

In compiling this Special Issue we have felt an enormous sense of privilege and responsibility both to curate some of Andrew's most significant publications and to place them in conversation with the heartfelt written appreciations we gathered from colleagues and friends of Andrew. These appreciations were shared at an event in July 2024, held at the Tavistock Centre, to remember Andrew. The challenge for us has been how we convey Andrew's invaluable contribution to the social work discipline and profession over forty plus years, including people's deeply felt appreciations of him.

In January 2024 we met as the three editors of this Special Issue to think about Andrew and discussed at length how we might make sense of and, most importantly, do justice to his writing and likely legacy. Our shared connection to Andrew arose out each of us having been colleagues with him at the Tavistock Centre. We talked about how he so often managed to capture the *zeitgeist*, how the body of his work acted like a chronology of developments over a long period of time in social policy and social work practice. His many publications are an archive of this chronological journey. We talked about the inventive nature of his thinking; how he was able to provide an overview, the meta position, whilst offering very relatable, 'on the ground' examples; how he used engaging and thought-provoking titles to involve the reader. Amber Morgan in her appreciative piece describes this spirit in her appreciation of Andrew's commitment to his work in family therapy workshops:

Andrew really seemed to embody a faith in the approach, in the idea that not holding back, bringing what comes to mind, thrashing out disagreements, whilst challenging, can lead to creative thinking and good things.

He de-mystified complex ideas, without dumbing them down; he synthesised, whilst simultaneously disrupting. Yesim Deveci, wrote her appreciation in the form of a letter to Andrew, and vividly described her own experience of this aspect of Andrew's personality:

Over the years you have repeatedly encouraged me to be bold; to not merely re-arrange the deck chairs but to throw them overboard, suggest new furniture, even sit on the floor. In doing this you have enabled me to develop my own principles for practice and research; core values of kindness, respect and justice.

Andrew's writing is a form of creativity. There is a timelessness to many of the concepts that he worked with, and we found our thoughts resonating with an aspect of Andrew's personal life that we were unaware of. We learnt from David Baker that as a school pupil and young adult Andrew had taken a passionate interest in archaeology. Like an archaeologist, Andrew showed a 'willingness to look beneath the surface', a phrase that you will find recurs throughout this editorial, and indeed might be considered a fitting epitaph for Andrew. This combination of foundational, but not always visible, elements is characteristic of all Andrew's work.

After much careful deliberation our editorial approach was informed by a collective wish to reflect the development of Andrew's thinking and writing over his career and to structure this around the three key themes that in our opinion run through the body of his work: child care social work practice and research; anti-racism and social justice; social policy and politics. To this end we have selected six papers. As we reflect in chronological order on each of these papers and the key issues they surface, we have interwoven our commentary with excerpts from the personal appreciations of Andrew.

PAPER ONE: Thinking the unthinkable: 'white liberal' defences against understanding in anti-racist training (1997)

From the point of his arrival at the Tavistock Centre Andrew was active in opening up conversations about race and committed to promoting anti-racist practice. Agnes Bryan in her appreciation wrote of Andrew's '*political tenacity and foresight*'. Together they became a formidable team promoting the inclusion of Black and Global Majority colleagues and students within the Tavistock Centre. Andrew's commitment to anti-racist practice was set within a wider context of concern for social justice and was promoted by his ability, as expressed by Harry Ferguson, to:

'critique inequalities' and excavate 'what's happening below the surface, in the unconscious, what is not being thought about and bringing the range of emotions, unbearable feelings, irrational thoughts and patterns to mind.... [in a] curious, playful, analytical spirit'.

In this paper Andrew brings his deep commitment to anti-racist practice together with his equally deep expertise - learnt from experience – in psychoanalytic understanding of group process. The paper showcases a pedagogic initiative to help students engage in experiential learning about racism and anti-racist practice through a group relations event. The design of the event is bold and this paper highlights Andrew's sophisticated awareness of the conscious and unconscious processes that operate in contexts that are exploring issue of race. It is a typical

example of Andrew's fearlessness to enter difficult territory and willingness to work with what emerges, as the excerpt below illustrates:

'the (genuine) surface harmony of group relations, conceals deep occurrence of racialised identification and meaning which the white student majority have protected themselves from knowing about' (p. 131)

As acknowledged his ability to see and work with what lies 'beneath the surface' was an extraordinary skill that Andrew demonstrated in a wide range of contexts. In the paper he acknowledges how, through the group relations exercise, White students became aware of their '*not hitherto suspected*' connection to racism:

...it is the beginning of the process of exploration of oneself as a racially situated subject. But, and this is perhaps the crux of the matter, it is the capacity to think about the anxiety, which the reality internal and external of racism arouses, which is the source of hope and change.

Sharna Jolly described in her appreciation of Andrew how he '*seemed to believe in me before I could believe in myself. He told me not what I wanted to hear but what I needed to hear at any one time.*' In many respects Andrew was remarkably ahead of his time and took up a position of 'allyship' with Black and Global Majority colleagues, well before this term had been introduced more widely into anti-racist conversations and spaces.

PAPER TWO: Andrew Cooper (2002) Keeping our heads: Preserving therapeutic values in a time of change, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 16:1, 7-13, DOI: 10.1080/02650530220134700. Published online 2010.

This second paper was written by Andrew for the 'Therapeutic Social Work Today' conference, held at the Tavistock Clinic in 2001. Andrew addresses therapeutic social work, or what we might think of as clinical, social casework, and how it stood at that time in relation to political and ideological debates facing the profession. He recalls the 1970s and the painful divide which opened up between radical social work and therapeutic social work. He argues that therapeutic social work in fact never stopped engaging in political debate, despite its decriers and the vehemence with which 'the therapeutic' was viewed at the time. As Wuraola Bolaji affirmed, '*he exemplified social work values, including social justice, integrity, dignity, and fostering human relationships.*' Andrew sets out how growing understanding of the tensions, which arise between intra-psychic, social, systemic and political spheres, has productively emerged from the efforts made by therapeutic social workers to reflect on its relationship with the state.

Of continuing contemporary resonance, is Andrew's exploration of how managerialism in social welfare had taken over from Left and Right politics, disciplining and ordering the nature of welfare state activity, driven by an unconscious 'fear that something is about to escape'. While Andrew acknowledges the many instances of serious institutional abuse contributing to the undermining of the professions, he argues that ever increasing rates of surveillance and discipline is not the answer. Social workers' skill in holding and working within the therapeutic space remains essential in containing and challenging dimensions of authority and power; thus, doing the work of managing risk and seeking truthfulness. Harry Ferguson picks up this point in his appreciation, recognising how Andrew's work considers:

... what is not being thought about and bringing the range of emotions, unbearable feelings, irrational thoughts and patterns to mind. All while remaining grounded in the social processes, power relations, ideologies and conditions that influence people's lives - a pioneer of the psychosocial approach.

The importance of this thinking continues to resonate in current times of global political uncertainty and upheaval, on the individual, interpersonal level as well as the wider social, political level.

Finally, in this paper Andrew writes on the indebtedness we hold to each other as social workers who supervise, educate and learn from each other, taking up therapeutic work where we show '*a readiness to become intimate with strangers*'. Amber Morgan recalls in her appreciative piece Andrew's aliveness to clinical practice and the creation of therapeutic space as she remembers his statement when faced with a 'tricky' case in family therapy, '*Let's get them in a room and see what happens; see if it can be worked with*'.

PAPER THREE: Andrew Cooper (2014) A Short Psychosocial History of British Child Abuse and Protection: Case Studies in Problems of Mourning in the Public Sphere, Journal of Social Work Practice, 28:3, 271-285, DOI: 10.1080/02650533.2014.927842.

At a time when we are still processing accounts of the torture and death of Sarah Sharif, Andrew's paper has much to tell us. Here he presents a close and critical analysis of four decades of moral panics in the field of child abuse and protection. He characterises the task of child protection practitioners as two-fold: explicitly to protect vulnerable children and prevent abuse, and implicitly to protect society from knowing about the true extent of child maltreatment and death. Andrew proposes that when the boundaries of official containment are breached, we respond with Public Inquiries as a means of settling contested areas. With respect to child death

the anxiety-filled problem is, he says, *'recurrently projected back into the public domain'*.

This paper demonstrates the thoughtful, analytic and politically alert qualities of Andrew's work, as channelled here on child protection. Andrew suggests that society's response to child maltreatment and murder illustrates our problem with handling mourning in the public sphere. Blame, retribution, the listing of missed opportunities are defences employed to prevent us from properly registering distress at the loss of a child. It is projective processes that serve to deny child murders keep happening and instead attribute this repetition to incompetent professionals who take their eye off the ball.

Andrew argues that, despite 50 child murders a year, international comparisons show the English child protection system does relatively well at protecting children and there have been many fewer child deaths in the last thirty years. But he underlines, that is not how it feels to professionals in this field who continue to teeter on the edge of collapse. Andrew acknowledges the value of Eileen Munro's systematic review of child protection (2011) and her sense that society must establish *'a realistic expectation of the professional's ability to predict the future and manage risk of harm to child and young people'* (p.13). Perhaps it is the case, Andrew proposes, that Inquiries and Reviews following specific child deaths and related crises are themselves an unrecognised attempt at public mourning in the event of otherwise unspeakable horrors.

Andrew's own engagement with policy was wide and impressive. For many years at the Tavistock he convened, with others, a Policy Seminar of which, to date, there have been sixty-six, each with a uniquely democratic format of specialist policy speakers and audience discussion. There were so many platforms to which Andrew contributed. As Gill Robinson notes:

...our paths had crossed on multiple previous occasions... Firstly, at the annual Psychoanalysis and the Public Sphere conferences in the 1990's and again at a GAPS' AGM in the late 1990's, and later at conferences convened by the SW Department at the Tavistock....Andrew was always bringing his sharp philosophical mind, psychoanalytical knowledge and training alongside his social work practitioner and educator identities, permitting a certain clarity of mind when it came to analysing contemporary health and welfare policy trends.

Phillip McGill offered a comment on how Andrew worked within his organisation:

'I came to appreciate his terrifically focussed thinking and the way that he did not hide his anger at some of what was happening but also was one of the first to come forward to try to help sort things out.'

Other appreciations particularly singled out Andrew's political astuteness. In their collective appreciation Anna Harvey, Amina Adan, Philip Archard and Louise Grant commented:

'His understanding of internal, emotional processes was also matched by his equally passionate engagement in issues of inequality, deprivation and difference. ... As colleagues, it is difficult to do justice to the significance of his passion, commitment and influence... Andrew relished the good story as a way of making sense of human experience, particularly about taboo and 'unthinkable' subjects, helping those of us struggling in lines of work like child protection to know that meaning could be made even in the most awful of circumstances.'

PAPER FOUR: Andrew Cooper (2016) A Good Death? Journal of Social Work Practice, 30:2, 121-127, DOI: 10.1080/02650533.2016.1168384

In this powerfully moving paper Andrew asks: how can the living relate to the dying? How can the dying relate to the living, and how can we create and maintain organisational systems to support this? In the UK the recent passage through Parliament of a bill to legalise assisted dying brings the themes addressed in this paper to urgent public attention. Looking at today's crisis in Social Care, and as Atul Gawande (2014) argues, 'assisted living is far harder than assisted death'. Yet, says Andrew, it is the terror of the loss of life that renders dying so hard for us all to bear. What is needed, he proposes, is that *'thoughtful and experienced professionals able to tolerate and think about intense emotional pain help those close to the dying person'*. Dying people 'fall from culture' (Seal 1998). Losing connections with networks and routine relationships, here described as *'the social tissue of our aliveness'*, means that *'social death'* may precede the death of the body. Remembering when his own father was dying, Andrew suggests the challenge, which few could meet, was in being able *'to summon the emotional resources to find a way to come closer to him'*.

This paper has prompted many appreciative comments and connects to what, as editors, we have termed 'Andrew's legacy' which we will return to. For John Simmonds this paper was at the heart of his appreciation:

'My first reading of Andrew's paper [A Good Death] was challenging – I had avoided many of the issues associated with loss – particularly the death of somebody I had a personal relationship with. The intensity of the emotional world

leading up to death and the idea of keeping that person in one's mind following their death seemed unbearable..... But Andrew articulates the significance of this in a life changing way as it was life changing for me.”

The paper resonated profoundly for David Baker who commented:

I admired his thoughtful paper ‘A Good Death’, not just because I’m 83, but for its skill in normalising understanding of an intrinsically difficult concept.

PAPER FIVE: Unpublished: Social Work Futures: A talk given at the launch of the Centre for Social Work Research Legacy Fund.

This short, unpublished paper was presented at the launch of the Centre for Social Work Practice Legacy Fund on 9th November 2021. Here, Andrew decided to focus on the climate emergency and his thoughts about how social workers’ reflective practice will have to expand in the face of new future challenges.

Andrew, as he often did, drew on a case example brought by a student to supervision, of an Afghan boy who had endured terrible hardship during his travel to the UK. Instead of being deflected and ‘over there’, the encounter with the young person was experienced close-up by the worker in the room as is the case many times over with a busy workload. Through reflective practice, we are invited ‘*to travel outwards into the experiences of others, to hear, understand and identify with these*’. Andrew stresses that such work is going to be needed more as the impact of climate change takes effect, displacement of populations around the world grows. Reflective spaces are needed, he argues, to engage beyond the bounds of the organisation, to consider wider social and political processes and their impact, allowing deeper emotional and moral engagement with central conflicts of our times.

Barry Richards in his appreciation writes of Andrew’s contribution to multidisciplinary thinking and psychosocial approaches to the study of ‘lived experience’, in a way that is relevant here. Andrew is helping us to consider the individual encounter with the Afghan boy, in its wider psychosocial (and ecological) context. Through this intellectual and emotional reflective work, both face-to-face social casework can be supported and given value, while wider social and political levels may be engaged and challenged, even where the solutions may be extremely difficult to achieve.

This merging of psychological and structural dimensions of everyday experience was a defining feature of Andrew’s work and he never shied away from the challenges that it could present. Jill Comfort vividly recalls in her appreciation her direct experience of Andrew’s fierce intellect and tenacity:

'Across the room he would be sat in that low slung armchair, photo of the 'Sky blues.' on his bookshelf and precious art on the wall. Chewing concepts and endless gum, taking on complexity with an expectation that it could be considered, and more than that, known, and even mastered. He created and developed thinking spaces.'

Who can forget the 'endless gum'!

PAPER SIX: Containment as a lived experience. ND

This paper is undated and, at the time of Andrew's death, was not quite finished as it had not been submitted for publication and was brought to our attention by Andrew's partner, Heather. It is an honour to share with the readers of this journal some of Andrew's most recent (and final) feelings, thoughts and experiences. It feels to us that this final paper in our selected collection epitomises what Andrew contributed to the social work discipline and profession over the course of his career. It engages with the core psychoanalytic concept of containment and, without oversimplifying it, he presents it in an accessible and applicable way that holds the reader's imagination. Andrew always worked to demystify psychoanalytic ideas and bring them into conversation with direct professional practice. His interventions were often made with a sharp sense of humour as Anna Harvey, Philip Archard, Amina Adan and Louise Grant recall:

Andrew had a wonderful sense of humour. He once began a theoretical seminar on Bion's notion of the container/contained with an example from real life. He explained how 'beta elements' and projections originated in the physical reality of the body and used an example of an episode of flatulence. He described the effect of this happening unexpectedly in a clinical group, and how contagious emotions and unspoken communications arising from the shock, embarrassment, and then ensuing suppressed hilarity could be understood in terms of alpha functioning, to make meaning of the poor person's misery and group's reaction. He explained that some kind words led to the group containing an intolerable experience. The movement to alpha functioning meant that the distress could be digested by the group, that is, could be managed and rendered tolerable.'

The paper concludes with a typically candid Andrew-like caution. It is possible to hear Andrew's physical voice echoing in these words:

In this paper, I have sought to both render the theory of containment more accessible, to live in it with examples of how it feels to provide containment, and to puncture what I sense is a creeping tendency towards idealization of the practice and the idea, that side steps the necessarily active, thinking element

required in the face of hostility and aggression that is bound up in every search for a container strong enough to withstand that attack.

Importantly Andrew did not simply write his own papers but co-authored a huge number of pieces over his career. Furthermore, as Judy Foster recalls Andrew, was rightly proud of the numerous papers his doctoral students went on to publish and 'the book' that Judy produced off her own thesis.

Some thoughts shared on Andrew Cooper's Legacy

'Andy has left an impressive legacy of contributions to cross-disciplinary working; we may have lost the analytical stimulus of his direct personal involvement, but others can continue to build upon the intellectual foundations he excavated.' David Baker

'I think of him as an artist, writer, parent, revolutionary; much fuller than academic or social work narrowness may afford him. ...all of us have become something other, something more through him.' Jane Herd

'Andrew's scepticism was for me a model of independent thought...it was a *constructive* scepticism, a negative always in the service of a positive, in the search for a better way of understanding something. It was an expression of his generally demanding approach to intellectual work...His high standards were combined with a strong open-mindedness and generosity which made him, by all accounts, a perceptive and supportive supervisor. I hope his legacy will be as large in the field of psychosocial studies as it is likely to be in social work.' Barry Richards

'On reflection I notice both the timeliness and timelessness of your work. An enduring conversation, which resonates beyond words and the borders of time. Always held in mind.' Yesim Deveci

'I gave a research lecture at Cardiff University recently. Part-way through I abandoned my presentation, inviting the group to join me at the front of the lecture theatre, using movement and discussion to help notice what might be happening between us. I later realised that this more fluid moment echoed a way I'd seen Andrew engage with a group at the Tavi. Inviting people in. Social work.' Dale Bartle

'Andrew's presence, over many years, felt like an assurance that almost no matter what, it was worth trying to think and persist. To many of us Andrew was a giant, for our times. I miss him and, thinking here about him, notice that there is a need to not

let that settle into something past, but to be an encouragement to find a similar mettle.’ Phillip McGill

‘In the weeks after Andrew’s death, I read again Andrew’s paper – A good death where he was thinking and writing about death and dying. It felt to me that he was hoping that a good death might include some confidence that one will be loved and held in the minds of others and remembered long after they have died. I think there is no doubt about that.’ Nicola O’Sullivan

‘We need many more minds like Andrew’s in social work. It’s not easy because it requires an openness to theory, ideas and academic learning, practice wisdom, a willingness to analyse one’s own internal life through psychotherapy, courage and compassion to get there. But Andrew has shown us the way.’ Harry Ferguson

‘Drawing on the work of Derrida on loss and mourning, Derrida ‘de-pathologises mourning and sees it as the opportunity for a continuing engagement with the legacy of the dead who remain within us and yet beyond us, and who look at us with a look that is not ours to do with what we will, but a look that is a call to responsibility’ (Kirby 2006). Responding to Derrida’s call to responsibility would seem to be a particularly fitting memorial to Andrew and one that can further enrich and comfort us all.’ Katharine Scanlan

To conclude...

Margaret Rustin commented at the event in July that it was no coincidence that Andrew was a member of the Adolescent Department at the Tavistock Centre. Andrew would not and could not be pinned down; he could be provocative but always in the interests of engaging more fully and deeply with an issue or an idea. Andrew was mercurial, simultaneously frustrating and fascinating. His presence and his thoughts are deeply missed but will live on in this Special Issue and in the lives of those people who had the privilege of knowing and being influenced by him.

Authors of Appreciative Reviews

Amina Adan, Philip Archard, David Baker, Dale Bartle, Wuraola Bolaji, Agnes Bryan, Jill Comfort, Yesim Deveci, Kirsty Ellis, Harry Ferguson, Judy Foster, Louise Grant, Anna Harvey, Jane Herd, Sharna Jolly, Amber Morgan Nicola O’Sullivan, Barry Richards, Gill Robinson, Katharine Scanlan, John Simmonds

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Helen Hingley-Jones

Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, Mental Health and Social Work
Department, Middlesex University, London, UK

Clare Parkinson

University of East London and the Tavistock NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

Gillian Ruch

Department of Social Work and Social Care, School of Education, University of
Sussex, Brighton, UK