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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

This general issue contains two papers from Israel, two from Australia, one from New Zealand and one from the UK. Differences in policy, practice and culture are evident and enrich our understanding of how social work is thought about and conducted in different parts of the world. Familiar themes are also evident: the value of supervision, the importance of the relationship, the contribution of knowledge, the significance of theory—and the obstacles that social work encounters in all these areas. The papers reflect a range of research methods and approaches to writing, lending the issue the interest of diversity.

The issue opens with Rachel Goldhill's paper about UK probation officers' supervision of women service users, exploring the changing context for probation practice and the drivers for a punitive stance. Her data include video tapes of meetings between probation officers and women. She is thus able to analyse interaction in detail, with concrete examples of varying levels of sensitivity to the women's concerns. She also draws on interviews with the parties involved, so she can report on their views about their experiences. This paper combines microanalysis with an appreciation of the impact on probation officers of larger political, policy and organisational change.

The two papers that follow also concern supervision, but in this case, supervision of social workers. First, Hanoch Yerushalmi describes social workers engaged in mental health work in Israel. Faced with the prospect of effecting little change for clients living with severe mental illness, social workers can become despairing. He discusses the value of mentalisation and reflection. In vignettes of supervision, he describes processes that unlocked new ways of thinking and led to surprising and welcome change in both therapist and client. In the second paper, Ronnie Egan, Jane Maidment and Marie Connolly report on a large study of social work supervision, the first of its kind in Australia. Results from an online survey are analysed alongside focus group discussions. Supervision is highly valued by social workers and the article teases out what makes a difference to social workers and where supervision falls short.

Peter Adams' paper is philosophically and theoretically based. It discusses concepts and ways of seeing that are then worked through in an exploration of three 'lives', imagined scenarios of people facing existential challenges with the help of a social worker. He suggests that existential concerns on the part of service users are often overlooked by professionals, who are more preoccupied with solving problems and dealing with more immediately visible distress.

Edith Blitt-Cohen and Romain Jammal-Aboutd make a contribution to the literature on social workers engaging fathers where there are concerns about children's welfare. Their focus is on Arab women social workers in Israel, working with Arab fathers, and explores issues of gender, culture and social work culture. Finally, George Karpētis writes a narrative review to identify the (lack of) knowledge of parental mental ill health shown in child protection literature. He uses a

range of theoretical perspectives to extract the underlying beliefs and views of the literature examined, and argues that social workers need greater knowledge of parental mental health.

This issue is a short one, to allow for the larger special issues that flank it in this volume, but its range and scope offer interest at many levels.

Juliet Koprowska and Gillian Ruch