Child Welfare Changes and Opportunities

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Some Propositions

- To understand contemporary challenges in child welfare one must have some understanding of its history
- Overrepresentation of African Canadian families in child welfare is caused by systemic anti-Black racism
- "Best interest" will only result in good outcomes if implemented with cultural competence
- ECE's are critical supports to the most troubled children and families

Your Question

Child Welfare "Eras"

- Responding to gross cruelty – prior to late 19th C.
  - Children were chattel but even livestock needed to be protected from "gross cruelty". (1870-1925 importation of child agricultural workers)
- Scene from How Green Was My Valley – The absence of childhood

  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-kE3CC2uDc&t=4951s

Child Welfare "Eras"

- The advent of childhood and the requirement to protect – c. 1930's – 1950's
  - Industrialization, post-depression/postwar society, formal child welfare agencies, enforced "community standards". Child welfare defined by "charitable" middle class values.
- The advent of professional child welfare – c. 1980's
  - More professionalism, clearly defined "risks", introduction of "principles" in the form of preambles
- Expansion of protection – seen in recent changes

Blind to Race and Aboriginal Peoples

- Sixties Scoop well documented in Canadian Child Welfare
- Overrepresentation of African Canadian Children in Child Welfare less studied
  - 2000-2002 40% of 76,000 children in care in Canada were Aboriginal, in Manitoba 80% were Aboriginal
  - In Ontario The Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable (2009) found that 65% of children in GTA were Black

Today . . .

- More First Nations children in care than were ever in residential schools

- Percentage of children who are ANS in secure care and youth criminal justice at an all time high

Child in Need of Services

- Children are in "Need of protection" when they have suffered or are at "substantial risk" of:

  - Physical harm
  - Sexual harm
  - Medical neglect
  - Emotional abuse
  - Neglect of mental, emotional, developmental needs

  - Exposure to intimate partner violence
  - Neglect
  - Abandonment
  - Engaging in serious violence or criminal behaviour

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Proposed Changes to CFSA

- Expansion of the Definition of a Child in Need of Protective Services
- Permanency for Children in Care
- Services provided to 16–18 year-olds
- Duty to Report
- Interviewing a Child without Parent's Consent
- Importance of a Child's Culture

Opportunity for Leadership

- **Knowledge centre for child development**
- Mentors and supports to parents
- Help secure children's early development
- Report concerns while asserting role
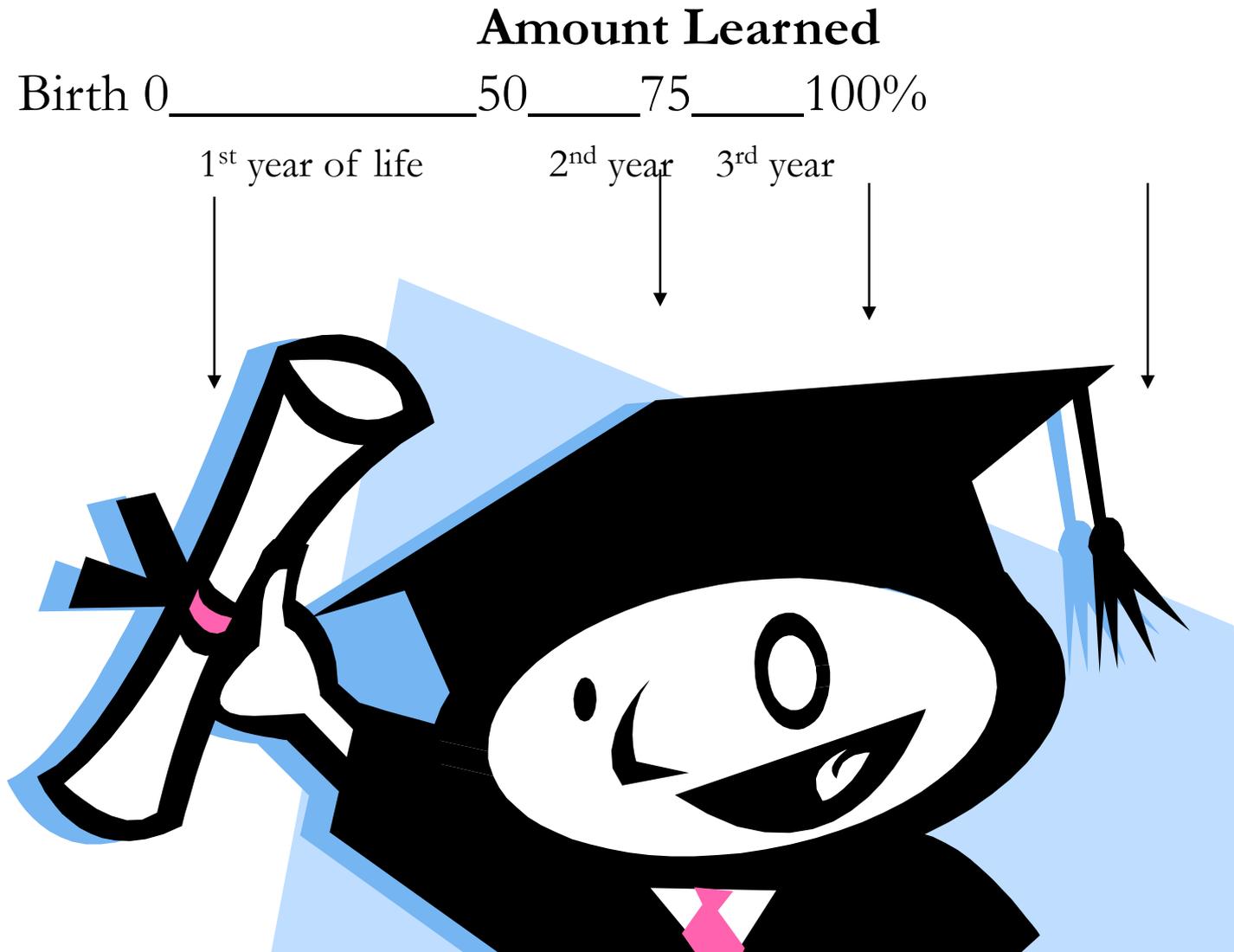- Contribute to cultural connection plans

Early Child Development Theory

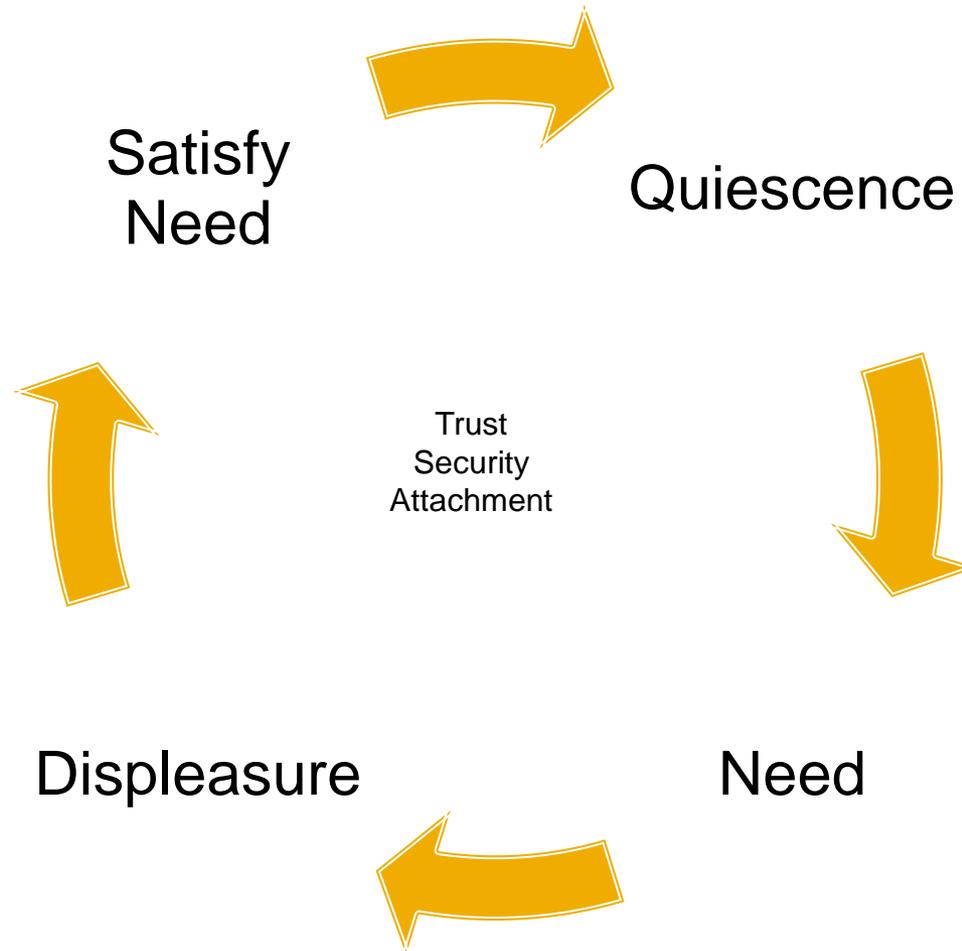| Life Stage	Developmental Tasks	Psychosocial Crisis	Central Process
Infancy *(birth to 2 years)*	Social attachment Maturation of sensory & motor functions Sensorimotor intelligence & primitive causality Object permanence Emotion development	Basic trust versus basic mistrust	Mutuality with caregiver
Toddlerhood *(2 to 4)*	Elaboration of locomotion Fantasy and play Language development Self-control	Initiative versus guilt	Identification
Early School Age *(4 to 6)*	Sex role identification Early moral development Group play Development of self-esteem	Initiative versus guilt	Identification

What is Attachment

- Attachment is "an affectionate bond between two individuals that endures through space and time and serves to join them emotionally (Kennell 1976)."
- Attachment is an emotional phenomenon rooted in our neurobiology.
- Early abuse, neglect, abandonment, unrelieved pain, or other traumatic events can create neutral pathways that interfere with attachment and have life long consequences for a child
  http://www.attachmentcenter.org/neurodevelopmental.htm
- Other attachments sites:
  - Sites affiliated with the Attachment Centre in Colorado
    - http://members.tripod.com/radclass/
    - http://www.attachmentcenter.org
  - SUNY's research site at Stony Brook. Good descriptions of Ainsworth's work
    - http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/ewaters

Lifetime Knowledge

Amount Learned

Birth 0_____50_____75_____100%

1st year of life   2nd year   3rd year

How Attachment Develops

Satisfy Need

Quiescence

Trust
Security
Attachment

Displeasure

Need

Ainsworth's Strange Situation

- The strange situation is a laboratory observation consisting of eight episodes in which the caregiver and a female stranger interact with, depart from, and reunite with, the infant in an environment which offers the child opportunities for exploration

Ainsworth's Strange Situation

Infant Behaviour…	Avoidant	Secure	Insecure
Pre-separation	Little attention to mother – explores freely	Explores freely but "checks in" with mother	Preoccupied with mother-little exploration
To Stranger	May be more sociable to stranger than mother	Responds with interest to stranger looks at or moves toward mother while doing so	May cling to mother and reject or withdraw from stranger
At Separation	Little distress	May or may not be distressed, concrete efforts to contact mother (e.g. follow to door, call, search)	Extreme distress – may make some search efforts, may be angry or helpless
At Reunion	Snubs or ignores mother or slow to warm up to her invitations	Greets mother positively, if distressed makes physical contact and is comforted	Ambivalent response – seeks and rejects contract, refuses to be comforted

How Does Initiative Develop?

- Like Attachment, in a cycle

- Challenge ▶ Risk ▶ Success or Failure ▶ Celebration

How Does Racial Identity Develop

- Racial identity develops in stages across the life span
- Each stage has a critical issue, a process for resolution and a significant relationship and/or resource

Critical Stages of Development

- Pre-school (Age 0 - 5 years)
- Early School (Age 5 - 9 years)
- Early adolescence (Age 11 - 14 years)
- Middle adolescence (Age 15 - 18 years)

Preschool Stage

- Critical Issue:
  - Comfort with visible racial differences
- Process for Resolution:
  - Adequate and enlightened physical care
- Significant Relationship(s) & Resources:
  - Primary physical care giver

Early School Stage

- Critical Issue:
  - Understanding of personal equality and competence
- Process for Resolution:
  - Facilitated success in social and academic pursuits
- Significant Relationship(s) & Resources:
  - Extended family members/school personnel

Opportunity for Leadership

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- **Mentors and supports to parents**
- **Help secure children's early development**
- **Report concerns while asserting role**
- **Contribute to cultural connection plans**

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