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**Editorial for Journal of Social Work Practice, 34 (3)**

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We write this editorial with mixed feelings. We are pleased to see this issue published and very grateful to all our contributors - but we wish to acknowledge that this issue is being produced in the most unusual context. As we are all now aware, the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 13th March 2020. While the virus had already caused much pain, suffering and loss before that date, it was the announcement by the World Health Organisation which instantly transformed the virus from a local, situated concern to the problem of everyone across the world.

Since that day, a lot has changed regarding our individual and shared experiences of safety and wellbeing. As Jakovljevic (2020) outlines, the consequences of this pandemic are complex in many ways, including its effects on economic, social, political and health systems. We are still learning about this virus and about our ability to respond to it and co-exist with it. It is clear we need collective solidarity more than ever if we are to find a solution to this crisis, but it is not always easy to reach consensus on strategies and approaches.

In tandem with the pandemic, other issues have also spurred large scale collective responses. The swift and strong reaction to the death of George Floyd in the USA has sparked a global anti-racism movement; a movement fuelled by an unstoppable momentum to address racially-based prejudice and discrimination once and for all.

The global climate crisis also continues to cause widespread concern and, similar to the other pressing issues of the current period, it is pushing our human species to re-assess and re-calibrate our relationships with nature and to each other. While these various issues represent enormous challenges, they also present opportunities for reform and renewal regarding how we live on this planet and share it with each other. It is important to stay attuned to the real problems facing our world but also to stay open to solutions and to the belief that the interplay of problems and solutions can produce positive resolutions. In the contributions to this issue, a number of articles deal with this interplay of problems and solutions, from a range of perspectives and in a range of contexts.

The complex dynamics of managing issues of racism and white privilege within therapeutic relationships is the focus of the first article by Stuart Stevenson. Using the example of therapeutic work with a vulnerable white mother who was traumatised by witnessing a racist attack, Stevenson explores her retreat into a racist solution that blamed the victim of the attack and identified with the aggressors. He uses the concept of ‘White Fragility’ to explain the use of defences when white privilege is experienced as under threat. He also explores his own countertransference and the demands of working with racist dynamics faced by clinicians of colour, who are likely to have experienced racist trauma in their own lives. He concludes that there is a need for a great understanding of the complex impact of racist trauma and how this can be managed within therapeutic relationships.

The theme of trauma and the importance of relationships is developed further in the article by Ofir Levi, which addresses the role of hope in psychodynamic psychotherapy for people experiencing PTSD. Hope is explored as both the search for a psychological space in which the self can start anew and a desire that leads to formulating goals. Levi illustrates this with his therapeutic work with a military veteran in a therapeutic unit in Israel, exploring how the client had regain the ability to hope, while recognising that this hope may not necessarily be realized and allowing himself to be open to disappointment and frustration.

The theme of recovery from trauma is continued with the article by Nina Esaki, Sarah Yanosy, Zachary Randolph and Joseph Benamati, which focuses upon the healing of military veterans. They argue that, rather than just focusing upon the absence of PTSD symptoms and problematic substance use, recovery should also include restoring purpose and the capacity for trust. They explore how a residential facility in New York uses the Sanctuary Model to help veterans move from a worldview that has been organised by their experience of trauma to one that integrates that trauma and honours how the veteran has been changed by that experience.

The article by Rosemary Vito on social work leadership addresses the importance of building trusting relationships amongst other core leadership practices. Drawing upon a qualitative case study in three children’s services agencies in Ontario, Canada, Vito highlights the importance of leadership influence, the capacity to building relationships, developing shared and realisable visions, acting as a role model as well as a mentor and coach, building a culture of teamwork and staff recognition.

The theme of relationships is continued in the article by Brian Rasmussen and David Kealy, which explores supportive psychotherapy in the 21st century. Rasmussen and Kealy explore the historical roots and theoretical foundations of this approach in comparison to alternative approaches and examine some of the common confusions. They argue for a clearer identity for supportive psychotherapy and for the integration of contemporary relational theory and recent findings from the field of neuroscience.

Themes of relationship and separation are continued in the next article by Hanoch Yerushalmi, which addresses the topic of play in social workers’ supervision. After examining the positive role of play in human development and therapeutic processes, Yerushalmi explores how the illusion of full partnership between supervisor and supervisee can be seen as a form of play that reduces the therapist’s sense of isolation and to help them feel connected to an internalised community of therapists.

The final article by Fiona Robinson, Patrick Luyten and Nick Midgley examines tensions in the child psychotherapists’ role in consultation work with the professional network around looked after children. The authors describe a study of child psychotherapists who worked across England and identified a number of themes. Firstly, a tension between what they felt they could offer versus what was expected of them. Secondly, a tension between what they felt was in the best interests of the child and network versus how the system was currently organised. Thirdly, a tension between psychoanalytic model of reflective practice and a generic model of reflective practice.

In the face of the response to COVID-19 that requires social isolation on a scale hitherto unknown, the papers emphasize the importance of connection and relationships and highlight practice that seeks to offer hope in difficult times. As Winnicott (1947) states in ‘Hate in the Counter-Transference’, recovery from trauma cannot occur in isolation and can only take place within the context of a relationship.

**References**

Jakovljevic, M. (2020). Editorial: Covid-19 crisis as a collective hero's journey to better public and global mental health. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 2020; Vol. 32, No. 1, pp 3-5 <https://doi.org/10.24869/psyd.2020.3>.

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