

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

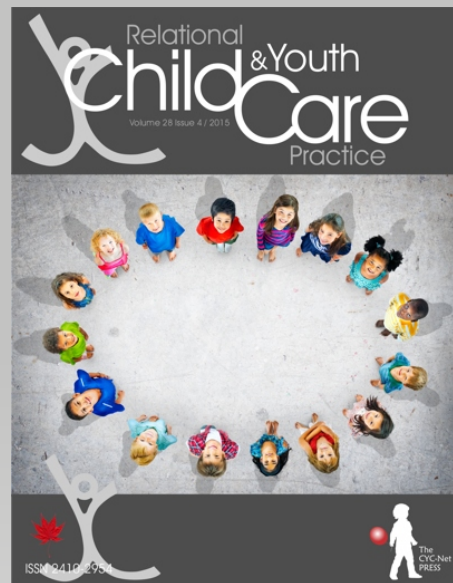
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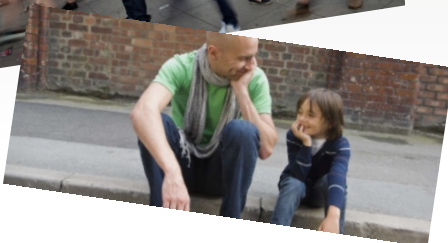
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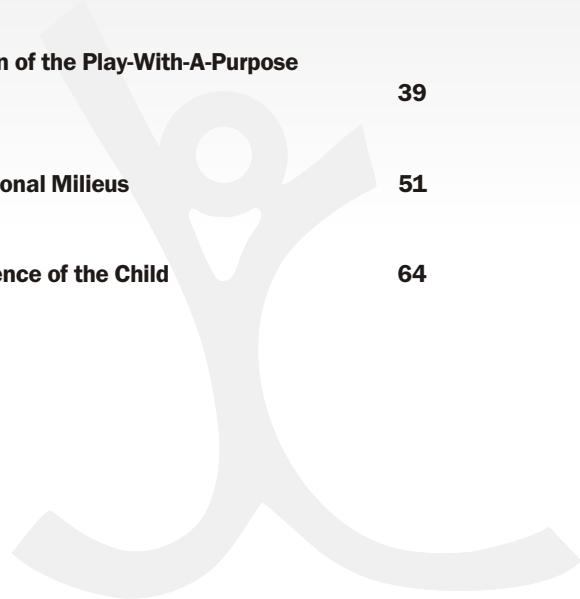
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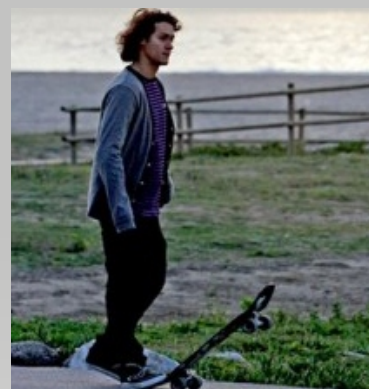
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Young people need models, not critics.

— John Wooden

Relational & Youth
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(formerly *The Journal of Child & Youth Care*, established 1982) is committed to promoting and supporting the profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people.

This commitment is founded upon the belief that all human issues, including personal growth and development, are essentially “relational”.

Different voices, different worlds

Rika Swanzen

I am writing the Editorial for this issue from a country I love with my very being. You will either herald South Africa as a beautiful and inspiring country or you will reflect on our troublesome challenges to stay balanced in our developmental and cultural strivings. We have again recently witnessed the demonstrations by students against fee increases at public South African universities.

For those looking from the outside it may be a strange sight to see how quickly the protest involves destruction of property and violence. It is a difficult rhetoric to understand if demands are made from a belief in individual rights to the detriment of the institution. If the history and underlying tensions are not understood, there are reasons to be concerned about a generation that already obtained access to higher education – demanded by the young activist voices of the past – but who seems perturbed and disgruntled.

While I will not venture into the political underpin-

nings of this movement, I will allow myself to wonder about solutions for this discontent. Albert Einstein said 'Any fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage – to move in the opposite direction.'

Another quote I came across recently by Dr. Steve Maraboli states that 'For most people, blaming others is a subconscious mechanism for avoiding accountability. In reality the only thing in your way is you'. Reflections on our society show our struggle with these difficult questions of who's to blame and what is needed for change.

We remain a proud nation with depth and richness in our cultural histories. The need for authenticity that may not always be understood by everyone, lies at our core and translates into an underlying resistance to accept the answers from the rest of the world. Empty promises stir anger because people do not have the luxury to relax for a moment, and to

trust that someone will pick up the tab for the opportunities and access our youth are told they have.

I may be biased through my involvement with this journal, but I do firmly believe that tensions are solved through a focus on relationships. We need to speak to each other in a way that is perceived as meaningful by all parties. In this issue I'm humbled by what is shared by *real* practitioners and fellow colleagues in Child and Youth Care. With each article that reflects on a piece of the relational picture in child and youth care, we build a foundation piece by piece to enable change in that small part we each influence each day.

This fourth issue of the first year of the e-format of the journal is very special for this moment in time – the editorial, guest editorial and four of the articles are written by South Africans. And for those who don't know this, the administrator and publisher are also South Africans. Together with our international colleagues that contributed to this issue with us, we do hope you get a glimpse of how serious we take the relational care of our children, youth and families. The contribution from various countries demonstrates the international status of this journal and of child and youth care workers speaking to

each other across geographical boundaries – remaining relational in our thinking – be it in a virtual space of sharing.

As we end the year and start to think about celebrating the holidays, this issue provides a look – a reminder – of what it means to be a child. With all we do, we know never to forget what lies beneath our strategies when working with children: the best interest of the child.

The authors in this issue raise reflective questions such as what we want for children and remind us whose responsibility they are. We realise that with diversity comes vulnerability if society does not respond to the needs of children. The importance of play is highlighted with a practice idea that provides resources for play to under resourced communities. We are also informed of the outcome and impact of early childhood intervention and how a quality assessment focus can increase the success of a programme that uses play for a purpose.

A warning of the effect of an overemphasis on wrongdoing in child care centres is given through with an experiment on social behaviour and transformation behaviour in role-playing prison guards. A sobering reminder of the few protective factors with which children in care enter the system. A provoking statement is

made: “Punishment gets redefined as discipline which is further redefined as behaviour management – a much more acceptable concept”.

In the information age we are reminded that the generation of youth we are working with has been ‘plugged in’ most of their lives. What does the social media reality say about the life space we work in? Should our conversations change or do we need to ‘unplug’? A study on vicarious trauma and caregiver burn-out reminds us of the cost of caring and provides further strategies for practitioners.

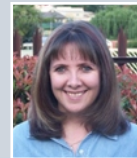
A number of authors touched on the ecological model that encourages us to consider that the environment influences most of what we do. In work with families we are directed to look at the conditions for supporting change, “with change as movement that requires a collaborative engagement”. The impact of environment on the experience of vulnerability is further explored through a heart-warming reflection on dyslexia and reiterating the matter of accessibility. Another focus in this realm is on the creation of a sensory-safe class environment for traumatised children.

Words related to these topics that sound like an echo through our practice and remind us of the relational walls that can keep

people safe or which can become obstacles to overcome, are homesickness, reflection, personal awareness, challenging behaviours, resistance, chaos, action, cultural ceremonies, position, data management, security objects and transitions.

As Nancy Getty says in her article in this issue: “Listen closely to the song you sing and do not fear to share your authentic song with others. Join together and we may one day become a choir and sing in unison.” May we remain unique when we join in the melody of the song with others, and may differences add to exciting variety instead of conflict.

Happy holidays.



Rika Swanzen

worked in different child and youth care settings over the past 18 years, obtaining her PhD in 2006. In 2009 she joined Monash South Africa (MSA) to develop a degree for Child and Youth Care, successfully completed by 2013 with the introduction of Honours. In 2011 Rika won the Pro-Vice Chancellors Distinguished Teaching Award at MSA and has been featured through various forms of Media on a variety of topics in Child, Youth and Family Well-being. She has authored 14 peer-reviewed publications and presented at 14 international and national conferences.

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As of Volume 28, *RCYCP* will no longer be available through aggregator services such as EBSCO and eBrary. *RCYCP* will only be available for subscription through The CYC-Net Press. See www.RCYCP.com for details. **All subscriptions are used toward funding the day-to-day operations of The International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net) (www.cyc-net.org)**

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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice welcomes the submission of manuscripts on all aspects of relating to children and young people. While particular attention will be given to material that explores the interpersonal dynamics of professional practice, consideration will also be given to all submissions that assume a relational perspective. This might include topics such as cultural values, ethics, social policy, program design, supervision, education, training etc. Each issue may include: refereed articles that comply with acceptable 'academic' standards; submissions contributed by regular and guest columnists; short pieces that describe particular relational experiences and reflections; poetry; artwork and photographs.

Material should be submitted by email to rcycp@cycnetpress.cyc-net.org in standard word processing format (eg. .doc, .rtf). Formal articles should not exceed 20 pages in length and should include an abstract of no more than 150 words. This material and referencing should conform to either APA or Harvard format (go [here](#) for guidelines). Author-date citations should be used within the text and a double-spaced reference section should accompany each article. In all submissions, authorship details, including brief biographies (no more than 100 words) and digital photographs should be included.

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