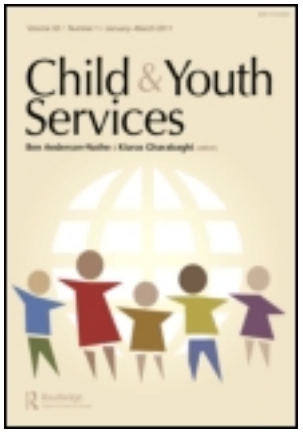

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Locating a Place for the Arts Within the Art of Child and Youth Care Practice

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Locating a Place for the Arts Within the Art of Child and Youth Care Practice

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Art, not of any specific form, but art and the processes in which it is created are compatible with many core concepts of what defines a child and youth care (CYC) approach to working and being with young people. The author explores the perceived relationship between art and CYC practice and demonstrates how art-related activities can be used effectively within the context of a CYC approach to practicing care. The article reviews some fundamental philosophies of CYC practice, followed by an exploration of what constitutes art and its similarities and compatibility with a CYC approach. Connections made between CYC practice and the use of art-related activities centre on the use of purposeful activities, developmental/social pedagogical practice, self in relationship, and ethical practice.

KEYWORDS art-related activities, artistic process(es)/interventions, becoming, child and youth care, CYC practice, CYC practitioner, subject, youth, young people

CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE: A HOLISTIC AND RELATIONAL VISION OF CARE

Arguably, the knowledge base that informs child and youth care (CYC) practice is rooted in social constructivism, which is evident in the profession's identification with an ecological orientation to care (Bellefeuille, McGrath, & Jamieson, 2008; Jones, 2007; Parry, 1985). At the core of the CYC practitioner's way of being with young people is the idea that all people are always "becoming" in how they experience themselves, how they experience themselves and others in relationship, and how they experience the

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settings and circumstances that form the physical, social, cultural, political, and historical contexts that define a person's life-space. If who we are and what we experience, who we encounter and how we experience them, and all the contextual elements of our life-space are perpetually shifting, then we and everything we experience are always "becoming," and thus we are never static, never the same (Munger, 1998). Deleuze and Guattari put it succinctly: "The child does not become; it is becoming itself that is a child" (Tarruli & Skott-Myhre, 2006, p. 187).

CYC practice does not lend itself to views that attempt to define and categorize people and thereby conceive of and engage them as objects. Objects do not have agency and therefore remain static; people, in contrast, are always "becoming" in relation to others and the world around them (Freire, 2009; Krueger, 2000). To engage youth in ways that are commensurate with the belief that they are always "becoming" CYC practitioners must elicit young people's life-narratives, which entails learning *from* young people what they have experienced in their lives and the meaning they have ascribed to those experiences that took place prior to the CYC practioner's contact with them. In addition, it entails cultivating a conscious recognition of how a young person, their life story, and the meaning they ascribe to it continues "to become" within the ongoing relational connection that the CYC practitioner continually develops *with* the young person (Bellefuille & Ricks, 2010). Regardless of developmental stage, circumstance, culture, or historical period, CYC practioners connect to young people through examining and re-examining these elements *with them*. Furthermore, when CYC practitioners come into the lives of young people it is never at the beginning of anything—the exact entry point of a new developmental stage or any life changing circumstances or vicissitudes for that matter. Life has already happened and is currently happening for all young people as we encounter them. As Garfat and Fulcher (2011) say, we "meet young people where they are at."

DEFINING ART AND ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH CYC PRACTICE

What can constitute art is open ended. Anything that facilitates self-expression and creativity could be classified as art. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that CYC practice itself constitutes an art, as it falls under the definition of a "subject," one which entails understanding and relating to *people*, who themselves are also considered "subjects" (Pontisso, 2004). This brings us back to the underlying theoretical orientation of CYC practice and the idea that people are always "becoming" or "subject" in relation to others, their surroundings, and the meaning they ascribe to them. People are not static entities, so using approaches that objectify their behavior and experiences is paradoxical. Conversely, using activities that help facilitate self-expression

and call upon the subjective nature of young people's perceptions and their experiences through creative means, at least intuitively seems fitting.

Artistic process is both personal and dynamic in relation to the person(s) creating it, his or her experiences, and the social, environmental, cultural, and historical contexts through which it is being expressed. Through the act of creation, expression and meaning happen in tandem. In the words of Carl Jung, "Image and meaning are identical: and as the former takes shape, so the latter becomes clear" (Jung, quoted in Maclagan, 2005, p. 24). Art moves with the tempo and context of one's being, helping to capture the worldview and ecology of the person expressing himself or herself through it. Sartre may have said it best when he stated that:

> We never say that a work of art is arbitrary. When we speak of a canvas of Picasso, we never say that it is arbitrary; we understand quite well that he was making himself what he is at the very time he was painting, that the ensemble of his work is embodied in his life. (Sartre, 1957/2004, p. 361)

Using artistic processes, CYC practitioners can meaningfully engage youth by connecting with them through approaches that elicit their subjective ways of thinking, feeling and experiencing life, while also remaining consistent with the social constructivist mindset guiding the profession.

BENEFITS OF THE ARTS AND DEVELOPMENTAL/SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Much research has gone into understanding the effects the arts can have on the development of young people. The arts, when introduced into group settings, have been linked to various personal and social gains. These entail enhanced self-esteem and self-concept; increased emotional awareness; pro-social interest and skill development; feelings of belonging to a peer group; increased capacity for goal setting, goal attainment, and time management; and a sense of safety and being cared for in the company of a capable, caring adult (Smeijsters, Kil, Kurstjens, Welten, & Willemars, 2011; VanderVen, 2011; Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006).

Within the historical roots of social work practice, the arts were frequently used as a means to engage with people across various settings of the life-space "including hospitals, community centers, schools . . . mental health in- and out-patient facilities . . . correctional centers, and shelters" (Bitel, 2010, p. 29). This is indicative of the arts' conduciveness to the life-space, which is a main focus of CYC practitioners and where their practice is situated. On this note, it is also worth mentioning that within a social work approach to practice (which entails case-management work and moving from

place to place without being immersed in any one setting) art groups would likely have been conducted as an external intervention, coming from the outside in. CYC practitioners, on the other hand, have an added advantage of working directly within the life-space settings. By virtue of where they are situated, CYC practitioners who decide to use the arts in their practice are in a position to gain deeper insights about how the effects of using art in the life-space is impacting the overall development of youth within those settings.

CYC practice is also guided by a dedication to fostering the growth and development of young people in relation to the "totality" of their developmental functioning (Anglin, 2001; Garfat & Fulcher, 2011). Through the relational connections that CYC practitioners build with young people, over time and within the life-space, they apply knowledge about human growth and development to nurture young people's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs (Krueger, 2000). CYC practitioners believe helping youth entails engaging the whole of the person(s) within their care. VanderVen (2011) indicates that "both a relational approach and a stimulating and engaging activity program contribute to children and youth feeling competent, respected, and cared for" (p. 93). Implementing artistic activities in the daily lives of youth can be helpful for fostering all of youth's developmental needs, and do so in ways that globally engage these areas (Craig, Kermis, & Digdon, 1998).

In the art therapy community, arts that constitute the expressive therapies such as music, dance, and drama facilitate multiple developmental functions simultaneously. They embody "a creative synthesis of expression . . ., which . . . incorporates the contribution of different components of expression, be they kinaesthetic or sensory, perceptual or affective, cognitive or symbolic" (Lusebrink, 1992, p. 402). Reflecting on this last point, an interesting parallel emerges. CYC practice is concerned with a holistic way of understanding and being with young people to foster their overall development, while engagement in expressive arts can facilitate the overall growth and development of young people on a holistic level. In musical expression, for example, the sense of sound is engaged; the body is enacted through the playing of an instrument; there is a mood to the music being played; the lyrical content is derived from the thoughts and feelings that comprise one's world view and experiences. Moreover, the lyrics may represent an overarching social issue like gang violence or poverty, which can be spoken to directly or metaphorically on both a personal (micro) and political (macro) level. When one engages in music they engage in concert with others, playing, singing, and rapping to experiences that are highly personal and contextual, which are often relatable to the experiences of those both within and outside of the group. Creative and expressive forms of art like music can help facilitate a CYC practitioner's purpose for being with youth by infusing different aspects of learning, and fostering multiple areas

of young people's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development simultaneously. Engaging with youth through the arts is a meaningful way to facilitate overall personal growth, cultivate group cohesion, and develop the relational connections between CYC practitioners and young people in the life-space.

The use of art activities in CYC practice is compatible with a social pedagogical approach to care. Eichsteller and Bird (2007) summarize the meaning of social pedagogy, stating that it "is all about being—about being with others and forming relationships, being in the present and focusing on *initiating learning processes* (emphasis added), being authentic and genuine, using one's own personality, and about being there, in a supportive, empowering manner" (n.p.). Through the use of daily events and activities this is what CYC practitioners do with young people; they are devout observers and facilitators of process. What is meant by "process" is how a situation, event, or activity unfolds, the social exchanges within it, the moments of personal breakthrough or breakdown, the patterns of communication and silence, the feeling and rhythm of the atmosphere, and how one's self fits into all this (Krueger, 2005, 2011). CYC practitioners try to be mindful of process as much as possible, regardless of what they are doing and when they are doing it. However, inasmuch as CYC practice is driven by an in-the-moment and rhythmic style of engaging, it is also comprised of intentional work. CYC practitioners plan and introduce activities in which "one learns about and takes into consideration a person's previous experiences in anticipation of how new experiences might offer the potential for growth" (Phelan, as cited by Garfat & Fulcher, 2011, p. 13). CYC practitioners create opportunities to facilitate "process" as well, although to remain true to being rhythmic and in-the-moment, CYC practitioners must introduce activities that have *inherent flexibility*. A social pedagogical approach to care is "dynamic, creative, and process oriented rather than mechanical, procedural, and automated" (Eichsteller & Bird, 2007, n.p.). Artistic activities can offer great flexibility, specifically because they can be introduced as frameworks—not linear activities that require an exact process to be carried out. In the social pedagogical approach to care, living and learning do not happen separately, but rather in tandem. Social pedagogy stresses that the challenges youth face and work through are best overcome in the context of daily life, activity, and relational connection with others (Bellefeuille et al., 2008; Gharabaghi & Groskleg, 2010).

Relationship and activity go hand-in-hand. Through relational connection we engage in activity and through activity we develop relational connections. Thinking of activity in a broad sense—as human activity—it is when human beings engage in action with each other that relational connection is formed. Therefore, the more meaningful and engaging an activity is, the greater the likelihood that deeper relational connections can be made. Eichsteller and Bird (2007) speak to this idea through their adoption of the

social pedagogical principle known as "The Common Third." They describe this principle as activity being a binding force between CYC or "pedagogue" and youth.

By bearing in mind young people's past experiences and things they have yet to experience, CYC practitioners can create experiences that are inherently flexible and subject to youth input through the introduction of artistic activities. They can facilitate opportunities with youth to work on various aspects of their development, cultivate real connections with peers and CYC practitioners alike, and provide a basis for good relational practice to transpire.

EXPLORATION OF THE SELVES IN RELATIONSHIP AND DRAMATIC EXPRESSION

Knowing who a young person is and the meaning of their experiences cannot be decided a priori. It can only be discovered by being in relationship with a young person while inquiring about their life story (Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2010). Historically, the concept of "relationship" in CYC practice has been thought of and spoken about in purely descriptive and often superficial ways. However, a more sophisticated, conceptual understanding of relationship and its role in practice continues to gain momentum (Gharabaghi, 2010). According to Garfat and Fulcher (2011), the idea of *being in relationship* with youth as opposed to simply *having relationships* with youth is part of the field's growing conceptual understanding of relationship. The latter simply indicates a stated connection between two people, whereas the former represents a more dynamic process of relationship. *Being in relationship* or *relational practice* "refers to the dynamics that unfold within the spaces between the Selves, or the physical and emotional identities, of two individuals" (Gharabaghi, 2010, p. 88). It entails an intrapersonal and intersubjective awareness in which individuals are attuned to how one's overall presentation and worldview influences how one comes to understand, affect, and be affected by youth as one is being with a young person in the moment (Garfat, 2002; Krueger, 1997, 2011; Swanzen, 2011). This is complex, requiring practitioners to be present both *within* themselves and *outside* themselves. It is not a formulaic method (Gharabaghi, Skott-Myhre, & Krueger, 2012); it is a way of being with others that requires one to constantly inquire and reflect about his or her thoughts, emotions, and experiences, and draw upon the support and feedback of colleagues and supervisors (Krueger, 2000). Youth themselves can act as a form of support in this process. Through the use of drama-based activities, for example, CYC practitioners and youth may engage in processes that foster mutual self-awareness within the context of what it means to be in relationship with each other.

Role Reversal

The role reversal is an activity in which two people seek to portray each other and engage in dialogue together, and is a common drama-based activity within the expressive art-therapies. Smeijsters and colleagues (2011) indicate that the use of role reversal with youth "allows each young person to experience both roles, thus giving him/her an understanding of the other person's situation." There are various ways and situations through which this activity could be conducted; however, for the purposes of this section of the article, attention will be paid to how it can be utilized within, and with specific reference to, the relational connection between CYC practioner and youth. Using role reversal within this context can help facilitate the co-creation of meaning between the interacting selves, shed light on what is known and unknown to each other, and provide opportunities for new ways of understanding and relating to one another. With respect to the nature of collaborative, artistic creation, McNiff argues that "Life is always created from an interplay among different participants who make contact, influence one another, exchange their essential natures, merge, and generate new forms" (McNiff, as cited in Moon, 2010, p. 5).

To portray the other, one must first observe how the other acts within context and relationship. Attentiveness to the other's mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, thoughts and emotions, and behavioral and relational patterns within the situations and settings of the life-space is what guides creating a portrayal of the other. However, as much as role reversal is about portraying the other, the presence of the self is also central in this process. This is because how the self *experiences the other* informs how the self *portrays the other*. Two people creating a portrayal of the same person may end up demonstrating many of the same character traits that each has observed in the person they are both portraying, although *how* and *the degree* to which those traits are emphasized will reflect how each has experienced *being in relationship* with *whom they are portraying*. Therefore, by engaging in role reversal together, both CYC practitioner and youth engage in an opportunity to experience themselves through *how the other experiences them*. To assist with elaborating on this idea, featured below is the Johari Window (Luft, 1969; see Figure 1), adapted from the article "How am I who I am: Self in Child and Youth Care Practice" by Thom Garfat and Grant Charles (2007).

Open awareness could be characterized by something both people know without necessarily having to verbally confirm a mutual knowing (e.g.,

Johari Window	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Other	***Open***	***Blind***
Not Known to Other	***Hidden***	***Unknown***

Open - refers to those things *known to self and known to other.*
Hidden - refers to things which may be *known to self but not known to other.*
Blind - refers to things that are *known to other, but not to self.*
Unknown - refers to things which are *unknown to self and unknown to self* .

FIGURE 1 The Johari Window. Adapted from Garfat and Charles (2007, p. 9).

we have the same colored hair, we eat breakfast together each morning, we argue a lot). An example of *Hidden* awareness could be embodied by something like a personal memory, a feeling, or an intention one has toward the other, but one that has never been shared, leaving the other to remain unaware (e.g., a woman loves her partner, but has never expressed her love). *Blind* awareness is the opposite of hidden awareness, wherein one knows something about the other (e.g., the other bites his lip whenever he is nervous or questioned publicly), but the other lacks awareness of this. Finally, *Unknown* awareness could be manifested by anything to which two people are both oblivious (e.g., a forgotten, traumatic childhood memory causing one to be aggressive to the other when they argue).

Role-reversal situations can be created by CYC practitioners and youth within the various life-space settings. Life-space settings are inherently conducive to role-reversals because they provide a forum for the contextual factors that encompass relational dynamics. Also, contextual factors include the daily routines, rituals of encounter, and activities within the life-space (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011; Krueger, 2011). For instance, in a residential setting, there are routines, chores, games and activities, and physical spaces for a variety of these actions and others to unfold throughout the residence over time. Through these interactive, spatial, and time dimensions relational dynamics are characterized, develop, and evolve (Martin & Stuart, 2005). CYC practitioners and youth interact within these dimensions regularly, and through repeated exposure within these dimensions they form many observations of each other. This means that CYC practitioners and young people share a lot of *Open* awareness as a natural consequence of how they come to be together. That said, this does not mean that within the *Open* levels of awareness there are not things *Hidden* and *Blind* between the selves. However, it does provide a basis for one to simply portray the other and expose some *Hidden* and *Blind* levels of awareness between the CYC practitioner and youth.

Example of a Role-Reversal Scenario in a Residential Setting

A young person is portraying the CYC practitioner and asking them to do their morning chores. In this scenario, the CYC practitioner has just woken up to his morning alarm and, within less than a minute of opening his eyes, the youth opens the bedroom door, unannounced, and abruptly urges the CYC practitioner to shower and clean the bathroom sink (*CYC practitioner reflection*: I did not know I am experienced as demanding and controlling). The CYC practitioner responds by shouting a profanity at the young person and remaining still in bed (*Youth reflection*: This is rude! I want to tell him where to go!). At this point the youth raises his voice to the CYC practitioner, tells him that he is being disrespectful and that he needs to get to school

on time (*CYC practitioner reflection*: I come across schedule-oriented and impersonal right now—like I don't care he's tired). The CYC practitioner then flings one of his pillows at the youth and swears at him again, but remains in bed (*Youth reflection*: He whipped something at me and I can't whip something back at him. This sucks!). The youth warns the CYC practitioner he will be back in five minutes and that he better be up and ready to go (*CYC practitioner reflection*: I haven't been saying good morning lately, yet I expect him to do as I ask).

In this brief interaction above, both CYC practitioner and youth come to realize what it is like to be the other and, through being the other, what it is like to experience self through the other's portrayed experience of self. At this point, the CYC practitioner and youth are made aware of parts of themselves that were subject to "blind spots" (Garfat & Charles, 2007) and approach a potentially deepened level of *Open* awareness between the selves. By communicating through *re-enactment of* relational dynamics, as opposed to communicating through *dialogue about* relational dynamics, an avenue for verbal dialogue has surfaced. In artistic processes (in this case a dramatic process) images and dialogue mutually facilitate each other's emergence (Schnetz, 2005). Once the role-reversal has finished its enactment stage, the CYC practitioner and young person can talk about what each experienced. Approaching this successfully, however, requires modeling openness to feedback and self-reflection on the part of the CYC practitioner. The CYC practitioner could take it upon himself to describe to the youth how he saw himself in the young person's portrayal of him. Furthermore, in recognizing and inquiring about how he may be perceived by the young person based on the re-enactment, the CYC practitioner may come to notice *Hidden* levels of awareness between the selves. For instance, in noticing he came across bossy, the CYC practitioner realizes that his abruptness in this re-enactment came from angst that the young person would get suspended for being late again and possibly be kicked off the basketball team. He has not been expressing this verbally to the young person, yet now there is an opportunity to clarify this intention.

CYC practitioner: I felt like I might come across bossy when I come to wake you up in the morning. What do you think?

Youth: Yeah, lately it's like you're on a mission. I'm barely awake and you're already angry and telling me what to do.

CYC practitioner: I can see how it you'd feel that way. I realized I didn't even say good morning. I'm sorry I've been coming across as bossy. Lately I've been worried you'll get suspended again, and your Principal said he'd boot you off the basketball team if that happened. That's what I've been thinking but, I guess I haven't been saying that to you. You love basketball and I know how upset you

were when you were told you could get kicked off the team.

Youth: When you say it like that, I see that you're looking out for me.

CYC practitioner: I'm going to practice being more mindful about saying what I'm truly thinking. What was it like for you to be me?

Youth: Man, when you swore at me I wanted to tell you where to go right back! It was hard to let you swear at me.

CYC practitioner: When you swear at me, what are you really saying to me? What am I not being told when you just swear?

Youth: I don't know. I guess I just want you to back off a bit, give me some time to wake up, you know?

CYC practitioner: It sounds like both of us need to work on saying what we're truly thinking. I'm glad to talk with you about this. Fighting isn't a good way to start the day.

At this juncture, different ways of knowing, doing, and being together can happen through further dialogue that is both verbal and action-oriented. For example, an ensuing role-reversal could take place wherein the CYC practitioner and youth demonstrate how they would like to be engaged by the other in the scenario they just re-enacted, deepening insight and providing the means for further dialogue about how they interact with each other. Using role-reversal is a creative way of strengthening the development and understanding of the "co-created space" between CYC practitioners and youth (Garfat, 2008). It embodies the CYC concept of "praxis"—the idea that good care practices require reflection about practice *before* and *while engaged* in practice (White, 2007). It is an ongoing, self-reflective, ethically oriented way of being with others.

If done with the humility of an open mind and open heart, CYC practitioners can use role reversal as a way of engaging young people and co-create meaning about being in relationship, as "it is through this construction of meaning that we grow and change while constantly redefining who we are in the moment. Only through the acceptance of this mutuality with other can we truly know ourselves" (Garfat & Charles, 2007, p. 7).

Ethical Practice

Throughout the CYC literature, what constitutes ethical practice continues to evolve. However, consistent themes are emerging that supporting the notion that ethical practice focuses on rights-based practices, strengths-based practices, and reflective practice—which entails self-reflection and reflecting upon the nature of the systems through which CYC practitioners care

for youth (Laursen, 2003; MacArthur et al., 2011; Mattingly, 1995; Newbury 2010, 2011). Furthermore, it is important to note that these aspects of ethical practice are not entities and typically overlap. (Pearson & Finlay, 2008) argue

> A rights-based approach looks at assets and strengths, rather than pathologies and problems. It focuses, to a great extent on "voice". Recognizing their strengths means that children youth and families will be seen as resources for one another rather than simply as individuals or groups "needing help." (n.p.)

It is important for CYC practitioners to reflect upon how they see themselves as professionals and thereby position themselves in relation to the young people they care for. They must engage in self-reflective praxis (White, 2007) by consistently reviewing their "professional attitudes." Stuart (2009) describes "professional attitudes" as one's worldview in connection with the "mindset" a CYC practitioner brings to the life-space milieu. Stuart also comments that "Your attitude is the manifestation of your self, the emotional expression of who you are within the surrounding environment" (p. 50). These attitudes can have a significant influence on how CYC practitioners come to conceive and interact with young people and, ultimately, affect how youth-serving programs are designed and operated. Cahill (2008) suggests

> Who we think Youth are, and what we think they need, will affect the way we position the young people within the project. If we consider Youth to be "in development," we are likely to think that they "need" educating. If we see Youth as "victims," we may think that they "need" to be helped or rescued, or teach them to blame the perpetrators. If we believe Youth to be "deviant," we are likely to see that they "need" correction or surveillance. If, however, we see Youth as "citizens," we may see that they can contribute [now]. (p. 19)

Ethical practices connote recognizing how the actions of self will impact the well-being of others, which means ethics are socially constructed and negotiated codifications of conduct (Skott-Myhre, 2006). This begs the question, "how often are youth involved in the negotiations of ethical practices?" Also, it implies that CYC practitioners cannot engage in ethical practices removed from the views and input of others (in this case youth), as to do otherwise is merely an exercise of *imposing* one's own views and beliefs. Therefore, ethical practice denotes that service provisions, the targeted underlying needs of services, and the ways in which services are delivered to youth must include the input of young people (Ricks & Charlesworth, 2003).

Effectively connecting and engaging with youth is unlikely to result from imposed service provisions that do not include the needs and interests of young people. Garfat and Fulcher (2011) argue, "if someone is not connected with another, and/or cannot engage with him in a significant way,

then the Practitioner's interventions cannot be effective" (p. 9). Therefore, part of ethical practice is creating opportunities for meaningful interactions with youth, which involves embracing what is already meaningful to young people and exploring how deeper meaning can be found in such things.

CONCLUSION

Child and youth care is a field that espouses the notion that knowledge and people develop over time, across the life-space, and in relationship as people live their daily lives. It is imperative that CYC practitioners reflect upon the nature of their interventions and work milieus and listen for any discordant echoes between their philosophies and practices. Throughout this article it was argued that CYC practitioners foster the growth, development, and capacity of whole persons. Therefore, utilizing *ad hoc* interventions that attempt to isolate, dissect, and decontextualize youth from their environment, relationships, and experiences is incompatible with the CYC approach. Opting to use artistic interventions and activities, however, can help CYC practitioners avoid this, as such interventions and activities are inherently provocative. In other words, they are used to elicit the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of young people, and the subjective meaning that youth ascribe to these aspects of themselves. Artistic interventions and activities invite meaning; they do not impose it. When programming designs and interventions focus on young people's symptomology we *impose* meaning and challenges *onto* youth. However, in doing so, we alienate ourselves from eliciting the *ecologies of our youth*, even though it is through relationship and surrounding systems and circumstances that youth develop—challenges and all (Newbury, 2009).

On a final note, Krueger (2008) uses the artistic metaphor of dance to describe CYC practice, reminding us that "competent workers see their actions in the dance as interconnected with the actions of children, youth and families, and the healthy systems they are trying to create" (p. 7). Using art-related interventions and activities can help CYC practitioners stay in the rhythms of young people's lives by engaging them through ways that invite meaning that is relationally and contextually relevant to both youth and CYC practitioners. The CYC approach is an inquisitive and inclusive approach to care. We are not *pre*scribers of meaning, nor are we mere *sub*scribers of meaning; we are *co-creators* of meaning. Therefore, we must engage youth in ways that bring us closer to understanding their perceptions of their life stories while we become a part of them, and stay attuned to their evolution, together, as we go about our daily lives.

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