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Editorial

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Editorial

When the decision was made to have an international Special Issue of the *Journal of Social Work Practice*, our sense of what it meant to be part of a global community was largely framed by our economic inter-connectedness. This perspective on global identity has changed beyond all recognition in the past few weeks and months, as we are writing this editorial in the midst of ever-increasing restrictions as a result of COVID19. The world shrinks inwards, into the confines of our homes, in an effort to restrict the pandemic. So, it is good to spread our gaze and awareness outwards by adopting a global lens in this international special issue. This idea of holding the local and the global simultaneously in a creative tension is perhaps a useful position to start from in considering the place of psychodynamic and systemic thinking and how it may be interpreted across the world. What additional value can such frameworks offer to social workers in different nations?

In terms of the global presence of psychodynamic and systemic approaches there are areas of the world where it has gained a strong foothold, such as North West Europe and North and South America. Interestingly the papers presented here offer psychoanalytic and systemic insights from parts of the world (or groups) not readily associated with these approaches – from the Arab nations to the Czech Republic, from Finland to China and Korea. Perhaps it is because the voices that are represented here are little heard, that their impact is stronger. Qushua and Ostler's exploration of traditional Arab LGBT clients learning to name and articulate their experiences embodies this process, and perhaps sits at the heart of international social work values. In the abstract for the paper the complex potential of the psychodynamic process is powerfully expressed:

Words helped to humanise what had been unspeakable and unbearable experience and allowed clients to begin to openly accept and share the realities of their sexual orientations even within the confines of severe social and cultural demands.

Glumbikova's paper similarly engages with the values at the heart of social work practice and considers the place of reflexivity in the growing sense of self of social workers in the Czech Republic. Through a psychosocial lens she explores how social workers struggle between a technician and reflexive professional self and finishes by underlining the crucial role of social work education in supporting and facilitating this professional developmental process.

Several of the papers have an underlying theme around the contribution of psychodynamic and systemic thinking in adding to our understanding of human suffering and inequality. Glumbikova and Gojova's paper, for example, looks at the changing sense of identity of Czech women who survive domestic abuse. Once again, as with the social workers' in Glumbikova's earlier paper, the women who are the subject of this study have to walk a challenging line between two identities – victim and survivor. The paper's authors argue that the relationship of the women to their social workers is pivotal to the effectiveness of their identity transformation and underlines the importance of emotionally informed interactions. Maatta describes how the use of collage-based image work can provide valuable insights into the lived

experiences of immigrants in Finland and the responses of professionals to this group. The complex and challenging binary of identity appears here too with reference to the work of Crociani-Windland (2017):

who emphasises that as humans we are all inclined to experience contradictions and disorientation regarding identity, and thereby challenging life situations should be understood as 'creatively undetermined' rather than 'pathologically predetermined by the past'.

Moving to a global lens reminds us that individual human rights exist alongside collective responsibility. This is perhaps where relationship-based practice can come into its own, offering a holding space. Ha, Kim and Han's powerful depiction of a nation in grief as a result of a ferry sinking leading to massive loss of life (including a high percentage of children) is evocative of how deep a collective conscious can be amidst individual suffering. Based on a collective autoethnography the paper adopts a psychoanalytic lens to understand the individual and societal responses to a national disaster. Once again individual and collective responses are foregrounded with the authors provocatively concluding, '*The whole Korean society seemed to be sunken with Sewol Ferry*'. Xia and Lam's paper on the lived experience of Chinese children whose parents have been incarcerated provides another opportunity to think about the inter-relationship between the individual and the complexity of the collective; how the collective presents challenges, as well as the reassurance of containment. It can also be a place of shame where children bear the stigma of their parents' actions.

But there is hope. Almakhamreh et al's paper describes the effectiveness of Aggression Replacement Therapy for juvenile offenders in Jordan and shows how strengths-based and human-rights informed psychosocial interventions can contribute to greater self and wider group understanding.

Of course, how social work is perceived varies from country to country and this is reflected in the struggles that social workers face. There are challenges at an individual and collective level, in looking beneath the surface, in encouraging people to find the courage to speak in their own voice whilst feeling positively connected to the collective. It is heartening to see that while many of the countries referred to in this issue are not strong proponents of psychosocial approaches, there is a contribution that relationship-based practice can make. And as we realise more fully in light of COVID19 how globally connected and close we actually are, maybe we can sit more courageously and compassionately with the paradox associated with global-local and individual-collective tensions. We may not find the answer but we might find each other.

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Reference

Crociani-Windland, L. (2017). Deleuze, art and social work. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 31(2), 251–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2017.1305341>

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