

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

Volume 34 Issue 4 / 2021



ISSN 2410-2954



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Explorations into Diverse Relational Interventions

Dr Rika Swanzen

At the end of 2020 many of us mirrored the resilience we found within reflection and care. Another year has passed with some delayed dreams and for some immense sadness. This space of reflection within the context of relationships remains the place where we find deep treasures within ourselves, others and our practice. Someone once told me that what we focus on outside reflects what we feel inside. I have been amazed at how those in our field continued to show that their focus is on the care of young people. Claude Monet said that it's on the strength of observation and reflection that one finds a way; so, we must dig and delve unceasingly. With the reading of this last issue of 2021, I trust that you will also have admiration of how much other have delved into the space of relational child and youth care.

From KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, you will find results of a study on food security for child headed households. The piece shares direct voices from these youths and highlights where they typically find support for themselves and their siblings in their community context. On the other side of the intervention spectrum an alumni study on youth aging out of the Udayan Care *Ghars'* LIVE model in India, unpacks the ways in

which the care leavers received help to adjust to independent living. Again, these youths' voices are represented in the findings of what support they find most useful and what services may be lacking, including findings on the impact Covid had on their mental health. From New Westminster in Canada an exploration is done on embracing interdependence that is part of emerging adulthood for youth who age out of care. An interesting analogy with an exoskeleton is used to propose (and critique) the acceptance of an additional developmental stage, to fully understand and support a neglected part of our population who are often identified as being at risk.

Further representation of various levels of intervention is supported by an exploration from the United Kingdom, on how 'co-adventuring' creates a space to be in the moment as an alternative to traditional concepts of therapy. A context created to understand suicidality in residential care, from Calgary in Western Canada, offers two proposed forms of interventions: intentional day-to-day activities focusing on addressing the effects of trauma, and mindfulness or emotional regulation group sessions. In a similar vein we find deeper explorations of 'vulnerable little hearts' by speaking to the enduring of adverse childhood experiences, the collective efforts of resistance, and the 'blanket of healing'. From Gauteng in South Africa the strive for a relational response to the global pandemic is unpacked. Lessons learned are shared on how the balance between adhering to regulations, while meeting the needs of children were managed.

Moving further on the continuum of interventions to secure care recidivism is critically reviewed from Nova Scotia in Canada, through an investigation of various programmes focusing on reducing reoffending by young people in conflict with the law. With restorative justice being such a key focus in the juvenile justice system in countries like South Africa, the effectiveness of an approach requiring remorse is questioned.

Within the education and training space the continuing theme of delving into our practices took us to the need of educators to use teaching strategies intentionally to support students, relationally, through their post-secondary adjustment challenges. Out of Nisichawayassihk Noyo Ohtinwak Collegiate the concept of time from a Jamaican frame of reference is explored with regard to its social cultural reality.

With all the contributions to this journal issue, real-life, practice-based evidence is provided from lived experiences that focus on the notions of care. We soldiered on this year, to respond to the needs of those we took responsibility for. Among the many debates we had to position ourselves in; to vaccinate or not, public safety versus freedom of choice, to isolate or socialize; and to consider physical or mental health – we still know, what matters most is the relational space. May you fully appreciate the space you have this new year, where you can authentically say that you are safe relationally.

Dr Rika Swanzen

is the Programme Manager for Social Sciences at the Independent Institute of Education, MSA campus. Rika has been developing and teaching in the field of Child and Youth Care since 2009 and prior to her academic career worked in child and family welfare, adolescent mental health, community development, residential care, foster care training and practice model development. Since 2006 to 2021 she had 19 publications and presented 22 papers at international conferences. In 2016 she was appointed by the Minister of Social Development as council member, to represent education and training on the South African Council for Social Service Professions for a 6 year term.

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.

Publishers

The CYC-Net Press

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Relational & Youth
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Practice

ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 34 No.4

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All subscriptions are used toward funding the day-to-day operations of The International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net) (<https://www.cyc-net.org>)

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ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 34 No.4

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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).

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Abstracted and Indexed at:

Proquest Applied Social Sciences Abstracts (ASSIA); Proquest Central; Proquest One Academic; Proquest Social Science Premium



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