

QSW 25(1) In this Issue - articles

Articles

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Welcome to this first issue of 2026! First of all, I wish to welcome Kirsty Oehlers as our new co-Editor-in Chief, working alongside me and Lissette Piedra. Kirsty was one of the first contributors to our New Voices section (Oehlers, 2016) and Kirsty has been leading on this section since she joined the Editorial Board as Associate Editor (see Oehlers, 2023). We are delighted that Kirsty has agreed to become an Editor-in-Chief. Her most recent article was one of the standout pieces we published last year (Oehlers, 2025). You will have read Kirsty's first Editorial as co-Editor which opens this issue in which she encourages other practitioner-social workers to engage in research. In the Editorial, Kirsty provides an invaluable overview of creative and innovative work published in the journal. I encourage both those new to research and those looking to take a more creative approach to research to check out the rich resources Kirsty highlights in her piece. Three New Voices pieces are included in this issue, which Kirsty introduced above.

Moving to the articles contained in the issue, we start with Louise Oliver and Lee-Ann Fenge's co-authored article titled, *'Don't tell anyone anything': How do family secrets influence child-to-parent violence and abuse?* Both authors are based at Bournemouth University in the UK. This is a fascinating article which focuses on secrets and secrecy within families where there is Child-To-Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA). The research was conducted with two families experiencing CPVA using the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method. The latter approach is helpfully detailed in the Method section. The authors found that topic avoidance created a 'spiral of secrecy and abuse' within the whole family system (depicted in Diagram 1). While the use of secret-holding and secrecy appeared to be used to avoid conflict within the participating families, paradoxically, it tended to lead to more family violence and abuse, including CPVA. The authors conclude by providing guidance to practitioners engaged in working with families experiencing CPVA.

The following article is by Amy Rose Bromley, Carmela Bastian and Sarah Wendt, all based at Universities in Australia. The authors discuss how the use of co-design can facilitate collaboration at the intersection of statutory child protection and domestic and family violence services (DFV). The importance of an Advisory Group of senior staff members from the collaborating services who

guided and provided accountability to the project was notable. Two sets of co-design workshops were facilitated where two collaborative service prototypes were developed, each prototype consisting of three three-hour workshops. The workshops provided practitioners with a safe space to purposefully co-create, validate, and strengthen collaborative practice. Not surprisingly, Power was identified as a dominant theme; critical in collaboration between statutory child protection and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The study shows that more sustainable and contextually relevant solutions can be developed between statutory services and DFV services. The next article in the issue is co-authored by Amélie Couvrette, Nadine Lanctôt and Chloé Turpin, who are based at two universities in Canada. Their study is focused on how young, single, vulnerable mothers residing in affordable social housing in Quebec develop 'self-concept clarity'; namely, how they define their personal sense of self outside the framework of motherhood. The authors found three senses of self were described by these young women: 'an undefined sense of self, which is shaped by their transition to motherhood and the adverse events they experienced, a negatively impacted and fragile sense of self, and a sense of self that was intended to be resilient but was still under construction'.

We now move to two articles by Irene de Haan and Ian Hyslop, based at University of Auckland, New Zealand, the first co-authored by Jessica Steele, from the same institution. In their article, *Recognising child protection social workers' shifting professional identity after becoming a parent: An insider perspective*, the three authors discuss their findings after undertaking interviews with 10 social workers who became parents while working in child protection roles. The study was motivated by the personal experience of first author, Jessica, a child protection social worker, a mother and a researcher, who was supervised by Irene and Ian. Themes included an unexpected shift in professional persona, incorporating destabilised confidence together with heightened empathy, and a sense of incongruence between agency rhetoric and practice realities. Interestingly, all ten interviewees went on to leave the field of child protection practice.

In the second article, Ian and Irene are joined by co-author, Tian Tian, a PhD student from China, studying in New Zealand at the University of Auckland. This article, *Drawing out the relationship: An art-informed study of collaboration between social workers and other professionals in the child protection multi-disciplinary process*, is based on interviews and drawings by central Auckland child protection services, including social workers, doctors, nurses, police officers, and counsellors. Echoing the article by Bromley, Bastian and Wendt (above), the study focused on the collaboration between child protection social workers and other multidisciplinary professionals. Following an individual in-depth interview, the practitioners were asked: 'Please draw a picture that illustrates how you collaborate with other professionals in child protection work.' Four key themes were

identified: The Value of Child and Family-Centred Collaboration, Challenges in Collaboration, Complexities within Collaboration and Health Professional Specificity in Collaboration. In the findings section, each theme is illustrated with several drawings, adding richness and depth to the discussion.

The penultimate article in this issue, *Embodying place: Embodied geographic methods as a method-in-development*, has a focus on embodied geographic methods and is written with the aim of offering social workers a way to understand the relationships between people and place. USA based researchers, Greer A Hamilton, Josh Lown and Danielle Maude Littman, share their working definition of embodied geographic methods, which concludes: 'embodied geographic methods explore the relationship between one's physical and psychological body, their social environment, and the power dynamics that exist between them'. The authors provide case examples from their own studies using Photo elicitation, Photovoice, Oral history, Mapping interviews plus geographic information systems (GIS), and Geographic interviews. These examples are all accompanied by images and together form an excellent resource.

The first issue of 2026 ends with another useful resource for researchers, providing examples of how young people were engaged in research as part of the Canadian Digital Divide study. The study by Shelly Ben-David, Sara Kolomejac, Corinne Tallon, Mikaela Basile, Gurvaan Mann, Julia Gray, Rory Higgs, Yurou Zhao, and Skye Barbic focused on young people's decision-making in accessing digital mental health technologies. Young people were either participants in the Digital Divide study, acted as Youth subject matter experts as part of the project steering committee, or were Youth research assistants. The latter, for example, conducted the virtual qualitative interviews, were involved in transcribing and coding the interviews, and co-developed accessible presentations for key stakeholders. The research team included social work graduate research assistant coaches that provided research coaching and mentorship to the young researchers throughout the study, and this was a powerful youth engagement tool.

We hope you enjoyed this issue. We are currently putting together our Special Issue on *Domestic Violence and Abuse Across the Life Course: Considerations for Practice and Research*, Co-Edited by Drs. Lisa Young Larance, Patricia Mackey, and Kimberly Detjen. This contains brilliant contributions from early career MA and PhD students alongside those from more established colleagues and will be published as a double issue. It will be a highlight of the year.

References

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