

In this issue

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Welcome to this issue of *Qualitative Social Work*, the first issue of 2024.

We are excited to have two new Editorial Board members. You will have read the brilliant Editorial by Kirsty Oehlers (Oehlers, 2023), including her call for submissions to our New Voices section. In this issue, we are delighted to welcome our new European Review Essay Editor, Dr Caroline Leah. You will have seen from her Editorial that Caroline is passionate about inclusion, participatory research, and mental health. I love her vision for the Review Essay section. Caroline is inviting reviews of documentaries, plays, films, museum exhibitions, podcasts and TED talks that are pertinent to qualitative social work. Caroline's first commissioned review is included in this issue; Sarah Vicary reviews Jeremy Dixon's book on Adult Safeguarding.

We have 11 articles in this issue, on topics using a range of creative approaches, including sandboxing, visual diagramming, and poetry. We begin with an article by Jitka Navrátilová, Pavel Navrátil, Monika Punová, and Veronika Smutná, all based at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. It is particularly notable as it is the first article that we have published where the authors are based in the Czech Republic. In their article, *Needs of children with incarcerated parents in their own voice*, the authors undertook individual interviews with children and used these to develop topics for focus groups with children aged 7–14 years old, who had at least one parent in prison at the time. Seven focus groups with a total of 52 children took place during a weeklong summer camp, organized for these children by a nonprofit organization called Prison Fellowship International. The children's needs are contextualized using the theoretical methodology of the capability approach, with their needs related to love and care being the most important for the children. Many of the children spoke of the support they got from their pets, which leads us to our next article called, *Experiences of parents of autistic children who adopted a cat*. Lead author Gretchen K Carlisle and four colleagues at the University of Missouri, USA explored the experiences of parents of autistic children aged between 6 and 14 years old who adopted a shelter cat. 10

parents took part - nine mothers and one grandmother – and the families were approved to adopt a cat through the standard protocol of the animal shelter. They were given a cat carrier, climbing tree, toys, food, and litter for participating in the study, as well as access to a Board-Certified Specialist in Veterinary Behaviour. Two of the cats were relinquished during the study. The parents were asked to complete an online open-ended online questionnaire every 2 weeks for up to 18 weeks after the adoption of the cat. The authors identified five main themes: benefits of cat adoption, challenges of cat adoption, parent-cat bonding, child-cat bonding, and family impact of cat adoption.

The third article in the issue is by UK researchers Eleanor Mary Staples, Debbie Watson, and Katie Riches. It is one of my favourite articles from last year as the authors use creative methods, sandboxing, and discuss temporality: arguing that ‘past, present, and future are indiscernible, co-existent and co-constructive of identity’. In their article, *Being, becoming, belonging: negotiating temporality, memory, and identity in life story conversations with care-experienced children and young people*, Staples, Watson and Riches apply Feminist New Materialist theoretical perspectives on time and temporality to critically explore the social work practice of Life Story Work. In doing so, they seek to understand how aspects of life story work could be transformed into everyday care conversations between children and the adults who care for them. The 17 participants included six Adoption social workers, five Fostering social workers, two Foster carers and four Adoptive parents. The participants were asked to create scenes in the sand representing their hopes and fears about having difficult life story conversations with child/ren they cared for, had adopted, or worked with, followed by an individual interview using a semi-structured topic guide. Interestingly, although some participants initially expressed uncertainty about creating sand scenes, they took part, reflecting afterwards ‘how helpful the method had been in allowing the time, space and physical material (of the sand and figures) to ‘think things through’ before being interviewed’. For me, this article is innovative, creative, and important.

Creative methods are also discussed in the next article. Prince Chiagozie Ekoh and Kathleen Sitter based at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, provide a literature review of three visual diagramming methods – timelines, convoy circles, and ecomaps. They highlight the possibilities and limitations of their use for

social work research with refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, asylum seekers, and victims of trafficking in person. Informed by the critical constructivist paradigm, the authors discuss how each of the three methods have been used by researchers, including visual examples of each. The article is helpful for any researcher considering using any/ all of these visual diagramming methods as it provides definitions, examples, and analysis of each. Another article providing concrete examples of a research process is the next article in this issue. Marina Morgenshtern and Jeanette Schmid, based at two Canadian universities, make a strong case for (exa)mining journal archives as data sets through critical discourse analysis allows for the excavation of the history of professional scholarship in social work. Specifically, the authors employ Foucauldian *history of the present* to critically analyse 'where discourses have been reinforced over time, silenced, or ruptured, and how discourses echo into current practice'. After providing a review of where authors - including our co-founders, Ian Shaw and Roy Ruckdeschel - have analysed social work journals over time, Morgenshtern and Schmid then provide a working example of their use of journal archives as sources of data. This is followed by a guide to undertaking such an approach, including the research process, data presentation, advantages, and limitations. I thoroughly enjoyed this article and would recommend other researchers take up this research approach.

We then move to another fascinating article. The focus of the article by UK based researchers, Rosemary Oram, Alys Young, and Patricia Cartney is on the professional recognition of specialist professionals working with Deaf British Sign Language parents in child safeguarding. The lead author, Rosemary Oram, describes herself as 'a culturally Deaf, qualified registered social worker with extensive experience of working with Deaf people'. Using an oral history approach, Oram interviewed seven participants - four qualified social workers - who were employed in a specialist role, with extensive experience of working with d/Deaf people. The interviews were conducted in BSL, and video-recorded using two cameras, preserving the richness of the visual language. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyse the materials, which remained in their source language. The article focuses on 'Professional Recognition', which was one of five themes identified overall. The findings highlight the interviewees' brokerage skills, cultural competence, linguistic fluency, and specialist knowledge of the Deaf community. However, this was often

not recognised. In addition, the participants were 'concerned by the inefficiency and inconsistency of the referral processes and protocols which they consider have adverse effects on assessment outcomes, and consequently the parents involved'. This is highly concerning when the authors show that the number of child removals relating to Deaf parents and child protection is notably high. The next article is also concerned with child safeguarding, this time in the Northern Territory in Australia. In the study by Ashlee Reynolds, Steven Roche, and Timothy Piatkowski, twelve practitioners were interviewed who worked in child protection services, family support services, and residential care with children at risk of or exposed to domestic or family violence. Four themes were identified and are discussed in the article: Bridging the gap: Enhancing support for families escaping domestic violence; Beyond basic needs: Addressing underlying trauma and systemic issues in family support; Community-led decision making: "A two-way learning approach"; and Building stronger futures: Empowering families for lasting change.

The next article, authored by USA based authors, Rebecca Campbell, Katie Gregory, Rachael Goodman-Williams, Jasmine Engleton, and McKenzie Javorka, is focused on 'cold case' sexual assault prosecutions. These are cases that were re-opened because victims' sexual assault kits had not been submitted by the police for forensic DNA testing. I was shocked to read that there are likely to have been 300,000–400,000 untested sexual assault kits in the U.S. Unsurprisingly, re-opening these legal cases caused significant emotional distress for survivors. The authors are part of a long-term (13 years thus far) participatory action research project in such cold cases. The focus of this specific article is to capture both the experiences of survivors receiving the news that their case had been re-opened, and the community-based victim advocates providing support to these women. Using a phenomenological research design, 32 survivors were interviewed in person or by telephone, and 12 advocates were interviewed via Zoom. The team identified four core advocacy needs of survivors: crisis intervention and emotional support; confidential communication; court accompaniment and advocacy; and assistance with other life needs. The material from the interviews with the survivors and the advocates is co-presented under each theme.

I found the next article – an autoethnography - to be intriguing and thought-provoking. Mark A Hardy, a doctoral student at the University of Edinburgh, takes a creative and reflective approach to three metaphors which have been used in understanding the relationship between social work practice and poverty. Hardy takes a different approach to autoethnographic writing to address and unsettle each metaphor. He adopts a narrative-reflective-analytical approach conventional to reflective writing in social work for the first metaphor: 'The Invisibility of Poverty'. Next, a poetic approach is taken in relation to 'The Elephant in the Room'; and finally, a post humanist approach is applied to 'The Wallpaper of Practice'. Hardy explains how the writing was inspired by a postgraduate course 'Autoethnography in the Social Sciences', where each week, students were given 15 minutes to write in response to a prompt. I know our Associate Editor, Kirsty Oehlers (who is cited in the article) is doing something similar through the creative writing prompts at <https://www.nycmidnight.com/>.

The next two articles, both published Online First in 2023, are focused on the use of text-based vignettes in research. The first is by Katrin Bain from London Metropolitan University, UK. and the second by Hannah Kia – who cites the article by Bain - based at the University of British Columbia in Canada. In her article, Bain provides clear guidelines on how to design a vignette, and discusses the uses, benefits, and limitations of written vignettes as part of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with professionals. The article covers all the parts of vignette use, including the choice of scenario, characteristics of the protagonist, and the type of vignette. A comprehensive review of literature where vignettes have been used is provided throughout the article; thus, it is a particularly helpful resource. Bain provides a working example of her own vignette focused on how parents who are involved with Children's Services are represented by social workers. In her article, Kia considers 'the promise of incorporating text-based vignettes to develop empirical social work literature that is rooted in the voices of marginalized service users'. She illustrates her discussion by using an exemplar from a study where she interviewed 20 transgender and gender diverse people and 10 social workers. Kia shows how a Community Advisory Board shaped the development of the case vignette – and the full vignette is provided as Supplementary material. These articles by Bain and Kia both provide a thorough grounding in the use of vignettes and make an excellent resource for educators and researchers alike.

The final article in the issue is on the innovative topic of the social work object. Authors Soraya Espinoza Moraga, Ramón Vivanco Muñoz, Irene Ibacache Calderón, all based at Los Lagos University in Chile and Mark Doel, based at Sheffield Hallam University, UK, consider the possibility of expressing the contested nature of social work via objects and their stories. I knew that Mark Doel had curated an online Exhibition of Social Work (socialworkin40objects.com), but I wasn't aware of a recently established sister Latin American Spanish language Collection (40objetos.ulagos.cl/galeria). The authors analyse and compare the two Collections and devise three categories of object/story: practical, symbolic, and totemic (defined on p.7 of the article). It was fascinating to read about eight of the objects/ stories in the Collections, including a memory jar, Un puente (A bridge), and Olla (Communal pot).

I hope you enjoy reading the articles in the issue as much as I have.