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**Publication:****Migration and Social Work: Approaches, Visions and Challenges.**

Edited by Emilio Jose Gomez-Ciriano, Elena Cabiati and Sofia Dedotsi. 2023 Bristol: Policy Press

**References:**

Dennler, K.T (2018) 'Re/Making Immigration Policy through Practice. How Social Workers Influence What It Means to Be a Refused Asylum Seeker' in *Migration and Society: Advances in Research 1* (2018): 82–95

Badenoch, B. (2020) *The Heart of Trauma* London W.W. Norton & Co.

**Text of the review:**

I acknowledge the children and adults who, having experienced hostility around immigration, chose to share their stories. In doing so they enabled the authors to amplify their voices and offer sharp focus on the issues surrounding refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (RASM). The structure and readability of the book makes much of the text accessible, enabling the reader to understand the need for solidarity with people affected by borders.

Strong ethics are demonstrated in each chapter, with a consistent, hopeful message that social workers can make a difference in how they manage individual case work and by challenging oppressive, hostile practices, harmful organisational decision making and inhumane application of policies. This book makes it clear that social workers are positioned to see and understand what is happening to RASM through a unique lens. Communicating this perspective could change the way migrants are perceived and treated, but especially, the authors assert, if we use research in a way that informs social work education, direct practice, policies, and politics. Presented as a collection of 11 essays the book offers strong practice and research evidence to aid understanding and clarity regarding why people migrate, for instance poverty, war, and persecution.

The authors call for our profession to contribute towards the creation of migration policies, to ensure the vision, of social work based on empathy and knowledge, is present. Alongside policy makers, social work educators have the potential to shift attitudes, inform teaching and include research in this area. This can be achieved by teaching authentic knowledge about how migration policy works, promoting intercultural sensitivity and critical thinking. Including people with embodied experience, in education helps to avoid tokenism. The reader is reminded that social work is a rights-based profession and that collectively we will not tolerate human rights abuses.

Human beings can experience the same emotions and neurological (brain) activity when we observe others, especially when we see people being harmed, (Badenoch, 2020). Social workers experience this frequently without always being able to find solutions or repair for RASM, especially in reception and immigration centres (RICs). Being unable to create emotional/neurological repair, increases the risk of burnout and vicarious trauma for professionals, more so perhaps for social workers who have experience of forced migration. Powerful connections were made between concentration camps and RICs as political sites for dehumanising by highlighting the inherent problems, of mental and physical ill-health, poor living conditions, human rights abuses, and insufficient resources. The point has been made before, but it is worth repeating; all people inherently hold rights, we must avoid viewing RASM through the lens of their immigration status and focus instead on their needs and our shared humanity (Dennler, 2018).

The background of hostile political discourse towards RASM, being reflected in the field of social work, is addressed sensitively. Alternative narratives are suggested of how social workers can contribute to increased consciousness of the hidden complexities and unconscious dynamics of racist attitudes. In addition, clear research and practice evidence helps to deepen understanding and awareness of anti-oppressive practice. Each chapter feeds into broader analysis regarding the inherent worth of RASM and the need to protect their human rights; the need for social work practitioners to increase confidence, skills, and knowledge and for social work educators to better prepare students for direct practice. The overarching message is clear; social work practice and education is better when we include research and align with an attitude of solidarity.

In relation to who controls access to resources and how this is maintained, more history regarding hostile attitudes and policies could have been provided. There may have been a decision not to address issues of coloniality, the creation of dominant forces, or capitalism but historical context can be a helpful aid. This may leave a gap for a second book; in the meantime, important ground has been covered and this book is a must for every library. (Wordcount 645)

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