

*Reflective Practice in Homelessness Research and Practice:*  
**Firsthand Experiences of  
Researchers and Practitioners When  
Working with Youth with Lived/Living  
Experience of Homelessness**

**Cas Star** (Presenting Author), Karen Naidoo, Melanie Lusted, and Ahmad Bonakdar

Making the Shift: Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Tkaronto (Mohawk meaning: “*where there are trees standing in the water*”), was and continues to be taken care of by many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat Peoples. Built on sacred land, Tkaronto’s peaceful and respectful stewardship is covered by the Toronto Purchase Treaty 13 (1805) agreement between the Mississaugas of the Credit and extended to allied nations. Tkaronto is now home to diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples across Turtle Island.



# AGENDA

- **Origins**
- **Definitions**
- **Framework**
- **Pros and Cons**
- **Examples**
- **Recommendations**



# What do you do when you, as a researcher or practitioner...

- Encounter roadblocks?
- Need space to process emotional experiences?
- Require emotional protection while exposed to difficult stories?



# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (RESEARCH): ORIGINS

## Authentic Roots

- Embedded in women and gender studies
- Marginalized groups

*“Reflexivity in research involves reflection on self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics, and researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation.” (Sultana, 2007, p. 376).*



# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (RESEARCH): ORIGINS

## Donald Schön

- American philosopher and professor of urban planning
- Observed ‘crisis of confidence’

*“Professional knowledge is mismatched to the changing character of the situations of practice—the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice.” (Schön, 1983, p. 14)*

- Reflective practice as solution



# TECHNICAL RATIONALITY & REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

**Technical rationality:** *“The view of professional knowledge which has most powerfully shaped both our thinking about the professions and the institutional relations of research, education, and practice-professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique.”* (The Reflective Practitioner, p. 21)

**Reflective practice:** Practice of giving serious thought or consideration in and/or on one’s performance when dealing with challenging professional situations



# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

## **Reflection-in-action** *Thinking on your feet* *Learning by doing*

- Conscious thought about actions one takes as it happens
- Consider situation at hand
- Make decision on action
- Act right away

## **Reflection-on-action**

- Conscious thought about actions one already took
- Re-consider the situation
- Decide how to improve this situation in the future





# PROS & CONS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

PROS	CONS
✓ Provides outlet for emotion processing	x May be difficult to begin
✓ Acknowledgement of privileges	x Discomfort with self-evaluation
✓ Builds self-awareness of strengths and limitations	x Lack of time
✓ Prompts empathy	x Ongoing process
✓ Allows for comprehensive assessment	x No formulaic response
✓ Stimulates new ideas for interventions	
✓ Improves professional knowledge and practice	
✓ Can be done on own or within a group	



A person with long, dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking out over a body of water. The background features a sunset or sunrise with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a soft glow. The water is dark with some ripples, and the sky is filled with light clouds. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXAMPLES (RESEARCHER): DEALING WITH GRIEF

## Expect the Unexpected

When you have participants who are typically responsive and they completely drop out of contact, expect the unexpected – *including death.*

A photograph of a red brick wall with a concrete curb at the bottom. The wall is made of red bricks with visible mortar lines. The concrete curb is dark and appears to be made of several blocks. The overall scene is a simple, textured wall.

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXAMPLES (RESEARCHER): CONFLICTS

Hitting Brick Walls


# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXAMPLES (PRACTITIONER): MEETING AGENDAS

## Themes

- Check-ins
- Successes
- Bumps in road/hot spots
- Employer support
- Youth goals
- Youth progress
- Youth service engagement
- Employment engagement
- School engagement
- Improved health and well-being
- Community connections
- Family and natural supports







## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXAMPLES (PRACTITIONER): DIXIT CARDS

- **A game of cards with illustrated, vibrant dream-like images**
- **Pick a picture card which gives you space to reflect on feelings, work, barriers, and successes of the day**
- **Allows for self-care reflection**



# REFLECTION EXERCISE: POSITIONALITY

- What are your identities (racial, ethnic, cultural, national, class, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc.)?
- How did the historical aspects of your own identities shape your positionality?
- What effect does your presence and prior knowledge have?
- What relationships and power dynamics exist?
- Who will benefit and who will lose through your research and practice?
- Whose physical, mental, and emotional labour and resources goes into your research and practice?
- Whom are you accountable for the knowledge and practice you disseminate and undertake?



(Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002)

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify skills and knowledge needed
- Reflect on positionality on both individual and institutional level
- Establish reflective practice as an essential work duty
- Build portfolio of reflective practices and document effective interventions
- Ensure ongoing training, support, and supervision
- Provide training in sensitivity, compassion, and adaptability
- Customize research processes, protocols, and trainings to needs and experiences of participants in vulnerable circumstances



# QUESTIONS?

Cas Star

[casstar@yorku.ca](mailto:casstar@yorku.ca)



# REFERENCES

Business Bliss Consultants FZE. (November 2018). Schon's Reflective Model. Retrieved from <https://nursinganswers.net/reflective-guides/schon-reflective-model.php?vref=1>

GenUrb, The City Institute at York University. (n.d.). Feminist Research Ethics: Module 6 – Reflexivity and Self-reflexivity. Retrieved from: <https://genurb.apps01.yorku.ca/courses/feminist-research-ethics/lessons/reflexivity-and-self-reflexivity/>

Hussen, T. S. (n.d.). “All that You Walk On to Get There”: How to Centre Feminist Ways of Knowing. Retrieved from: [firm.genderit.org/blog/all-you-walk-get-there-how-centre-feminist-ways-knowing](http://firm.genderit.org/blog/all-you-walk-get-there-how-centre-feminist-ways-knowing)

Naidoo, K., & MacDonald, C. (August 2022). How Can Researchers Build Trust with Research Participants? Retrieved from: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/how-can-researchers-build-trust-research-participants>

Ramazanoğlu, C. & Holland, J. (2002). *Feminist Methodology*. London Sage Publications Ltd.: London, United Kingdom.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Basic Books: New York, New York.

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International Journal of Critical Geographies*, 6(3), 374-385.

