At the time of writing, our editorial collective, like all Aotearoa New Zealand residents, are under the Level Four shutdown, and so confined at home with our immediate housemates/family. We have been reflecting on the global situation we find ourselves in. The implications for work, for higher education, for our families and communities are immense. We share some of our initial thoughts.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is not just a public health crisis; it's an enormous social and economic crisis. Across the world, neoliberal governments are in disarray realising that business as usual will not get our nations and regions out of this mess. The market offers no solutions to a global pandemic. In fact, it makes matters worse. It makes matters worse because decades of neoliberal ideology, dismantling of public services and the marketisation of everything have ripped apart the health and social safety net. Across the world, public health and social services are discovering they do not have the capacity to respond to the pandemic, nor are they likely to have the capability to meet the fallout from the economic maelstrom brewing as a consequence of the lockdowns.

Curiously, many governments have reluctantly rediscovered the value of public services, of social planning and of direct interventions to support incomes. Seemingly radical ideas like universal basic income, free accessible health care for all and government investment in public works are back on the agenda.

We really are in new times. Yet there is a high degree of unpredictability about where we go from here, and there are real dangers ahead. Some commentators argue that there can be no return to normal because normal was the problem; others point to the inherent dangers in a new authoritarianism emboldened by the use of emergency powers. There is also a paradox presented by cleaner air as air-travel and the global production of consumer goods are temporarily halted. We know that boundless production and consumption fuelled by private profit and the associated intensification of inequality are not sustainable; but will nations have the courage to confront this or will we resume the race to self-destruction as soon as we are able?

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, at the edge of the world, we may count our blessings. In comparison with others, we seem to have a government that listens to health experts and appears to be taking steps to shield the population from the consequences of the economic fallout of COVID-19. However, as responses to the crisis evolve, we must maintain a strong critical perspective on government actions, both here and abroad.

To date, the primary focus of critical commentators has been on health services and that is as it should be. Nonetheless, as we move forward, we must also monitor and highlight the impact on social service agencies, social workers and service users. We must seize the opportunity to highlight the social consequences of the pandemic; and, in these new times, we must assert the need for new ways of forging social solidarity—ways of renewing the social contract between citizens and the state.

This first issue of 2020 includes articles of broad interest across the profession and

reflects again the importance of social work research in sustaining our knowledge and sharing our insights into social phenomena, including the development of the profession itself.

First up in this issue, David Betts notes that sexual and gender minorities continue to face social stigma and discrimination in countries where progressive legislation has been designed to support their wellbeing and social inclusion. In "'Civil rights? Yeah, right!': Reflections on legislative changes from older sexual and gender minorities in Aotearoa New Zealand", Betts reports on a qualitative study that explored the reflections of older sexual and gender minorities via semi-structured interviews in multiple locations across Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings of this study indicated that progressive legislation and social policy have not protected older sexual and gender minorities from social stigma and bias. While study participants identified an improvement in perceptions of safety and security, shifts and changes in social attitudes were significantly slower. With a growing number of older adults who identify as sexual and gender minorities in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is important that social workers promote a critical perspective rather than relying on legislation as the sole benchmark for social change. Betts makes a case for social workers to become active advocates promoting a critical awareness.

Kate Burry, Natalie Thorburn, and Ang Jury, in their provocative article, "'I had no control over my body': Women's experiences of reproductive coercion in Aotearoa New Zealand", present a survey plus in-depth interviews of New Zealand women about their experiences of reproductive coercion. Often under-researched, reproductive coercion refers to an element of intimate partner violence that seeks to limit women's reproductive rights, including controlling every aspect of women's reproductive autonomy. Amongst their respondents they found high rates of women who had

experienced controlled or limited access to contraception, contraceptive sabotage, and pregnancy coercion, including being prevented from accessing an abortion, or attempts to induce miscarriage. This coercion, often invisible, is a key element in the repertoire of controlling and coercive behaviour directed at women, and this survey describes what it consists of in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, and situates it in reference to three temporal phases of coercion (Moore, Frohwirth, & Miller, 2010). These three phases are: participants' experiences of reproductive coercion before sexual intercourse; during sexual intercourse; and post-conception. More attention to reproductive coercion and its damaging effects on women's reproductive rights is needed in order to respond to it within fertility, family planning and other services aimed at supporting women's reproductive health.

In "Where do we go from here? Ongoing colonialism from Attachment Theory", Peter Choate, Brandy CrazyBull, Saaami inihkaakii (Head Dress Singing Woman), Desi Lindstrom, Ninna Pita (Eagle Man), and Gabrielle Lindstrom, Tsapinaki challenge the current interpretation of Attachment Theory which favours the placement of Indigenous children in non-Indigenous homes. This topic is explored against the consideration of the history and on-going practices of assimilation of Indigenous children within the child intervention and justice systems. The authors state their goal is to stimulate discussion and the development of culturally appropriate models and practices which can articulate the complex and multiple attachments formed by an Indigenous people raised in Indigenous communities— standing in contrast to the popular Western and Eurocentric view of parenting through dyadic attachment derived from Attachment Theory. The article draws on a review of attachment literature examining key questions of cross-cultural applicability validity in relation to Indigenous populations. Consultations were held with Elders from the Blackfoot Confederacy of

Alberta as part of the *Nistawatsiman* project. Data were gathered in a project relating to AT and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The authors note that *Cultural* Attachment Theory is emerging as preferable in Indigenous contexts rather than traditional Attachment Theory which they frame as likely to perpetuate colonial and assimilative understandings of family, parenting and the place of culture. Finally, they note that it is not for the eurocentric population to find the solutions but to support Indigenous researchers and "knowledge keepers to begin exploring the stories and traditions of 'attachment' and how that might be defined".

The ongoing professionalisation of social work is the focus of the article, "Disrupting the grassroots narrative of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand" by Sonya Hunt, Barbara Staniforth and Liz Beddoe. Drawing on the voices of people who were historically "close to the action" of this movement, who were engaged and active in the debates, the authors offer a collection of voices arranged around political, practice, and cultural themes over time.

This article presents a useful chronological account of social work registration in Aotearoa New Zealand which began in the mid-1960s. More importantly, however, it offers a rich story of the tensions and power discourses apparent in the social work community as the movement evolved. The identity of social work as a grassroots profession with a strong social justice mandate sits in tension alongside the growing push to be recognised as a profession and to address issues of public safety. This debate challenged (and continues to challenge) the profession to agree on what it stands for, who should call themselves social workers and how they should be educated. The research in this article highlights the genuine fears of elitism, continuing colonisation and inherent racism as a result of the proposed registration legislation. It outlines the various

government agendas, especially related to child protection social work and the impact this has had on what it means to be a social worker in this country.

The publication of this research is timely given the current work of the Social Workers Registration Board which is responding to new mandatory registration legislation— this is seen by many as the final step in the professionalisation project. This article provides valuable context for what should be a continuing debate and presents points of reflection based on the insights of those who have engaged historically in the movement. The authors challenge us to recall, and include in our analysis, the pivotal role professionalisation has played in changing the nature of social work, to assume responsibility for continuing our influence of this new legislative environment and to take active ownership of who we are and what we do.

In "Pressure drop: Securitising and de-securitising safeguarding", Dave McKendrick (Scotland) and Jo Finch (England) explore the increasing role of social work in managing risks associated with certain sections of the population— social work's muscular turn. The authors draw on securitisation theory, more commonly associated with the study of international relations, to explore the way in which existential threats are constructed in contemporary society. There is a focus on child protection practice in England, although the analysis is relevant to comparable societies. It is argued that securitised approaches to safeguarding focus on eliminating the threat posed by dangerous others rather than considering the social context which impacts upon the experience of people who are categorised as risky. This reactive practice focus is said to run contrary to the empowering and liberating aspirations of social work, locating it within the repressive apparatus of the neoliberal state. In relation to insight developed from securitisation theory, strategies for the de-securitisation of social work are explored.

In a highly topical article, given that most social workers are currently working remotely with services users, teams and colleagues, Danielle Davidson notes that the literature on telephone counselling suggests that physical invisibility, coupled with anonymity and the immediacy of service provision are the defining features of telephone counselling. However, in "Heard but not seen: Exploring youth counsellors' experiences of telephone counselling", Davidson notes that little research has explored how telephone counsellors experience these features in any real depth. The study reported here reports on data collected in qualitative, semi-structured interviews with practitioners at a youth helpline in Aotearoa New Zealand. Davidson reports that counsellors' experiences of telephone counselling appear to be "more nuanced than traditionally understood". While there were challenges in providing telephone counselling, such as hoaxes and abusive calls, practitioners also experienced the benefits of relaxed and supportive work environments and supervision. Management practices, such as good access to supervision, assisted practitioners to manage the impact of telephone-based work with clients.

Finally, in a viewpoint article by Joanna Appleby we are encouraged, indeed challenged, to consider ways in which we as social workers, can effect systemic change in our organisations or practice spheres. Appleby draws on her own experiences in the field of youth forensics and uses the example of the establishment of the first youth forensic workforce forum in Aotearoa New Zealand. She begins the article by discussing the current youth forensic context and social work's position within this domain. She recognises that this can be a challenging environment for social workers who wish to see long-lasting change in young people but may feel significantly constrained by the political and organisational infrastructure. Appleby acknowledges some of the deficits that currently exist then moves on to explain how she sought to influence the experiences of young people engaged in youth forensic services. The example of the establishment of a workforce forum, with the aim of connecting practitioners across disciplines for the betterment of the young people they are working with could be translated into many fields where social workers are positioned. Appleby reminds us that we can influence, advocate, challenge and initiate change to more effectively serve those we work with and that this is actually part of our responsibilities as social workers.

Reference

Moore, A. M., Frohwirth, L., & Miller, E. (2010). Male reproductive control of women who have experienced intimate partner violence in the United States. *Social Science & Medicine, 70*(11), 1737–1744.

Liz Beddoe and **Neil Ballantyne**