

## Reviews

*Social Work under pressure*  
*How to overcome Stress, Fatigue and Burnout in the workplace*  
Kate Van Heughten  
London, Jessica Kingsley, 2011, 224pp  
ISBN 9781849051163 (pbk) £19.99

Managing stress within social work is a topical issue. In recent years, there has been debate within social work practice and education about 'burn out' particularly in front line social work. In the UK, this has led to issues with recruitment and retention. The work of the Social Work Reform Board in England has highlighted the need for social workers to be supported on the front line – particularly in relation to social workers who are newly qualified (DCSF 2009). A resource discussing models of workplace stress and strategies to deal with this is therefore a useful text at the current time. Chapters 1 to 3 outline how to identify stress and offer ways of identifying when stress is becoming unmanageable. It is also helpful that the book is written in relation to social work practice in New Zealand and covers how to work with stress and trauma in relation to community disasters and emergency events (Chapter 5).

As the author indicates, resources relating to how social workers deal with both potential and actual violence and aggression have been fairly limited. This also relates to how social workers need support in managing anxiety and stress relating to their fears as well as actual incidents where violence or aggression occurs. The author makes a valuable point that training for newly qualified workers (as well as for student social workers) needs to be given in relation to coping with potential and actual violence and aggression. Chapters 6 and 7 outline the issues in relation to both violence from service users and in dealing with bullying or harassment in the workplace. The latter is a concerning issue within health and social care generally and Chapter 7 highlights research and ways of working in this area. The techniques and tips about stress management are helpful and provide practical examples that can be used within social work education and in the workplace. This is certainly needed within social work education and will prove useful as part of professional development teaching both on pre and post qualifying social work courses. Chapters 8 and 9 detail the difficulties that can result for social workers when stress becomes overwhelming and Chapter 9 offers useful discussion about how to achieve a healthy work/life balance.

What would have enhanced the book further is perhaps more discussion of how reflection can support how social work students and practitioners manage stress. Reflection can assist

a critical incident analysis of managing stress and dealing with violence and aggression. Students and practitioners can be taught about the critical thinking skills that accompany this analysis. For example an understanding of emotional intelligence theory and how this can relate to social workers developing emotional resilience would have enhanced the analysis and could have been linked to the practical tips and techniques. Morrison's work on emotional intelligence highlights the link between intelligence and competence and how social workers need to develop skills in this area (Morrison 2007). Chapters 8 and 9 discuss some of the issues relevant to balancing personal and professional identity, but some relationship to organisational theory and managing identity would have developed this further. For example, in terms of balancing personal values and beliefs with professional responsibilities and role.

Similarly, Chapter 7 concerning bullying and harassment could have been linked to a discussion about the complexities for social workers in working in bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations. This could have drawn on the literature relating to social work practice and organisational theory (see for example, Hughes and Wearing 2007). There are certainly tensions for social workers in managing the personal stresses of working with complex and unpredictable situations with the demands of their organisational responsibilities. This is further complicated by working within workplace cultures where support or supervision may be difficult to obtain at times. Chapter 7 talks about how social workers can cope with these kinds of situations.

This text is a valuable edition to resources for educators and practitioners about the impact of stress, anxiety and burnout on social workers. The text will have an international appeal as many of the issues relating to stress and stress management will be common to social workers working in a range of settings and countries. It will assist teaching and training in an area of social work practice which has been neglected until recently within the literature. It could be used at various levels within training and post qualifying practice which will make it a useful resource to assist training and development as part of the Professional Capabilities Framework in England

## References

- DCSF (2009) Building a safe, confident future; the final report of the Social Work Task Force: November 2009
- Hughes, M and Wearing, M (2007) *Organisations and Management in Social Work*, London, Sage
- Morrison, T (2007) 'Emotional Intelligence, Emotion and Social Work: Context, Characteristics, Complications and Contribution', *British Journal of Social Work* (2007) 37, 245-263

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Social Work in a Globalizing World,

*Lena Dominelli*

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Dominelli's inimitable style carries an urgency and clarion call to arms for a reinvigorated and reconfigured social work to respond to the contemporary neo-liberal, global situation. The book's opening line argues 'the world is becoming increasingly complex as the spread of hitherto unknown diseases, disasters both (hu)man-made and natural, poverty, and migratory movements of people pose new challenges for social workers' (p.1). There is a need for a response of emancipatory social work that is 'person centred, empowering, and critical of power structures and systems of resource distribution that undermine the well-being of many' (p.2).

Chapter Two traces the development of the social work profession located in a context of global exchanges and myriad actors to excavate the terrain of the 'social'. She provides a topography of 'local-specific practice' rather than the appropriated term of 'indigenous'. The history and narrative is charted through philanthropic and charitable social work, the emerging welfare state and a re-framing of entitlement based welfare to provide an international context for the historical emergence of social work. From here, the terrain of the 'social' is mapped out in Chapter Three, including the contemporary social ills of global warming security, industrialisation, risk and social work's global re-ordering. She sees the shift from the UK paradigm of three arms of social work practice (casework, group work, and community work) to the bureaucratic competency based practice, dominated by procedures, business language and risk assessment.

Chapter Four examines the process of professionalising social work and the different locality-specific trajectories of methods and intervention that it has taken. She concludes that 'social workers need to develop further their research base and claim in definitive terms the terrain that they think appropriately belongs to the profession' (p.74). Chapter Five explores the difficulties of privatisation and personalisation, and rights and citizen based welfare provision, to rethink a globalized notion of citizenship.

Chapter Six changes direction and focuses on macro-level issues (human, social and environmental degradation) and a holistic practice underpinned by citizenship, human rights, and social justice to challenge these problems. Chapter Seven considers the implications for practice of wider developments in the social, geological and economic spheres at the points where the local and the global intersect. The two edged sword of positive and negative impacts of globalization are assessed in relation to service delivery, intensification of crises, labour mobility, and case-studies of the internationalization of social problems and child protection issues.

As with all of Dominelli's work there is much to commend and much to debate and discuss. The detail of discussion is informative although given the breadth of coverage there is a sense of a potential superficiality in some of considerations. For example, globalisation, the 'social', practice, theory, service user agendas and the addition of

research all provide areas for closer and more sustained examination. Similarly, there is a reinstatement of binary opposites in thinking of the local and global that could be helpfully reconsidered to fully recognise the heterogeneity, value and beauty of human diversity. There are Dominelli's bold and ambitious assertions such as 'perhaps it is now time for the world to plan for an international currency that all can share' (p.171). Finally, the familiar language (contested, movement, heterogeneity, struggle, chequered, contested, disputed terrain and porous boundaries) echoes much reflection on social work for meaningful, engaged and emancipatory activity.

The positing of the theory and practice nexus neglects adequate consideration of the role of research mediating between these poles. The generative and emancipatory potential for social workers as consumers and producers of research to inform practice and reflect on theory warrants inclusion. Similarly, Dominelli is caught in the binary oppositions between theory and practice, between knowledge and action, and between resources and reflexivity although is fully aware of the need for destabilising and decentering tendencies.

The book concludes with a call for a 'politics of practice' that involve the 3Rs of recognition (of the strengths of people), representation (of having voices heard) and redistribution of resources (equitable distribution).

The book is brimming with interesting and timely discussion pieces around: the search for egalitarian educational processes, establishing 'circle of resistance', 'indigenization', 'problematizing the "West"', the challenges of international social work, holistic interventions, dialogue between the local and global portable human rights for global citizenship and moving social work in new directions 'in advocating a world that is rooted in equality, human rights and all inclusive forms of citizenship'. The 'politics of practice' includes exploring commonalities and differences, learning from diversity, including the marginalised, lobbying for change, and enhancing training for a meaningful social activity that can make the world a better place.

The convincing polemic and rousing call to arms is seductive, timely and necessary and Dominelli arrives at well-argued and supported conclusions. Social Work is a profession in flux in a constantly evolving and unfinished process but unified temporally by citizenship, human rights, social justice and responding to human need. She concludes by 'exploring those elements of theory and practice that can be developed' to remake social work for the new millennium.

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