

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

Volume 31 Issue 1 / 2018



ISSN 2410-2954



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Relational & Youth
Child 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".

Abstracted and indexed at **Proquest** – Applied Social Sciences Index (ASSIA)

Relational & Youth
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ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 31 No.1

Communities of Practice or Are We Practicing Community?

Heather Snell

As the editor of a quarterly journal it sometimes feels as if the New Year comes four times a year. At regular intervals I am afforded the privilege of reflecting on the season past and given a chance to consider the months ahead. So, it is that I begin the introduction to this issue 31-1 as a chance to consider the past few months and a moment to ponder the future. For me, 2018 began with Nurturing Hope: the 3rd CYC World Conference so ably hosted by Casa Pacifica in Ventura California. I recall the excitement as new participants arrived at the venue, and the anticipation before the first key note. This sense of arrival and coming together grew each day as we shared stories and meals together ... and then exhaled a seemingly shared sigh on the final morning before we all went separate ways. For three brief days we were physically a neighbourhood; for me this sense of belonging and being recognized remained long after I arrived home. So palpable was the sense of community that it became my lens when considering each of the articles submitted to this issue.

Shannon Brown and Kate Hahn's work challenged me to think about the cyber platform as a community – complete with tool boxes, services and relational intention. And Tina-Nadia Gopal, Purnima George and Dena Taylor's work and observations describing the experiences of young people in the City of Toronto, described the impact when communities are defined by equity scores and identified as neighbourhood

improvement areas. Establishing this impact, they then introduce us to The Look at my Life project as a way of recognizing and respecting the individual within these systemically defined communities which have become oppressive identities.

The naming of community identities is further considered by Pat Kostouros in 'Wellness in the Post-Secondary Classroom', and also by Katelyn Root, Yvonne Unrau, and Natalie Kyles in 'Perceptions of Mental Health Needs and Supports among College Students Who Aged Out of Foster Care'. Writing about the post secondary classroom and those identified as struggling with mental health, Kostouros and Root *et al.* remind us of the need for educators to be more thoughtful about the assumptions and expectations we hold, and indeed to consider our own relationships when we share the classroom community from positions of privilege. From this perspective we then read Val Hazlett writing as a member of one of these post secondary classroom communities – sharing her differentiated experience as an individual – feeling she could not /did not meet community expectations. Hazlett's final sentences are a profound and personal conclusion that she “must do things differently... forge a different pathway.” This powerful statement of not belonging is eerily echoed in Matty Hillman's article about the tensions between “gendered expectations and the caring values of youth work” – supported by his observation about the male carer as a “non-traditional identity so much so that the perceived gender roles that station men who care is an abnormality?”

Could it be that men are not welcomed here? Or our learning communities work to exclude students who identify as 'wounded healers'? Or are these individuals simply welcomed differently? And, if so, do we need to be mindful of Gopal *et al.*'s warnings about the impact of labelling, the use of equity scores and identification of those in 'need of improvement'? When is a community not a positive, comfortable experience? When does the attribution of social characteristics which together form an identity become oppressive, limiting and ultimately forces decisions to leave 'the' community? When does a strong community identity become exclusive and no longer an inclusive experience? Perhaps as a profession, and community of practice we should consider not the Child and Youth Care (CYC) concept of 'self' so much as reflect on the impact of our emerging collective identity. When we come together physically or remotely how do we value newcomers? Where is the evidence of our collective efforts not to keep people out but rather to extend welcome, and warmth? Can we do better?

As a publication goal, the RCYCP editorial team has intentionally sought to welcome new voices and share the work of previously unpublished authors. We do not mean to devalue the mature established voices – rather it is experienced as the creation of new space and the opening of a door a little wider. In this issue we welcome a new columnist Tara-Rose Farrell who will be championing a regular column inviting commentary and experiences about CYC education. We also welcome the voice of Cassandra Myers to RCYCP. Cassandra is a gifted spoken word artist and soon to be CYC graduate. And we would welcome your voice – if you are interested and eager to contribute to CYC discourse and discussion please get in touch – and encourage others in your ‘communities’ to knock on the RCYCP door. We promise to answer.

And I will continue to reflect on what I perceived to have been a warm and wonderful sense of community experienced back in January. But now I will ask myself if this was perceived differently by those I did not know? Looking forward to the new season, in my work as an editor, CYC researcher, educator and member of a CYC educational accreditation board, I will now wonder about impact and the emergence of what some might experience as a new gated community.



Heather Snell

has been involved in Child and Youth Care practice and education for over 30 years. From direct care in a variety of settings to CYC education Heather's practice and approach is often eclectic, drawing her to the 'in between's', merging disciplines, and supporting collaborations. After teaching and coordinating the CYC and BCYC programs at Humber College for many years, Heather is currently part time faculty with both the Ryerson University CYC undergraduate and graduate programs, and with the University of Strathclyde MSc in CYC. She is also a member of the Child and Youth Care Education Accreditation Board where she chairs the Research Committee.

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Relational & Youth
Child Care
Practice

ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 30 No.3

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Material should be submitted by email to rcycp@press.cyc-net.org in standard word processor format (eg. .doc, .rtf). Formal articles should not exceed 20 standard pages in length. 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 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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