Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

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On the Inside of Resilience lies Reflection and Care

Dr. Rika Swanzen

To have reached the end of a year like 2020 has not been an inconsequential endeavour. It is likely to have been a year that has led to the most challenging self-reflection on issues such as the heightened risk of having secondary health conditions; determining what you really need at home to justify facing shopping malls; realising how much human contact and entertainment means to you, and possibly even to rethink ways in which to remain gainfully employed.

I found it fitting that the articles in this issue all have an element of reflection. In his book *Images of Thought,* Mark Krueger stated: "I find much inspiration in the thoughtful way my colleagues and young scholars are introducing ideas from philosophy, film and art into their attempts to understand and shed light on child and youth care and human nature in general. They are not willing to accept simple explanations of complex phenomena".

These words are more meaningful to me when I consider that the contributions to this issue seem to raise their voices to reconsider an aspect of training, or the way in which categorisations can be culpable (starting their article with lyrics from an Elvis Presley song), while another team share the previously unexamined places where three professionals with different experiences tread. The voice of a student further uses an ancestral song to make meaning of challenging learning experiences. Furthermore, a

change in the language we use during reflection are among many techniques proposed for addressing burn-out through supervision.

As a teaser and maybe some bragging on my part, look out for the following in this issue to stretch your understanding of yourself in Child and Youth Care (CYC).

Pielle, Newberry and White gift us with a look into the ways love and reciprocity was revealed in their project work as a team of culturally diverse professionals – practices that will not be included in polished reports – practices that would rather be experienced by communities as connected to what they are living. Important aspects raised are the benefit of institutions valuing the process of team members getting to know each other, having cultural humility, and the flexibility offered by structural supports that does not merely move the team towards a pre-determined goal.

Theunissen, Anderson, Thoms, Bearden and Nunes speak as a team, yet with differing roles within the juvenile justice system. They build from the notion that prejudice and blame have serious effects on conduct, and even on the processes of social institutions. Culturally shaped categorising is used by those working with youth, including judges, to conduct their business. The authors guide the reader through considerations, including thought-provoking case studies, towards recognising that culpable categorisation imposes restrictions on professional practice, with profound implications on the lived experiences of youth and marginalised groups, and how these must be challenged and redefined for improved judicial practices.

In a time when caregiver fatigue has been thrust to the forefront, the contributions of Kostouros and Kearney are timeous. The cost of caring and compassion fatigue are concepts that reflect our current global reality. We cannot afford to have highly trained and experienced caregivers leave their field because of burn-out. The authors share the results of their study that focused on highlighting personal concerns, program-related aspects, the nature of supervision and secondary traumatic stress themes. What is believed to form a further unique contribution are findings related to compassion satisfaction themes, shared journey, and the right use of power.

To further reflect on whether youth are truly allowed to participate in their own outcomes, even though the profession posits the inclusion of the young person's voice,

Dennis and Vasiljevic propose that the child rights-based approach with trauma informed training as the optimal way to train staff in CYC. They express the hope that its unifying effect will help create a culture of social responsibility and also a mechanism of child protection system accountability for the well-being of children/youth.

Eeles bravely internalised her student experience in exploring her CYC identity through an arts-based self-portrait assignment that was part of a third-year advanced practice course. Her analogy to being the boatman in the traditional Gaelic song is stunning and meaningful.

Pevach expresses her wish for the intrinsic ideology of knowing the difference between compassion and caring be adopted, Ricks shares highlights on the evolution of her practice and comes to the conclusion that falling back on getting lists done does not allow her to be consumed in the moment. Both suggest a different way to consider yourself within your practice, to pay more attention to the role of conscience and 'presencing', to truly understand compassion – even to the point of believing our clients' experiences, and to embrace fear.

And fitting is the book review by Kostouros who looked at *Child and Youth Care Across Sectors: Canadian Perspectives* (Vol.2) by Gharabaghi and Charles on Canadian perspectives of CYC across sectors. The source advocates for understanding past practices as opportunity to reconcile and invite broader perspectives into the praxis of CYC. The very first chapter of the book introduces Indigenous-led arts-based projects that bring awareness to gender-based violence, among other lenses provided by various cultures. The reviewer ends with the authors' call: 'we need to be critical about practice origins and remain steadfast in acknowledging systemic isms, keeping the uniqueness of children, youth and families as central to our responses'. It is hoped that this too will initiate dialogue on specialising in niche areas versus expanding the reach of CYC into areas traditionally 'belonging' to other sectors.

Again, Krueger's words ring true: "... if we understand our story, the social, cultural, and political systems in which we live, and do not let it interfere in our open-minded presence and interactions with children, youth, parents, co-workers and others, this opens the door to create new ways of connecting on daily interactions. We do our

personal homework, and then get enmeshed in an experience with self-awareness at the edge of our consciousness and let the action take us where it will, our prior experiences and perspectives fuelling our curiosity as we search for new discoveries about self and other". It is noteworthy how many times care was mentioned in some way throughout the various articles. It compelled me to acknowledge that certain experienced truths form the core of our resilience to face the unnatural order of things. While it is not an exhaustive list, care and reflection, especially on your own cultural footprint, take us far when we must dig deep into our resilience.

Alas, beyond all the questions raised in this issue, we learned that all we know can be changed through a world-wide pandemic. Our very inter-connectedness and globalised reality has left us vulnerable. There were many heart-warming initiatives across the world that showed our human connectedness and in literature, SAGE even made all Covid19-related research articles available as open source beacons of collective knowledge gained. It is an interesting time to be alive.

With this issue it is also our wish to send out our heartfelt condolences to the families and colleagues of fallen heroes. Words fall short, so let us all remember what we stand for when we symbolically take hands and collectively fight to minimise the spread of the virus.

To echo the words of one of the authors in this issue: *it's ok that we are unfinished … even though it hasn't just begun and we can no longer claim sweet ignorance of our trauma, it's not over till we say we're finished. And I'm not finished.*

Peer Reviewed

The Generative Potential of Love and Reciprocity in Project Work

Ryan Pielle, Janet Newbury and Jennifer White

Abstract

The relational element of Child and Youth Care (CYC) practice is often discussed in terms of front-line engagement with youth, but rarely when it comes to the other places we find ourselves showing up as CYC practitioners. In this article, three professionals – each very differently positioned in this field – discuss our experiences of working together on projects related to life promotion and youth suicide prevention (one national and one provincial). By focusing on the ways love and reciprocity showed up not only in what we produced together, but in how we worked as a team and with others, we hope to shine light on the potential for positive change that exists in sometimes unexamined places.

Keywords

child and youth care, cultural humility, life promotion, love, projects, safety, suicide prevention

The generative potential of love and reciprocity in project work

We are three friends who have worked together on a number of projects. Well, not exactly. Rather, we are people who have *become* friends in large part through our professional collaborations.

In this article, we'd like to share some of the most impactful practices for us during this project work. Practices that often goes unacknowledged in polished reports, literature, or presentations: The far-reaching potential of project work that is emergent, reciprocal, relational, and oriented to research justice. When engaged in projects that are meant to be useful and transformative for children, youth and communities (which are the kinds of projects that we have recently collaborated on), we draw on a broad notion of research; one that is grounded in a commitment to co-inquiry and the co-generation of knowledge. Research justice nicely aligns with our orientation to project work and is defined by Bay (2019) as "a methodology that embraces the research participant as an expert who understands his or her [sic] own needs; exposes the limitations of the researcher; and can be used to develop … 'homegrown' participatory methods" (p. 13).

In the field of Child and Youth Care, we often talk about young people as experts in their own lives. But the fact remains that the services available to children, youth, and families continue to be experienced by many in our communities as out of touch with what they are living every day (de Finney, Palacios, Kaur Mucina, & Chadwick, 2018; McKenzie-Mohr, Coates, & McLeod, 2012). As academics, researchers, policy makers, and frontline workers, we can do much better. Bay (2019) says: "Enacting forms of research justice via homegrown methods requires that we approach the research task with cultural humility grounded in a sense of radical love" (p. 18).

It is in large part these elements that have left the three of us feeling *different* about two projects in particular that we have collaborated on, and excited about the possibilities to which they point. We have been reflecting on the profound impact of a deep commitment to these relational aspects of project-based work, and how these "imperfect and fluid" relations of solidarity (Richardson & Reynolds, 2014, p. 9) contribute to meaningful and positive outcomes – not only (or even necessarily) in relation to individual or interpersonal change, but structural, organizational, and social change.

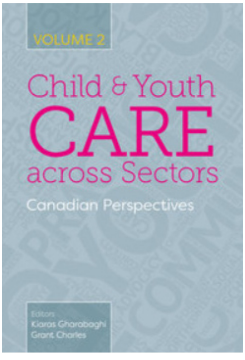
Some brief introductions

We are reminded that relations (blood or not) are central to most cultures. Therefore, walking into a working group already knowing at least one other member who you can

Reading Child and Youth Care

Patricia Kostouros

This is a column about resources that may be of use to Child and Youth Care Workers, and allied professions. While books will remain a focus for reviews, it will not be the exclusive focus. Websites, comics, Twitter accounts, videos, and any other relevant resource may be reviewed. If you have a resource that might apply, please email rcycp@press.cyc-net.org



EDITORIAL REVIEW

Child and Youth Care Across Sectors: Canadian Perspectives – Vol.2

Gharabaghi, K., & Charles, G. (Eds). (2020)

Canadian Scholars

In this second volume of *Child and youth care across sectors: Canadian perspectives*, Gharabaghi and Charles invited us to reflect on the roots of certain child and youth care (CYC) sector practices that remain today. In wondering about these practices there is an opportunity to question the ways in which we may have taken for granted some of how we practice and how we might move forward as our awareness grows. Through reading this volume we understand that many of the practices we perpetuate came from colonial systems that may have created more oppression. Understanding and acknowledging past practices provides an opportunity for reconciliation and for inviting

broader perspectives into the praxis of child and youth care. This text offers a multitude of voices teaching us new perspectives and guides new practice.

The first chapter in this offering, de Finney, Chadwich, Adams, Moreno, Scott and Sam introduced us to an Indigenous-led, land and arts-based project that brings awareness to sexualized and gender-based violence. This collaborative writing provided a historical understanding of how Indigenous women and girls have been prepared to face violence since colonialization and government sanctioned dehumanization. These sisters provided hope when describing ways to decolonize CYC practice, first by reclaiming child and youth care from its colonial past, and redefining child and youth care practice for the future.

Following sisters rising, Nicole Ineese-Nash moved us toward more insights for working with Indigenous Peoples. With a foundation of an ethic of care we are provided a framework that informs the reader, from a Anishinaabe perspective, about ways to work *with* and *for* Indigenous Peoples. Cautions are offered that show the ways in which we may have thoughtlessly taken up practices. These practices have not been conducive to Indigenous Peoples "walk[ing] their own path" (p. 37) and instead we are shown how when settlers can walk alongside, we are on a path of relationship.

In the next chapter Hasford, Amponsah, Edwards and Stephen shared the African story of Nyame the sky god, and Anansi the human-spider trickster god and the origin of shared wisdom. These authors reminded us that much of what we consider as wisdom in the CYC field, has been embedded in Eurocentric beliefs and values. An African-centred lens is provided for work with Black youth as we are asked to contest the privileged positioning that we tend toward in much of our CYC praxis.

In chapter four, Hare shared experiences for newcomers in the immigration and settlement systems in Canada. CYC practitioners will recognize the limits in our understanding of these experiences since CYC education in this arena is only now emerging. We are encouraged to take up the opportunity to be care providers in this sector. As expected, Hare suggested ways in which CYC practice can be tweaked to navigate the political quagmire along with young newcomers for healthy and successful identity development.

The causes of youth homelessness mulitfaceted, and our own CYC institutions and practices have some brunt to bear given some of the inadequacies in responding well to the needs of some youth. Skott-Myhre's look at the history of child and youth homelessness centres the discussion on systemic barriers and societal expectations that continue to push people to the margins, demanding a fit within these expectations. Although the implications of global production and wealth disparages remain, the CYC relational and flexible approach may lend itself to the reconfiguration of society to one that provides care.

Modlin, Shaw, Lane and Oliver revealed the praxis of CYC in Northern regions of Canada as complex and uniquely distinct. As described, the Inuit People's historical horrors of colonialization have a parallel to Indigenous and Metis People's in Canada and the writers reminded us that these are distinct experiences; in particular that attempts to assimilate Inuit Peoples is more recent. Recounting tragic events generated by the Canadian government, we see how our systems are failing; yet hope prevails. The congruence between CYC and Labrador Inuit values are compared, and practice examples are shared.

In my mind there is nothing more Eurocentric than the present health and mental system; hence the need for CYC practitioners to be in those life-spaces. Quittard and Charles described a dance between the CYC scope of practice and that of the medical and deficit model that exist within these settings. Because of the flexible CYC approach these writers suggested that CYC practitioners are able to adapt to the interdisciplinary challenges. They also encouraged the CYC practitioners in this setting to educate others on the CYC profession by articulating CYC praxis and advocate for our place in hospital-based systems.

Opportunities abound for CYC practitioners in the school system according to Batasar-Johnie and Gharabaghi. While this chapter is focused on schools in Ontario, likely their insights are relevant for all of Canada. These writers pointed out that schools are a microcosm of the society in which they exist. Therefore, CYC practitioners are encouraged to become aware of the challenges faced by excluded and non-conforming communities if they are not already. When we move this awareness into action our relational-based CYC work can create a more equitable learning space.

An alternative to the routine of day-to-day schooling is necessary when "the intersection of mental health, social engagement, emotional complexity, and even family

constellations and circumstances may render the traditional school a challenging concept" (p. 130). Day treatment systemic and operational dynamics are described in this chapter by Carriere and Gharabaghi from an Ontario perspective. These writers highlighted the need for collaboration inside and outside of day-treatment programs which includes the CYC practitioner for more wholistic and successful programing.

The origins of CYC practice can be found in the youth criminal justice system which is predicated upon a colonial system. Acknowledging changes within this system Charles and Quinn looked at the legislation that governs this setting and the continued disproportionate representation of marginalized groups within this system. Restorative justice and family group conferencing are examples that are offered as alternatives to incarceration. The writers argued that the role of the CYC professional is pertinent in this sector because of our focus on relational strength-based practice that is trauma informed.

Acknowledging the impossibility to showcase every sector where CYC practitioners are being and doing, Gharabaghi and Charles collaborate with others to present some sectors that may be less visible. Most notably is the position that the field of CYC finds itself today and to carefully consider our expansion. As these writers completed this text, they celebrated that CYC was a response to those who were crying out for care, but to also remembered that much of our work and education has been founded upon Eurocentric, colonial and oppressive practices, As we move forward, we need to be critical about practice origins and remain steadfast in acknowledging systemic isms, keeping the uniqueness of children youth and families as central to our responses.

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is a psychologist practicing in the areas of PTSD, violence prevention and vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue. Patricia is also a Full Professor in the Department of Child Studies and Social Work at Mount Royal University. Patricia's research includes post-secondary student wellness, vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue, and trauma-sensitive teaching. Patricia co-chaired the post-secondary student mental health initiative across Canada. Prior to academia Patricia managed a youth shelter, a women's shelter, and was the Executive Director of a residence for women with a trauma history and a dual diagnosis. Her publications include a variety of articles and edited books.

Information

Relational Child and Youth Care Practice (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".

Certain pieces in *RCYCP* have received peer review. However, we do not peer review all articles as we choose not to exclude those voices where peer review would be inappropriate or on request from writers.

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Relational Child & Youth Care Practice welcomes submissions on all aspects relating to young people, families and communities. This includes material that explores the intersectionality of Child and Youth Care practice and the lived experiences of all who are engaged in Child and Youth Care practice. Considerations will also be given to interpersonal dynamics of professional practice and all submissions that assume a relational perspective. This might include topics such as cultural values, ethics, social policy, program design, supervision, education, training etc. Welcomed are also submissions that address advocacy, social justice and reconciliation practices within the diverse spaces and places of Child and Youth Care. 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@press.cyc-net.org in standard word processing format (eg. .doc, .rtf). Formal articles should not exceed 6000 words in length (excluding references). Referencing should conform to either APA or Harvard format. 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 an abstract of no more than 150 words should be included, as well as a short list of keywords at the beginning of the article, a headshot photo and a short author bio of about 100 words to publish with your article. Importantly, authors should also indicate whether a peer review is required (in addition to the standard editorial review).

Although no article or submission will be rejected purely for stylistic reasons, the editors reserve the right to return any manuscript for additional work. Authors requiring editorial assistance in this regard should indicate their request in a covering letter. Originality of material is the responsibility of the primary author. Previously published material must be identified as such and will be published only where the necessary permission has been granted from the original source.

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