

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

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Making Time to Reflect

Jaspreet Bal

Being a Child and Youth Care Practitioner is an ongoing process; I am in a constant state of reflection and coming across new ideas serves that reshape both my personal journey as a CYC and our collective journey as professionals. I am fortunate, as editor, to constantly be in a position of interacting with ideas that prompt me to reflect. In an ideal world, I would carve out time for meaningful reflective practice. In the absence of that, I take advantage of the opportunities already in my life and use them for reflective practice. This journal can be read many ways. You can read it cover to cover, skim the stories that intrigue you and return to them later, read it retroactively when you need to know more about a specific subject, or integrate it into your reflective CYC practice. If you, like me, are looking for a more regular and structures practice, this issue lends itself to just that. I went on an introspective journey with each one of the pieces in this issue and I encourage you to do the same. Some name reflective elements and encourage looking inwards. Others simply brought new ideas forward and had me challenge my otherwise taken for granted assumptions about CYC practice. I am excited to share the hard work of these authors with you and hope it helps you with your CYC journey as well.

One of the first to hit my desk was the thoughtful work of Anu Gaidhu. Anu questions the very way we frame the Self in CYC practice. She brings an Eastern lens to the conversation and uses the concept of conscious breath to guide CYC practice and exploration of the self. This critical work challenges the hegemonic concept of self and asks readers to reframe the very root of their practice.

If you had ever told me I would be truly moved about a piece on rubrics I would be surprised! Paula Ogg, Kristina Arena, Seden Yesildag, Rabya Razi, Wafa Benmahmoud, Jason Dennison, Alaa Alhyari, Simran Kaur Johal, and Hadil Aljandali all worked together and co-created rubrics for common CYC skills. I was blown away by the passion for the creation of the rubrics. While I had been using rubrics for years, I hadn't applied a critical lens to this tool. Through their work, I experienced a fundamental shift, not only in my concept of evaluation, but also in how I dismantle power in relationships with students.

Cristina Alexandra Guerrero, Blaise Humblelaine Cabanban, and Saverio Zupo shared their work with Filipino Youth in Toronto over the course of three years. Amongst the many interactions between communities, teachers, and admin, it was the access student voices that helped me understand the negotiating of space through their perspective. The recommendations from the work are essential for folks working with Filipino youth and bring a perspective to CYC practice that hasn't had much attention.

Similarly, the work of Shivani Bhardwaj, Sudeshna Roy and Aditya Charegaonkar brought the unique perspective of youth leaving care in India during COVID-19. They centered on youth experiences. The authors explored the intersections of race, gender, relationship with the state, poverty, and health as they examined the critical moment in which young people leave care during a pandemic and lose all their connections.

Nicole Diakite, Jacquelen Persaud, and Sharon Bailey-Wright look at technology and service delivery. They unpack the concept of lifespace and propose a hypothetical video game called Lifespace Interactive Technology. Alicia Pointer and Caroline Petrilla bring relational CYC practice into the healthcare field.

Finally, Thom Garfat, Jessica Hadley and Andy Leggett got me thinking in a very guided way. They worked through nine reflective questions, again, asking the practitioner to look in on themselves, before they hit the field. This proactive reflecting means we are less likely to be reactive in the field. This reading has the structure to help inform a practical and thoughtful reflective practice.

I am grateful to all the contributors of this issue for creating knowledge in CYC relational practice that pushes us all to think and become better practitioners.

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Self in CYC: The Poverty of Consciousness

Annu Gaidhu

"If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves".

– Carl Jung.

When we think of the word "Self", I've always wondered what it truly means to use "Self"? What is our understanding of it, and how do we identify with "Self" in Child and Youth Care practice?

Child and Youth Care (CYC) practice has identified core concepts, core themes, and core practices to represent the nature of its work. One key theme that is a collective characteristic within the framework of CYC practice is the use of Self. Many prolific writers of CYC have spoken about Self. Self is relevant to our identity and how we relate with others. Finally, much emphasis in CYC literature regards Self as a critical component in practice.

Michael Burns (2012) defines Self as "the sum of all that is you: your experiences, your relationships past and present, your genetics, your mind, and your body – everything about you, conscious, and unconscious." When exploring Self in our day-to-day practice, we think about core themes such as boundaries, ethics, professionalism, and how they relate to us (Self). True Self is the identification with who we are in an ever-evolving

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society. As a reflective action, we constantly define Self, the process of making meaning of how our experiences with children and youth guide the decisions we make about them (Garfat, 2004). Self is responsible for ethical decision-making and professional practice approaches that are fundamental to effective CYC (Fewster, 1990; Garfat, 1994; Ricks, 1989; Ward, 2010). In other words, the utilization of Self in this context speaks to the values and guiding principles of the practitioner and what emerges from their relationships with young people. It requires practitioners to finesse an ability to combine knowledge, values, and skills with aspects of Self including individual differences, personality traits, values, beliefs, identity, cultural heritage, and social location. It is through this process that theory and practice unite. The complexities of this role assume that practitioners have an awareness of Self and place an enormous value in trusting professionals for how Self contextualizes psychologically and emotionally with young people.

Garfat (2004) refers to Self as an ongoing process of maintaining an active awareness throughout the intervention process. It would seem that the reflective action in noticing and maintaining self-awareness requires a practitioner to attend to 'Self' externally simultaneously (noticing the moment) and internally (making meaning, constructing) within a given moment. Moreover, the *Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations* (CCYCA) writes that the context of Self is applied as a "mediator of knowledge and skills. Practitioners have insight into the factors of their own development, the impact of self-factors on practice interventions".

Why is this relevant?

Without acknowledging the nature of Self in various cultural, social and structural contexts within the pedagogic process, CYC professionals are challenged to respond meaningfully to the unique needs of young people. Suppose we continue to think of this use of 'Self' as an independent aspect of ourselves for insight when mediating our professional boundaries, is it possible to survive in the field without knowing the *nature* of Self? Yes, in fact, many professionals are doing so every day. It is not so much about not understanding the nature of Self; rather it is a problem of knowing the nature of Self

incompletely. One of the leading advocates of education in critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire (1993) argues that prescriptions (naming and acting words) for the behaviors of educators who are in relationship to the lived experiences of young people, represents the imposition of one individual's choice and way of being upon another. This transforms the consciousness of the person prescribed (practitioners) into a person that conforms with the prescriber's knowledge (dominant ideologies). In this, we can see how his persistence for producing new ways of looking at the words describing educational activities, in the lived experience of young people, should be examined further to inform greater possibilities in how practitioners guide their decisions and produce ascribed meanings for supporting one's actions. Core concepts in CYC (relational practice, caring, and engagement) are not theory-based actions. They are universal. The purpose of this paper is to explore Self in CYC, intersections of theory and practice whereby Self is as an informant of knowledge across various cultural, social and structural contexts within the pedagogic process and lastly, practical applications for exploring Self.

Self in CYC

There is a radical difference between the Western concept of Self and the Eastern philosophy of Self. Though they appear the same in fundamentals, there are subtle differences. The Western concept of Self is understood as an existence separate from others. In CYC theory, Self is related to a professional's identity, awareness, personal beliefs, values, views, and ways of being in the world (Fewster, 1990; Garfat, 2004; Ward, 2010). Self is a primary tool in practice that is emphasized as the core of everything practitioners do. Many frameworks of CYC conceptualize "Self" as a static property, with a carrier of characteristics that helps guide our decisions in practice. Krueger (1999) describes the use of Self as 'being present'; Garfat (2004) would apply Self for 'making meaning' in the moment. Given this, it can be assumed that the use of Self is an action that a practitioner utilizes in becoming available and present in an experience with youth. Ricks (2003) has argued that one of the most important aspects of relational practice is for the practitioner to be present with the other while simultaneously being present with the Self. Similarly, Fewster (1990) describes the foundations of the relational approach

as allowing oneself to be in the moment with the other or others. Regardless, of any of the views taken above regarding Self, look at it as a basis for identity, something of static substance and a carrier of characteristics.

In practice, Garfat (2004) refers to a contemporary framework for practitioners to understand the meaning-making process and how they influence our decisions in that experience. How do we know what is going on within our minds to 'make meaning' out of it? To cultivate our own cognitive awareness, we must stop relying on what others say about Self and understanding Self.

Consider this classic example by Plato presented in "Allegory of the Cave." Prisoners are chained away in a cave, where only they can see these shadows of themselves cast on the walls because of a fire inside. The prisoners wonder about these shadows to ultimately realize that these shadows were just of themselves once they're freed. The shadows were reflected from fire lit within the cave. Much contemplation regarding what and who these shadows went on for some time. Ultimately, what Plato suggested is an example of how much time can be spent on preconceived assumptions and beliefs (Cohen, 2006). Once we can observe and 'notice' these thoughts in our minds as they arise, we can transcend them. It can be assumed that Plato's aim is to describe what is necessary for us to achieve this reflective understanding. However, it also is important to note that a person's ability to think reflectively depends on the language we use to make meaning of the experiences we participate in. This is the highest form of Self and awareness. The aim here is to allow another perspective where our understanding of Self can include another approach to transcend traditionally oppressive practices.

In the same way, the practice of yoga, a 3000-year-old Eastern tradition, also engages an individual to play an active role in their own journey towards a greater sense of autonomy through practices that encourage reflection from within. Western culture has identified yoga as a physical practice, as a form of healing. However, a central component of yoga begins with conscious breathing as the bridge for cultivating inner awareness. Specifically, the aim of yoga is for an individual to unify the physical body and mind through focused attention of breath to harness a process of Self-inquiry, awareness, and discovery that is unique to the multi-dimensional aspects of each human being.

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".

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Relational Child and Youth Care Practice is committed to providing equitable and inclusive spaces that promote and support the global profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people, families and communities. This commitment is founded upon the belief that all human issues, are essentially “relational”.

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).

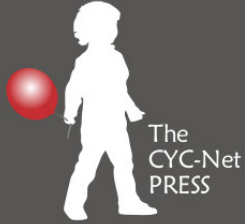
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