachers become the facilitators of moral change by enacting the role of parents in schools (Adler, 2011/1930); he also advocated the establishment of guidance clinics as a way of implementing the principles of Individual Psychology (IP) on a wider scale to improve the human condition (see Adler, 2011/1938).

Despite the adolescent focus and interest on youths that Adler's theory intimates, the principles of IP have been left out of mainstream discussions of rehabilitation and change in a correctional context. This omission is particularly regretful as Adler's theory of therapeutic change and the role of therapists in facilitating change has been touted as the roots of a humanistic psychology (Ansbacher, 1990). While humanistic psychology and other schools of thought have been used as theoretical anchors in the context of correctional systems (e.g., Polizzi, Braswell, & Draper, 2013), an Adlerian approach has been left out of a theory and practice of correctional philosophy and relationship custody models in Canada. This paper will examine the extent to which Adler's theories on cooperation and social interest have impacted the rehabilitation models of correctional system, in particular the relationship custody model. This paper will propose three recommendations as a way of reconceptualizing youth relationship custody model by incorporating Adler's ideas to the understanding of youth offending and the rehabilitation process.

RELATIONSHIP CUSTODY FRAMEWORK IN A CANADIAN CONTEXT

Although the significance of building therapeutic relationships with clients began early on with the work of theorists such as Freud (1912), Adler (1931), and Rogers (1946), the importance of the therapeutic alliance, the heightened attention on the efficacy of relationships in treatment has only recently become a focus of youth justice policy and practice with the introduction of the relationship custody framework. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in Canada has demonstrated the importance of building relationships with the youth through the development of the relationship custody approach in the last five years. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Youth Justice Division first noted the "relationship custody approach to working with youth" (Youth Justice Services Services, 2012, p. 1) in 2012 as part of a program framework statement. They noted that this approach is "evidence-informed and identifies the role of staff in creating a positive and safe environment, maintaining appropriate interactions with youth and supporting rehabilitation and reintegration for youth" (Youth Justice Services Division, 2012, p. 1). This definition asserts that the relationship custody approach accomplishes many rehabilitative tasks; however, there is little information on how this will be accomplished.

The Ministry recognizes the importance of developing relationships and expects staff members to integrate the development of positive relationships with youth into their day-to-day work (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2012). To that end, two anchor documents have been published which discuss relationship custody. First, the Provincial Advocate (2013) wrote, "It Depends Who's Working" outlining concerns of youth residing at the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre in Brampton, Ontario. Next, the Residential Services Review Panel (2016) released "Because Young People Matter" which made recommendations regarding relationship custody and its use in youth facilities. Both documents proclaim the benefits of introducing a relationship custody approach in youth facilities but also recognize the barriers to its effective implementation, such as facility size and the increased numbers of high risk youth in custody facilities.

Research has shown that therapeutic relationships lead to positive outcomes in terms of quality of life and rehabilitation. Horvath and Symonds (1991), for example, conducted a meta-analysis to examine the effects of client-professional relationships for those involved in treatment, and found an association between positive therapeutic outcomes and the development of a positive relationship with a helping professional. Moreover, Ross (2008) examined the motivation of violent offenders and reported that the development of a relationship between an offender and a helping professional could lead to decreased recidivism over time, in addition to a significant association between the therapeutic relationship and positive outcomes for the offender. Finally, Ulrich, Ricciardelli, and Brown (2012) found that the quality of the therapeutic alliance could play an important role in predicting future outcomes for adult offenders.

More recently, the role of the therapeutic relationship with the youth population has been a specific topic of research interest. It has been shown that the quality of the relationship between staff and youth from the moment that a youth enters a facility can have significant impacts on the overall quality of his or her entire rehabilitative experience at the facility (Cesaroni & Peterson-Badali, 2016). One important consideration is that the therapeutic relationships between custody staff and youth can influence the sense of safety and comfort that youths feel in a custody facility (Peterson-Badali & Koegl, 2002). The precedence of safety and security as a precondition to progress (e.g., self-actualization) has been long noted in the literature (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's hierarchy of needs reinforces the importance of custody staff using their relationships with youth to ensure they feel safe in their environment and are thus responsive to treatment.

There is adequate consensus that effective use of relationship custody with detained youth can improve the quality of their stay in custody facilities (Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2013). Karver et al. (2006) report that the quality of the therapeutic alliance between offenders and staff is more predictive of positive treatment outcomes for both adults and youths than the specific intervention used in their treatment. Ulrich, Ricciardelli, and Brown (2012) suggest that treatment programs that adhere to strict manuals for Cognitive Behavioral Treatment do not appear to be effective in offender success and community integration. Marshall (2009) reports concern with the heavy reliance on manualized programs in treatment because this format can interfere with developing a

strong therapeutic alliance. Florsheim, Shotorbani, Guest-Warnick, Barratt, and Wei-Chin (2000) report that the development of a relationship over time could help to mediate the effects of treatment on long-term outcomes for youth. There is support in the literature for an increased attention on relationships in youth custody facilities. Prior studies support the use of a relationship custody model in youth facilities with some amendments to its implementation and consistent use, and concur that these relationships can lead to positive outcomes for youth upon release.

PRACTICE IN SEARCH OF A THEORY: A CRITIQUE OF CURRENT RELATIONSHIP CUSTODY MODELS

Although the concepts outlined in the definitions and the general philosophy of the programs supported by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services suggest that relationship custody is rooted in a strengths-based perspective and a positive psychology framework, it is unclear what this approach actually entails. The framework assumed in the current Ministry of Children and Youth Services is an assemblage of best practices meant to facilitate success, but there is no clear explanation of the theoretical framework underlying the relationship custody model. While the concepts of positive psychology and strengths-based perspective do provide some context for the logic behind the relationship custody model, they do not constitute a theoretical framework on their own. A much more systematic theoretical framework is necessary to provide a sound program of intervention, and to clarify the logic behind the relationship model between the youths in custody and the staff who are charged with their incarceration and rehabilitation.

Positive psychology is “the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 1). A positive psychology approach to human behaviour focuses on what is going right for people, rather than what is going wrong. It is the psychological study of what is average, what makes people human, and the typical human experience. Positive psychology expects psychologists to be open to human potential and capability (Sheldon & King, 2001). Proponents of this approach recognize that after World War II, psychological practice took a disease/medical model approach and focused on healing (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychologists believe that this approach to human behaviour and treatment does not give enough credit to the human ability to build on strengths as a means to make positive change (Seligman, 2002). This approach complements the understanding of disease and human suffering in order to provide a more complete picture of human experience (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005).

Positive psychology is similar to health psychology, humanistic psychology, and constructionism (Lopez & Snyder, 2005). Gable and Haidt (2005) state that the focus on the ideal functioning of the individual in positive psychology emanates from Allport’s interest in positive human characteristics, Maslow’s advocacy of studying healthy people rather than sick people, and Cowan’s study of the resilience of children and adolescents. Seligman (2002) notes that positive psychology takes into account the past, present, and future of the individual, all the while keeping focus on positive subjective experiences. The

positive psychologist keeps optimistic traits of the individual and society at the forefront (Seligman, 2002). Proponents of positive psychology want to send the following message:

Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness, and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right. Psychology is not just about illness or health; it also is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. (Seligman, 2002, p 4).

Positive psychologists believe that classical psychology focuses on what is wrong with the human condition while meaningful improvement requires the field to move beyond mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The focus should instead be on how the “normal” person can live a more fulfilling life by learning from the most positive human experiences. Relationship custody model parallels this movement in positive psychology by shifting the focus in rehabilitation from what is wrong with justice-involved youths to how to connect with them and how they can benefit from positive experiences and interactions.

The strengths-based theory, similarly, is a social work model that focuses on individual strengths as a way to facilitate meaningful change. Proponents of this approach choose to look at people in terms of their abilities and strengths rather than their deficits (Saleebey, 1996). Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, and Kisthardt (1989) acknowledge that people have an untapped reservoir of mental, physical, social, and emotional abilities and the strengths perspective recognizes this as part of the becoming process. Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, and Kisthardt’s (1989, p. 352) work is regarded as a benchmark in the development of strengths-based theory, and widely credited with the coinage of the term “strengths perspective” (Clark, 1998). In their estimation “a strengths perspective rests on the appreciation of the positive attributes and capabilities that people express and on the ways in which individual and social resources can be developed and sustained” (Weick, Rapp, Sullivan & Kisthardt, 1989, p. 352). The preceding paper initiated the discourse about strengths in human functioning and change. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in their Published Plan (2015) noted that they focus on strengths in their rehabilitative work with justice involved youth; the report also notes how the staff can use the relationship model to discover the strengths of each youth in custody and continue to build on them.

According to Hammond and Zimmerman (2010), the strengths model makes a number of assumptions. Professionals who adopt this framework believe that people are capable of the following: possessing strengths and capabilities; changing and growing; acting as experts in their own lives; having problems that can act as barriers to recognizing their own strengths; wanting good things for themselves; doing the best that they can in light of their experiences; and having the ability to change within themselves. The strengths perspective recognizes that the tools required to make meaningful change come from an individual’s experiences and from his or her story (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2010). Advocates of the strengths perspective place focus on trust, meaningfulness, relationships, and collaboration; they recognize that the best way to work with others is by

taking a collaborative approach (Nissen, 2006). This focus on connection and collaboration intersects directly with the relationship custody model.

While the concepts in positive psychology and strengths-based perspective provide some context for the logic behind the relationship custody model, they do not, on their own, constitute a theoretical framework. Positive psychology presupposes the capacity for positive change and a default movement toward mental health as a primary motivating factor in its philosophy. Strength-based perspectives assume the inherent capacity of individuals to recognize their own problems and effectuate change. Both perspectives describe concrete ways of thinking and behaving that lead to positive outcomes. However, they do not provide an a priori rationale for why those positive behaviors should occur logically or theoretically. An explanation that precedes the positive movement of an organism toward health rather than disease, toward wellness rather than pathology, presupposes a fundamental account of motivation, an a priori assumption of a metaphysical principle that precedes a psychological one. This hidden first premise determines the shape and trajectory of a theory of motivation that positive psychology and strengths perspective presuppose. Some psychologies assume a dark and macabre view of human nature as a destructive trait (Freud, 1960/1923) while others assume a more positive one of life, growth, and continuous transformation (Maslow, 1943, 2011; Rogers, 1951, 1961).

Although there is no clear definition of relationship custody policy or practice in the texts produced by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the underlying principles appear to be based on the importance of care and concern for others as well as the value of building relationships. Alfred Adler's theories on the value of cooperation and collaboration would provide a strong theoretical framework for this approach to youth work (Youth Justice Services Services, 2012; Ministry of Children and Youth Services 2016; Provincial Advocate, 2013). Adler recognized the importance of looking at the individual, that each "individual needs to be studied in the light of his own peculiar development" (Adler, 1927, p. 4). The relationship custody model is built on this distinctly Adlerian idea that professionals need to spend time working with each youth individually, getting to know the offender.

Relationship custody is based on theories that rely on the development of a relationship with the client. Without the foundation of a positive and trusting relationship, the professional will not discover the individual's strengths. Clients will not uncover relational aspects related to positive psychology such as personal happiness, individual well-being, wisdom, and creativity (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). These theories rely on the development of a working relationship with clients and focus on Adlerian concepts such as relationships and collaboration, but fail to discuss or cite Adler's theories on cooperation, relationships and social interest. It is not just the relationship custody model that omits reference to Adler; the underlying literature on positive psychology and strengths-based theory commit the same omission. Positive psychology literature discusses theorists such as Allport, but neglect Adler. Strengths-based theory discusses the importance of an individual's life story as a tool for moving forward (Grigorenko & Elena, 2012), but Adler's influential role in laying the foundation for a narrative approach is understated.

There are a number of places where Adler's work warrants acknowledgement and citation when the literature on strengths-based work and positive psychology is consulted. Positive psychology is based on constructionism (Lopez & Snyder, 2005). Constructionism is understood to be based on humanistic psychology, and this in turn is built on Adler's individual psychology. In the *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, Lopez and Snyder (2005) credit Vico, Kant and Vaihinger as pioneers of constructionism. The authors mention that Adler's disciples would argue that he is a pioneer of constructionism rather than a Neo-Freudian; however, they do not give him credit for his development of individual psychology that shape the contours of humanistic psychology (see De Robertis, 2011; Obuchowski, 1988).

Finally, whole texts exist that have no mention of Adler's name when discussing the therapeutic alliance and the working relationship with clients (e.g. *The Skilled Helper*, Egan, 2014). Articles relating to the therapeutic alliance and its role in treatment consistently ignore Adler and his foundational ideas regarding the importance of the relationship with clients (Defife & Hilsenroth, 2011; Hilsenroth & Cromer, 2007). In one article, Freud's name appears as the original thinker behind the therapeutic alliance (Horvath, 2000). The roots of positive psychology and strengths theory, in their focus on the individual and on the reliance on a positive therapeutic alliance, trace back to Adler's original contributions. Just as others have noted how Alfred Adler is one of the most plagiarized source of ideas in psychology (Ellenberger, 1981; Hoffman, 1996), the current state of the literature on relationship custody is no exception. Alfred Adler advocated the importance of cooperation, collaboration, and relationships, yet he is not mentioned in the relationship custody literature. Adler was the first major thinker to put forth the idea that individuals possess the resources to resolve their problems themselves, and yet he is rarely cited in the literature regarding strengths-based theory and positive psychology, both of which also heavily rely on Adlerian concepts regarding the therapeutic relationship. Such a shortcoming in the literature warrants integration of Adler's ideas as a theoretical underpinning of the youth relationship custody model.

RECONCEPTUALIZING YOUTH RELATIONSHIP CUSTODY FROM AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of relationships is recognized in the relationship custody model; however, the statements by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services have not effectively addressed the issue of cooperation and care for others in rehabilitation. The rehabilitation processes for youth, and specifically the relationship custody framework, should be firmly grounded in Adler's notion of social feeling. This acknowledgement as a starting point would highlight the importance of teaching offenders to develop an investment in others and community while contributing to psychosocial development of delinquent youths. In addition, our framework diverges from the classification of the principal actors in the criminal justice system into discrete parts. Rather, by employing an Adlerian framework to conceptualize the potential similarities in the personality structures of offenders, victims,

and social control agents as a function of parental pampering, parental neglect, or conditions of their work (author), we bring a unitary perspective to an understanding of the effect of the criminal justice process on the participants within the criminal justice system. Rather than solely targeting offenders as objects of intervention and change, we are advancing the notion that another way of facilitating changes that lead to desistance in delinquent youths is to advocate a change in the training of custodial staff—to be more caring, empathic, and humanistic in their approach to their clients. In this section we provide three recommendations for bringing about this change from an Individual Psychology framework.

1. Conceptualize youth workers as teachers and counselors rather than social control agents, and reframe the process of rehabilitation and change as a dialogical one.

Adler espoused the importance of cooperation and relationships with others (“social feeling”) in the development of relationships with youth. However, the relationship custody model has not recognized the influence of childhood experiences on a youth’s development of his meaning of life and his life-attitude, his scheme of apperception. Relationship custody needs to emphasize the importance of using the relationship as a means to discover the youth’s early experiences and to correct attitudes that do not foster cooperation and social interest. This recalibration in their roles would allow staff to have a more significant impact on the youth and assist the offender in making meaningful change. One aspect of Adlerian thinking in the relationship custody model is the concept that teachers can play a protective role in a young person’s life.

A teacher, like a therapist, provides courage to students, to encourage them to have more faith in their abilities and themselves, and reiterates the idea that challenges and difficulties can be overcome (Adler, 2006, p. 199). Adler (2011/1938) noted that parental pampering is dangerous for such a reason as it led to a child becoming over-reliant on one person to meet his/her needs rather than independently. Hence, Adler envisioned schools as sites where teachers could inculcate the logical consequences of students’ actions using those experiences as learning tools rather than having the consequences imposed on the children by an external authority figure (Adler, 2011/1930, pp. 112-113). The relationship custody model recognizes that youth workers can play a role similar to teachers. The model identifies that staff are in a unique position to be able to build relationships with youth and potentially mediate some of the negative impacts of their home environment. Rather than conceptualizing juvenile custodial institutions as prisons where punishment is meted out, it might do well to frame custodial institutions as schools where the students learn the logical consequences of their actions.

Current theories underlying relationship custody do not recognize the importance of teaching youth how to work together and cooperate with others. They focus on people’s strengths and assets, but do not focus on the negative attitudes and private goals that get in the way of building trusting and healthy relationships. Moreover, there is no focus on how the relationship can act to facilitate motivation. One of the goals of relationship custody should be to teach youth how to cooperate with others, work together, and build on human connection. Adler (1992/1931) consistently repeated the importance of cooperation

in successful human development as they attempted to solve the three tasks of life (occupation, friendship, and marriage) in order to live meaningfully and productively. Adler's holistic approach emphasized cooperation as a way of surviving the hardships of life on earth with the resources offered. Relationship custody could further benefit from incorporating Adler's ideas on cooperation and collaboration. Teaching youths how to cooperate is particularly valuable for youth in custody facilities where they must constantly interact with others.

The existing models emphasize building relationships with youths, but do not outline how to accomplish this goal (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2016). Furthermore, the model does not explain how to use the relationship as a tool to teach cooperation to youth. In his discussion around strengths-based approaches, Clark (2009) recognizes that staff-client interactions have the potential to affect motivation in both positive and negative ways. He suggests how staff relate to youth is meaningful in terms of change, which can then be used as a therapeutic tool (Clark, 2009). Relationship custody emphasizes interacting with youth on a more respectful and understanding level while they are in custody facilities, but does not reflect mutual respect and cooperation in a collaborative Adlerian sense. Training staff to use the relationship as a tool to teach cooperation would serve the developmental interest of youth in custody facilities. The way the staff relates to youths could become a model for the way youths treat one another and others in society.

It is essential that youth workers understand that developing relationships with delinquent youths can be difficult as they interpret life differently than non-delinquents. In a nutshell, delinquent children hesitate in the face of a new situation and find an easy route to sense of superiority. Both neglected and pampered children interpret their position as a justification for demanding special treatment, and use it as a way to evade their social responsibilities. Staff need to be trained to work with delinquent youth so they are able to teach cooperation and foster social interest while counteracting this perceived injustice and grievance-against-the-world attitude (Piquero, Gomez-Smith, & Langton, 2004). Youths who do not have an interest in others tend to be centered on their own needs; they are less apt to trust others and build relationships. It is important for staff to build relationships with youth in order to help them examine their early life experiences and make connections to their current thinking and behavior; staff will have to challenge the criminal beliefs of delinquent youths in order to facilitate the understanding of their distorted private logic. Staff will need to be trained to develop these skills and Adlerian concepts regarding the therapeutic relationships.

2. Facilitate intra-individual reflections through inter-group self-analysis rather than short-term behavioral modifications and transitions.

The authors of the relationship custody literature would benefit from considering the theories proposed by Adler. As part of the relationship custody model, youth workers could explore the youth's early life experiences, his role in the birth family and the quality of his parents' relationships. With this information, they can identify the child's attitude toward life and understand the skills and strategies required to make change. Adler

(1992/1931) suggests that it is ideal to work individually with each offender, but this may not be logistically possible. He suggests that some of this therapeutic work can take place in a group setting where offenders discuss broad topics of interacting with others and contributing to society. If workers are able to identify common erroneous themes in the attitudes of youth, they can develop groups and programs that address the concerns of a number of youth at once.

In order to treat an individual who has engaged in criminal or delinquent behavior, the early life experiences need to be examined. Adler (1992/1931) recognized that criminals experienced situations such as poverty, abuse, and pampering that hindered their development of an interest in cooperation (Adler, 1992/1931 p. 188). Adler posited that antisocial attitudes and negative interpretations of situations will not change unless the individual recognizes his errors in thinking and chooses to correct them. Consequently, Adler (1992/1931) believed that sentencing criminals to prison and simply housing them had little to no value. If we want to effect change, we must work with the criminal, through therapeutic intervention, to discover any interferences in development and social interest and begin to engage the offender in cooperation. Adler (1992/1931) advocated that therapists learn how the individual interprets experiences and understand the individual's attitude toward life. According to Adlerian principles, rehabilitation must endeavor to uncover how the criminal's attitude was developed and help the individual to create a new outlook by teaching cooperation and collaboration.

The logistical difficulty of working with every individual on a one-on-one basis is less dramatic in the youth system where there are reduced numbers of youth entering custody. Staff have more opportunity to develop relationships with youth and interact on a personal level. Integration of Adler's concepts in the youth justice literature could catapult significant change in policy and practice. If Adler's contention that we cannot affect change without understanding the early life experiences of youth is true, then it is of utmost importance that we consider doing things differently in our work with youth. The relationship custody model is a start; however, in order to see significant outcomes, a new definition that considers Adler's ideas around cooperation and social feeling is necessary. These Adlerian concepts are essential in the rehabilitation of youth using a relationship-focused approach.

3. Formulate a new definition of custodial relationship that is rooted in Adlerian principles.

By implementing the relationship custody model, the Ministry already recognizes that simply punishing youths for crime is not effective rehabilitation. The model, however, does not outline how to use the relationship to teach youths how to make these changes. There is an implicit belief in the relationship custody model that the relationship itself leads to rehabilitation, not that the relationship is an effective tool for therapeutic intervention. It is important that the definition of relationship custody outline the importance of building this relationship, as well as how the development of relationships with youth can help them explore their meaning of life, understand their attitude, and develop new values that include cooperation and social interest. Our model asserts that developing relationships with youth can have a positive effect on their ability to make change in their lives.

Given recommendations 1 and 2, it is clear that a new definition is needed in order for relationship custody model to have an effective impact. The most accurate relationship custody framework would include a definition that is clearly rooted in an Adlerian framework. The proposed definition of relationship custody is as follows: “A *philosophy to working with youth that encourages and empowers staff to foster a positive and professional relationship with youth in order to facilitate treatment. This relationship allows staff to connect with youth and discover their understanding of life and their attitude toward it. The relationship becomes a tool to teach the value of connecting with others and working collaboratively to reach goals and contribute to society.*”

The adoption of the proposed definition would entail changes in policy, training, and implementation of relationship custody. Policy will begin to look at the importance of developing the relationship as well as expectations for effective use of the relationship as a tool for rehabilitation. Policy will highlight the importance of developing an understanding of the early childhood experiences of youth as well as how these experiences connect to each youth’s meaning of life and his propensity toward cooperation. New training will teach workers techniques to develop relationships with youth who demonstrate deficits in cooperation and care for others. Finally, staff will learn to understand how to challenge antithetical and anti-social beliefs in order to help youth develop a more socially responsible worldview in their daily interactions.

There are many benefits that can result from the ministry of Children and Youth Services committing to policy development and training to support the relationship custody framework. Using an Adler-informed framework would allow for empirical testing both quantitatively and qualitatively. One possible benefit is that recidivism rates could decrease as youths make meaningful changes in their lives as a result of participating in a positive relationship with their staff. Second, it is possible that the overall satisfaction of their custodial experience will improve as a result of increased social interest, and due to the humanistic orientation of the staff. Third, the humanistic orientation of the custodial staff and the training provided should lead to a decrease in assaults against staff as they work to change their adverse worldview, not reinforce their sense of injustice and grievance against the world. However, it is imperative that youths not conflate therapeutic intervention with special treatment, for confusing the latter as former will only reinforce an undesirable way of perceiving the world. As such, this change in perception can be explored qualitatively in focus groups or quantitatively through surveys. Further research would only strengthen our understanding of the impact these policy changes may have, both positive and negative repercussions, and should be explored.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the current relationship custody model lacks a sound theoretical framework to anchor its practices. We have argued that although Adler’s ideas underlie the framework, he is rarely acknowledged or mentioned in the literature regarding relationship custody. One of our central arguments has been that if current relationship custody policy and practice incorporated Adlerian principles into its operating philoso-

phy, it would be a stronger and more effective model. Integrating Adler's theories into the relationship custody framework could be used to design policy and training that focus on building relationships with youths and using these relationships as a tool to improve their social rehabilitation and reintegration. We have argued that staff will better understand the value of developing relationships and its use as a therapeutic tool if Adler's ideas are incorporated into staff training. We have argued that youth workers should be viewed more as teachers and counselors than correctional officers or agents of social control. Staff can use this relationship to appreciate what experiences lead youth to develop their unique meaning of life. They can use this relationship to teach cooperation, encourage care for others, and develop an interest in work and contributing to society. We have argued that one of the guiding principles in the relationship custody framework is that the process behind the relationship between the staff and youths constitutes the invaluable lesson that facilitates change.

This paper offers an understanding of the current relationship custody model and the theory that appears to be its foundation. An explanation of relationship custody's Adlerian roots has been provided along with the notion that the addition of his concepts would strengthen the relationship custody model. This paper has proffered a new definition of relationship custody that includes Adler's work, as well as an explanation of how this better developed understanding of relationship custody would affect policy and practice in the youth justice field. This new relationship custody framework could be used to develop a training program for staff based on the concepts discussed in this paper and begin to test the efficacy of its use in a youth custody setting. The results of such a program could be dramatic.

Limitations of this work include a generally narrow review of Adlerian works. Although the reviewed works provided useful information on the development of new ideas in psychology provided by Adler, many more Adlerian writings would benefit the assertions made in this paper. Furthermore, while the ideas proffered in this paper are consistent with a psychological theory of change, that changes in cognition precede changes in behavior, a sociological model of individual change argues for the importance of behavior-based interventions that promote turning points (Sampson, 2013) rather than changing people minds or trying to study inner states (Sampson & Laub, 2016). In a sociological model of individual change, self-reports and narratives are distrusted and unreliable sources of information due to distortions and deception that may occur. A converse is that psychological change is a precondition to moral change that leads to desistance from crime and delinquency (Maruna, 2001; Schubert, Mulvey, & Pitzer, 2016). These differences in treatment approaches logically follow from a difference in theories of crime.

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