

# Relational Child & Youth Care

Volume 31 Issue 4 / 2018



ISSN 2410-2954



[press.cyc-net.org](http://press.cyc-net.org)

# Contents

<b>Editorial – Like Roses, Spiders and Love .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Heather Snell</i>	
<b>Promoting the Safe and Effective Use of Self in Child and Youth Service Workers: Evidence from a mindfulness-based stress reduction program .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>William F.T. Mekers, Alexandra L. Clement, Kristen A. Morin, Jodi Frances and Mark L. Fraser</i>	
<b>East Meets West: A Child and Youth Care Perspective about Asian Young People Experiencing Mental Health Challenges.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Jaclyn Ng Man Chuen</i>	
<b>Exploring the Perception and Treatment of Children and Youth in Care .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Erin Brands-Saliba</i>	
<b>Why are we so Black? A Review of the Literature on Educational Experiences of Black Youth in Ontario's Child Welfare System.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Travonne Edwards</i>	
<b>In-Class/After-Class: Conversations on the Teaching and Learning of Relational Child and Youth Care Practice .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<i>Tara-Rose Farrell with Nicole Ostrowska and Jessica Barclay</i>	
<b>Changeover .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<i>Garth Goodwin</i>	
<b>Reading Child and Youth Care.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<i>Sheva Leon</i>	
<b>Information.....</b>	<b>72</b>

# Relational Child & 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”.

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

Relational  
Child & Youth  
Care  
Practice

ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 31 No.4

# Like Roses, Spiders and Love

*Heather Snell*

**R**eading through this final issue of 2018, and reviewing articles published in RCYCP over the past year, I am struck by the diversity of topics, and contributing authors. There is a changing demographic and range in the orientation, age, gender, social and cultural locations represented in RCYCP. We are diverse voices, which, when heard together, are like choral music – each voice singing in a different range, sometimes pentatonic, sometimes diatonic, sometimes chromatic, sometimes beating in predictable 4/4 solidarity and other times seemingly searching for more complex rhythms. In this issue Jaclyn Ng Man Chuen writes about East Meeting West; Erin Brands-Saliba and Travonne Edwards offers observations about “Why are we so Black?” Quite the choir. Evidence of an emerging restructuring of the harmonic composition of Child and Youth Care? Some might call this issue a synthesis – but I think not. My hoped-for description for both this issue and the 2018 editions of RCYCP is the word ‘synectic’.

Synectics refers to a co-creative process originally proposed by George Prince, and William Gordon (1961). Although the capitalized version of the word synectics was trademarked as the creative enterprise founded by Prince and Williams, the word synectics itself has become a standard term describing an approach to creative problem solving in groups. A synectic approach begins with the assumption that we all have really good ideas, and the capacity to use what we know in ways that are inclusive, expressive, nonlinear and collaborative. Synectics acknowledges we are often too linear, too oppositional, and/or too afraid of the possibilities of creative thinking. Problems and conflicts are simply that – problems which occupy singular spaces – and not ideas with the capacity to co-habit. Indeed, the term synectics comes from the Greek meaning the

joining together of different and apparently irrelevant or apparently dissenting elements. Important to those interested in action-based research, synectic investigations attempt to research diverse connections through creative processes *in vivo*.

A synectic approach explores the possibilities of diverse ideas by finding connections between ideas that exist outside of the dominating discourse. Synectics postulates that privileged narratives limit possibilities by triggering fear of being wrong or being chastised when confronted with information or possibilities that might exist outside of our norm. Synectics assumes that personal experience with a concept can both limit and deepen our understanding. A conundrum or an opportunity? Think of synectics as relational problem solving – a way of making connections between ideas that at first glance may appear to be diametrically opposed – strength-based problem solving.

As a method, there are six steps in a formal synectic session – beginning with a direct analogy, a personal description of that analogy, the identification of conflicts, the creation of new analogies, the re-examination of resulting possibilities, and a force fit of newly generated images, or analogies with the original problem or divergent points of view. Using this synectic method with Child and Youth Care students in a recent class, I asked students to examine the apparently troublesome concept of 'love'. We began by brainstorming a list of words we associated with love – a list of nearly seventy words. We then had fun considering plants, animals, colours, machines, sounds – anything we thought analogous to the words on our list. One of our words was the word 'rose'. In step three then we 'became' the rose – as we understood it. We imagined and then shared what we believed it would feel like to be a rose? Alive, happy, safe, fragrant, held, cherished, expensive, loved, soft, layered, misogynist, growing, self-centered, displayed, commercialized, guilty, symbolic, decorative, proud, prickly, dangerous, intense, wilted, thin, valued, plucked, cut, dying, fragile...? Working with these words we then paid attention to the apparent conflicts between these states. We created pairings of words that seemed to struggle with each other. Valued: plucked? Growing: dying? Safe: prickly? Selecting pairs that resonated we considered how our concept of a rose could simultaneously occupy these conflicting states. Both fragile and dangerous? In step five we changed our point of view then to generate a list of situations that involved circumstances and animals that also occupied dissonant states. Our classroom filled with imaginative descriptions of animals – fragile beautiful fish tanks filled with piranha, a warm summer evening swarming with mosquitos, a gentle ocean wave cresting over a hunting shark, or a quiet, unassuming, neglected corner inhabited by a deadly spider?

Stay with me here! In the final step of the synectic process we force fit these images back to our original concept – love. This challenged us to consider previously unrecognized possibilities. By forcing a connection between the disparate spider and love we imagined webs, forms of interconnection with the capacity to wrap, to protect and to trap; to suffocate and do harm. We understood both concepts as essential to the food chain, but both possessing lightning fast reflexes – quick to protect, to hide, retreat, defend, or to kill. We understood both ideas had capacity to be invisible; both were like tiny beings capable of triggering paralyzing fear, sparking curiosity, inspiring myth and legend, or healing injury and disease. And then we paused. I breathed deeply when I overheard a student ask their friend, “Where did you learn to fear spiders?” A profound question to ask in a conversation about love?

So, as you read the compelling, and sometimes discordant ideas in this issue; or if you reflect on some of the apparent contradictions included between the pages of RCYCP over the past year ... think about the possibility of absorbing this content through a synectic lens. Can you use these contradictions as a springboard of embryonic possibilities? Can you build these into uncharted courses of action in which all things are related? Could it be that these apparent conflicting views can coexist in non-linear ways that have the potential to deepen our understanding. Like roses? Spiders? And love?

## Reference

Gordon, William J.J. (1961). *Synectics: The Development of Creative Capacity*. New York: Harper and Row.



### 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.

# Promoting the Safe and Effective Use of Self in Child and Youth Service Workers: Evidence from a mindfulness-based stress reduction program

*William F.T. Meekers, Alexandra L. Clement, Kristen A. Morin, Jodi Frances and Mark L. Fraser*

## *Abstract*

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Programs can have numerous benefits in job performance for including improved patient communication, satisfaction and outcomes as well as more productive and patient-focused team meetings. Safe and Effective Use of Self (SEUS) is a key competency for multiple regulatory colleges and is defined as a therapist's learned capacity to understand their own subjective context and patterns of interactions as they inform their participant in a therapeutic relationship with a client. The purpose of this pilot project was to evaluate the effects of a MBSR program on Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) workers as well as to make connections between MBSR and the SEUS model. After the intervention, participants noticed many benefits including increased job satisfaction, clinical skills, mental and physical ability and a decrease in perceived stress. These results suggest that the MBSR program promoted SEUS by increasing their self-awareness and engagement.

## *Keywords*

mindfulness, clinical skills, stress, job satisfaction, safe and effective use of self (SEUS)

Relational  
Child & Youth  
Care  
Practice

ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 31 No.4

## Introduction

Mindfulness is a form of attention training which shifts a person's attentional focus to everyday, present-moment experiences (Burton, Burgess, Dean, Koutsopoulou, & Hugh-Jones, 2016). As Corcoran, Farb, Anderson and Segal (2010) suggested, mindfulness training works to promote metacognitive awareness, thereby enhancing working memory and emotional regulation itself by altering the activity and function of certain regions of the brain (Young *et al.*, 2017). In support, Chambers, Gullone and Allen (2008) demonstrated that inexperienced mindfulness practitioners who participated in mindfulness activities for ten days had decreased depressive symptoms and rumination and increased working memory and ability to sustain their attention in comparison to individuals who did not partake in the mindfulness activities. Based on the principles of mindfulness, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs work to reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). MBSR programs are a diverse form of mental training and may include meditation and yoga sessions to accomplish these goals (Carlson & Garland, 2005).

The use of mindfulness-based practices in the workplace, such as meditation or yoga, has grown in popularity over the past decade as the connection between the benefits to ones' 'self' have been translated into workplace skills. MBSR has been utilized in various professional landscapes including technological, medicinal, the military, and mental health (Burton *et al.*, 2016; Grepmaier *et al.*, 2007; Jha *et al.*, 2015; West *et al.*, 2014, Wolever *et al.* 2012). In a review conducted by Good and colleagues (2015), the authors highlighted several dimensions of workplace outcomes which were shown to be influenced by mindfulness training, including actual job performance, relationships and well-being. For example, restaurant servers, and those in supervisory or management roles who took part in mindfulness training had significant increases in job performance compared to those who did not practice mindfulness (Dane & Brummel, 2014; Shonin, Gordon, Bunn, Singh, & Griffiths 2014). Past work has also suggested that mindfulness training can increase the safety practices of workers by regulating emotional and attentional focuses of workers (Zhang, Ding, Li, & Wu, 2013; Zhang & Wu, 2014).

The benefits of MBSR training for health care professionals have also been well examined. For example, mindfulness training increases job performance in clinicians as seen through increases in patient rated communication, satisfaction and outcomes compared to non-practicing clinicians (Beach *et al.*, 2013; Grepmaier *et al.*, 2007). Singh N.N., Singh, S.D., Sabaawi, Myers, and Wahler (2006) also noted a positive influence of

mindfulness training in team meetings demonstrated by increases in active listening and patient focused discussion, as well as respect among colleagues.

Apart from these direct work-related improvements, there are also indirect improvements for health care professionals who engage in mindfulness training. These benefits include reducing stress, depression and anxiety as well as increasing self-compassion and an overall sense of self (Bazarko, Cate, Azocar, & Kreitzer, 2013; Brady, O'Connor, Burgermeister, & Hanson, 2012; Manotas, Segura, Eraso, Oggins, & McGovern, 2014; Shapiro, Astin, Bishop & Cordova, 2005). These benefits for the individual correspond to one of the defining competencies of psychotherapy practice, the Safe and Effective Use of Self (SEUS).

SEUS refers to the therapist's learned capacity to understand their own subjective context and patterns of interaction as they inform their participation in the therapeutic relationship with the client. It also speaks to the therapist's self-reflective use of their personality, insights, perceptions and judgments in order to optimize interactions with clients in the therapeutic process (College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario [CPRO], 2015). Taken together, mindfulness training in mental health care professionals promotes the safe and effective use of self, thereby increasing therapists' self-awareness and clinical skills.

While SEUS is a defining competency of psychotherapists, there is currently an absence of a formal model for mental health practitioners in the literature. The purpose of this study was to examine how a twelve-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program impacted the safe and effective use of self in child and youth service workers, laying the foundation for this model. We hypothesized that there would be a significant decrease of perceived stress, and increases in resilience, job satisfaction and clinical skills in those who completed the twelve-week program.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Study Design***

Prior to participating in this project, informed consent and medical information pertinent to the yoga instructors were acquired. During this time, participants also completed a series of questionnaires representing a pre-measurement. The following week, yoga classes began and ran two times per week in the morning and were guided by certified yoga instructors. The program ran for a total of 12 weeks (24 sessions), of which

participants were asked to attend at least 18 sessions. Two additional sets of questionnaires were distributed after six weeks of attendance, and again after 12 weeks of participation to represent mid and post-measurements. After the completion of the sessions, participants were also invited to take part in individual semi-structured follow-up interviews.

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from three child and youth service agencies in Sudbury, Ontario. A total of fifteen (N = 15) individuals participated in at least one yoga session as a part of this 12-week pilot project.

### **Questionnaires**

A total of four questionnaires were distributed at the pre, mid and post time points. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) which measures the individual's perception of life events as stressful (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) which measures an individual's ability to recover from stressful events (Smith *et al.* 2008). Counselor Activity Self-Activity Self-Efficacy Scale (CASES) Part 1 and 2 which contained 4 subscales: insight, explore, activity and session management (Lent, Hill, & Hoffman, 2003). The Q<sup>12</sup>® was used to measure job satisfaction and employee engagement amongst participants (Hartner, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 2006).

### **Follow-Up Interviews**

After completion of the yoga sessions, participants were invited for a brief follow-up interview to allow them to express their opinions regarding the program, its benefits and challenges, as well as areas for improvement. The interviews were semi-structured with six questions, providing participants with the opportunity to elaborate or add any additional comments. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and themes were gathered for each question with sample comments from participants.

### **Statistical Analysis**

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Questionnaire data was recalculated by finding the net change between scale scores (post-pre) and compared using a one sample t-test or a Wilcoxon signed rank test

# 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

PO Box 23199, Claremont, 7735 SOUTH AFRICA

<http://press.cyc-net.org> email: [info@press.cyc-net.org](mailto:info@press.cyc-net.org)

## Editors

### Managing Editor

Heather Snell MES CYC – Adjunct Faculty Ryerson University Canada, University of Strathclyde Scotland.  
Research Chair CYC Education Accreditation Board of Canada

### Editor

Rika Swanzen PhD, Associate Professor and Academic Cluster Manager: Human and Health Sciences, Monash South Africa. Chair: Education, Training & Development: South African Council for Social Service Professions.

### Senior Editor

Thom Garfat PhD – Transformaction International, Quebec, Canada

### Editorial and Administrative Officer

Carina Lewis

Relational & Youth  
Child Care  
Practice

ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 31 No.4

72

## Editorial Advisory Board

Leon Fulcher, Consultant, TransformAction International, New Zealand  
Karen VanderVen, Professor Emerita, Department of Psychology in Education, Univ. of Pittsburgh, USA  
Adrian Ward, Author and Editor, Norwich, United Kingdom  
Carol Stuart, Health and Human Services, Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia  
Sibylle Artz, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, British Columbia  
Ernie Hilton, Homebridge Youth Society, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Heather Modlin, Key Assets, St Johns, Newfoundland  
Penny Parry, Private Practitioner and Consultant, Vancouver, British Columbia  
Jack Phelan, Co-Chair, Child and Youth Care Program, Grant MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta  
Jennifer White, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, British Columbia  
James Freeman, Director of Training, Casa Pacifica, California, USA

## Regular Columnists

Garth Goodwin, Child and Youth Care Practitioner, Manitoba  
Sheva Leon, Humber College, Ontario

## Correspondence

All correspondence should be addressed to: **The Editors, Relational Child and Youth Care Practice**  
e-mail: [rcycp@press.cyc-net.org](mailto:rcycp@press.cyc-net.org)

## Subscriptions

From Volume 28, *RCYCP* will no longer be available for subscription through aggregator services such as Ebsco. *RCYCP* will only be available from the publishers, The CYC-Net Press. See <http://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)** (<http://www.cyc-net.org>)

## Back Issues and Advertising

See <http://www.rcycp.com> for details.

## Permission to Reproduce Material

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice is published four times annually. All rights are reserved. No portion of *RCYCP* may be reproduced without permission of the publishers.

Relational  
Child & Youth  
Care  
Practice

ISSN 2410-2954 Volume 31 No.4

73

## Information for Authors

*Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* welcomes 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@press.cyc-net.org](mailto: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).

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.

**Article copyright is jointly held by *RCYCP* and article author(s), allowing both the right to reproduction.**

Peer Review is available on request.



[press.cyc-net.org](http://press.cyc-net.org)

Relational & Youth  
**Child Care**  
Practices

Address all enquiries to –

**Relational Child and Youth Care Practice**

email: [rcycp@press.cyc-net.org](mailto:rcycp@press.cyc-net.org)

<http://www.rcycp.com>