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The *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* (JTTP) is a peer-reviewed, biannual, scholarly journal of contemplative cutting edge research and practice on subjects related to human social flourishing and peace.

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*JTTP* (<https://jtpp.uk>), bringing together peace practitioners and academics, fills an important transdisciplinary gap that exists in current academic literature.

*JTTP* endeavours to support scholarship that highlights

- the human potential for transformation,
- a holistic and collaborative approach to complex systems,
- the transdisciplinary nature of solutions to wicked social problems, and
- a shared sense of purpose in human transnational activism for positive change.

*JTTP* thus provides a dynamic forum for sharing information and experiences primarily catering to academics, and activists particularly in the disciplines of Peace and Conflict Studies, Political Science, International Relations, Human Rights, History, as well as professionals, policymakers, organisations, institutions and individuals who nurture a firm belief in peace and human rights.

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# Publisher's Greetings

6 February 2021

Dear All,

Greetings!

Wishing you all Happy and Prosperous New Year!

2020 will be remembered as a year with more challenges than opportunities, more questions than answers and more trials and tribulations than joy and gratification. Let's hope that 2021 will take us to a new era unfolding new opportunities.

With good wishes from you all, *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* (JTTPP), an initiative of Frontpage Publications Limited, UK, has stepped into the 3rd year.

In our endeavour to give voice to wide range of researchers, thinkers, and activists to explore radical responses to social conflict, war and injustice, JTTPP, with a transdisciplinary approach as opposed to simply interdisciplinary in nature, started its mission on 30 January 2019.

We are proud to have contributors from all over the world who significantly hold up their views and reviews regarding the topical issues, and readers from various strata of society, whose opinions matter. At every stage, you all stood by us to facilitate collaborative research and praxis for multi-dimensional realities of positive peace and reconciliation systems. Thank you so much for joining us towards nonviolent peaceful future, and I feel sure to get your patronage in our forthcoming accomplishments as well.

In our pursuit to make things even better than the best, I would look forward to your valuable comments. Please feel free to reach out to me at [am@jtpp.uk](mailto:am@jtpp.uk).

In solidarity,



ABHIJIT MAZUMDER

Publisher

*Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis*

&

Director

Frontpage Publications Limited

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## Co-Editors' Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the fifth issue (Vol. 3, No. 1) of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* (JTTP). At the start of our exciting third year of publication, we are pleased to bring you this Special Issue focused on healing and justice. Although just healing is something we are all still striving for at the start of 2021, we realise that both remain elusive for many. The last year has been difficult. Among racial reckoning, political upheaval, and a global pandemic what is more important in this contemporary moment than a justice that does not neglect the human need to heal? The emphasis on connecting peace practice to issues of both healing and justice seemed, and still seems, an appropriate way to start off our auspicious third year of production. Aspirationally, this special issue aims to expand consciousness about the important connections between seeking justice and the processes of healing.

Here we hope to spend a few pages in this co-editors' welcome and introduction articulating our own organising hopes and thoughts as we made public this call for papers in the tumultuous summer of 2020. August 2020 seems a distal context from the perspective of February 2021, but the structural racism, populist polarisation, and pandemic pain of last August, of course, all remain with us. In outlining a few reflective thoughts about what has emerged in the contributions to this special issue, we ask your indulgence as we rationalise and philosophise about the mindset which drove our own initial call for papers. In our preeminent desire to be prospective, as opposed to retrospective, we will not dwell in the past too long, but at the same time cannot simply look away. We believe this issue of the JTTP contributes to a growing understanding of the complex realities of achieving justice that reckons with the past. Any honest forward-looking change must engage with problematic pasts. We promise that you will not be disappointed in choosing to read the content in this special issue, which we believe will expand your sense of justice and forecast the skills and means necessary for both healing and change. So much human conflict is undergirded by shared traumas; we hope the articles that follow reveal this important critical acknowledgement.

What has emerged in this issue challenges traditional paradigms of justice and foregrounds healing as an important, and often overlooked, aspect of what it means to address the roots of shared traumas. A just healing is what it takes to move communities towards inclusive change. The elusive concept of justice, as you will read in these pages, requires at least a sense of what it means to heal and, likely, a concrete set of pragmatic means to heal. Still, the fact is, too often retribution overshadows the realisation of such healing. While we do not assume that an over-emphasis on retribution necessarily means restorative approaches to

justice are all that is needed, we do believe restorative approaches to justice have been under-utilised in most modern societies. While we would argue a wider acceptance of a restorative justice lens, or what Zehr (2003) calls changing lenses, is desperately needed in global systems of administering justice, such steps alone will not achieve a healing justice. The articles and book reviews in this special issue all explore, in differing contexts, ways to develop an expression of justice that privileges healing. As always, we hope that you enjoy this issue and continue to support the JTTP by sharing these articles and subscribing to the journal. Please disperse these articles widely among your friends and colleagues and encourage them to consider writing for us, and/or subscribing at: <https://jtpp.uk/subscription-plan/>. As a young journal, we are always eager to reach new readers and support important collaborations across disciplines. Your continued support is appreciated. We strongly believe in the power of cross- and trans-disciplinary collaboration as the most pregnant space of sustainable social change.

As we strive to open critical spaces for exploring peace, we want to be clear about what we mean by transdisciplinary peace praxis. By this we mean to uplift the difficult work of collaborative co-authored papers that bring together divergent and catalytic disciplinary lenses and worldviews towards achieving peace. The diversity of peace theory and practice (i.e. praxis) in this issue, like past issues, aims to both teach and encourage. Given the many difficulties of the past year, such innovative and creative approaches to peace are important now more than ever. Though many of the contributions to this special issue are single-authored articles, they offer a novel, creative, and collaborative scope for the project of achieving peace and justice without forgoing important processes of healing. Through upholding peace praxis while simultaneously attending to justice, the original contributions and book reviews in this issue of the JTTP provide a unique look at what striving for justice looks like in cases of extreme violence and systemic oppression.

In calling for papers for this special issue, we were keen to develop a space to interrogate the legacies of violence and trauma that shape public life in the United States and many other cultural contexts around the world. In the wake of the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN and a raging COVID-19 pandemic that made us all feel separate and apart, we were eager to envision ways that the work of justice could bring us together and make us feel interconnected in community. As scholar-practitioners of restorative peace circles and community dialogue, we both desired to question our assumptions about justice and problematise resilience and healing as both occluded by, and centred in, the work of social justice activism. In asking in the call for papers, 'what are the benefits and drawbacks of restorative approaches to justice?', we wanted to get insider-partial as well as critical outsider perspectives of the restorative justice

movement. Restorative justice, as an international social movement, often seems to have only strong adherents and/or vocal detractors. But, what lies in between? A little constructive criticism of restorative justice adds to a better understanding of both justice and healing. But, too often we hear only the rhetoric of restorative justice as a salvo for a failed retributive justice system. Beyond raising constructive criticism, we continue to wonder what alternative models and paradigms of justice exist that privilege both justice and healing? In writing our call we hoped to hear from people working in the trenches of justice activism and advocacy. In such spaces how is healing articulated and achieved? Is this healing only individual or is it collective? Despite extensive written literature about 'therapeutic justice' (Wexler & Winick, 2008), transitional justice (Minow, 1999, among others) and transformative justice (Evans & Wilkins, 2019; Balasco, 2018, among others), we felt none of these approaches adequately addressed the complex relationship between collective healing and community resilience. How do societies achieve a justice that not only holds accountable, but also heals at the individual as well as societal levels? Although the international restorative justice movement is an inadequate response to the many paradoxes of achieving both justice and healing after conflict, the restorative mindset does seem extremely well-suited to helping communities understand better what healing means for them as they conceive of past wrongs as harms. Whether transitional, transformative, or restorative, justice is an always evolving aspirational concept. Still, while restorative justice, as a process, seems well-suited to the processes of healing, we remain unconvinced that these synergistic processes are always well-synchronised in peace practice.

The philosophical concept of restorative justice often requires some kind of explanation for those unfamiliar with it, especially given the pervasiveness of retributive justice practices as being the 'default' when it comes to dealing with harms in the community (what retributive justice often identifies as crimes). Restorative justice is also defined differently by those who take a restorative approach when it comes to addressing the harms in communities and the structural violence that is perpetrated among those who are often most vulnerable or oppressed. In our call for this issue, we wanted contributors to not only define restorative justice practices they use, but also describe the tangible ways these restorative justice practices manifest themselves in the work they do and in the communities they work with. Specifically we were interested in how the interplay between justice and healing distinguished themselves and if restorative justice approaches were always the most effective tool for lasting change? It was a broad task, but we felt it speaks to the diverse and nuanced nature of restorative practices. We believe the call solicited a deep conversation on the complexities of restorative justice practices, the differences of these practices based on geographic location and the connection between justice and healing. We hope the contributions herein

help readers understand that healing may look differently based on harms caused and the restorative practices implemented.

As you can see more than answers, we had, and still have, many questions. The pieces in this issue only scratch the surface of answering our many curiosities, but scratching the surface, we believe, would desperately call for in the current context of political polarisation. The lacuna of pragmatic research on restorative practices, though slowly shrinking (for example see: <https://www.iirp.edu/>), remains important for peace practitioners to work to bridge.

In the first piece, David Anderson Hooker and Shelia A Bedi take us to Chicago to unearth the history of torture and trauma that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) has unleashed on city residents, especially on people of colour. Their article, entitled 'Re-Defining Justice and Creating Pathways for Healing: The Limits of the US Legal System and the Promise of Politicised Healing as a Model for Redressing Racialised Harm', develops a provocative expansion of the analytical framework of justice first offered by Coleen Murphy (2017) to 'redress CPD-created harm' (p.18). Their creative article articulates 'a syndemic approach to justice seeking' (p.36) in creating what they call a 'politicised healing' (p.32) to redress past harms. Hooker and Bedi's contribution appears at the start of this issue as it captures many of the complexities of focusing on both the history and the future (p.36) of past injustices. Their piece sets the stage for the articles that follow by defining and cataloguing liberal democratic approaches to justice and pointing out the limits of each.

In Joe Cole's article, entitled 'Photography Healing and Justice in Appalachia', the focus shifts to 'the legacies of colonisation, and cultural and structural violence' (p.46) in the Appalachian regions of the American mid-Atlantic. Cole's thick description of the lives of people in this region through their activism and photography gives voice to a particular expression of healing and justice. Through both ethnographic interview and auto-ethnographic vulnerability, Cole's contribution opens a dialogue about the 'ongoing legacy of an unjust and extractive economic system' (p.70) issues of white supremacy, and developing more 'ecocentric approaches to ethics and justice' (p.71). To weave a framework of justice that he creatively calls 'regenerative justice' (p.71), Cole paints a detailed picture of life in this hardscrabble region of the United States, a picture reminiscent of James C Scott's articulation of life in Zomia (Scott, 2010).

While the first two articles are grounded in the unique experience and history of the United States, the next two essays deal with quite different cultural settings. Jonathan Chukwuemeka Madu's article, entitled 'Addressing Clerical Sexual Abuse through Restorative Justice: A Search for Empowerment and Collective Healing', takes us to Nigeria to explore restorative healing after the Roman Catholic Church's international sex abuse scandal. In exploring the sensitive subject of 'how to address

clerical sexual abuse (CSA) through restorative justice that empowers individuals and all stakeholders' (p.91), Madu underscores the power of restorative justice to overcome 'the dominance of patriarchal tradition in Nigeria' (p.90) and transform attitudes in a way that respects both perpetrators and victims. In articulating how African values of communalism and indigenous leadership structures can support a restorative approach to justice after such harms, Madu's article gives voice to the hopeful possibility that the many victims of CSA can finally be heard, and their experiences validated.

Moving from Nigeria to India, Saloni and Kumar's article, entitled 'Traditional Livelihoods and the Idea of Gender Justice: A Study of the Minority Women of Varanasi in the Area of Art and Craft', explores a women's empowerment training programme among *saree* weavers in the ancient Indian city of Varanasi. In focusing attention on Muslim women, the 'women are more deprived in their deprived communities' (p.96), Saloni and Kumar shed light on alternative ways to bring justice to traditionally marginalised minority populations. In this context, healing comes through access and the training programme aimed at helping to develop economic opportunity and create 'gradual change' (p.116). Both the third and fourth papers in this issue give cultural texture to what it means to develop healing justice in the context of gendered legacies of past harms.

Engstrom and Powers in their article, entitled 'Embracing an Ecosocial Worldview for Climate Justice and Collective Healing', challenge readers with an autoethnographic account of the need to shift from 'human-centric to an ecosocial worldview' (p.120). Invoking the spirit and writings of Audre Lorde with her concept of 'radical self-care', Engstrom and Powers articulate as how to 'work towards collective healing through climate justice' in their 'roles as social work teachers and community engaged researchers' (p.122). The creative reflexivity of their article reminds us of the many ways we can heal the earth with our whole bodies and mindful behaviours.

The final research article by Randall Amster, entitled 'Mapping Digital Justice: Across the Great Divide, Towards a Sanctuary for All', 'explores the justice and peacebuilding implications of a "digital divide" that fosters differential access to online opportunities and other technological resources often associated with mobility, equity, and prosperity' (p.145). Amster's article argues that the injustice in this digital divide and technological avalanche 'isn't merely about who profits from [these technologies] sale and use, but more so how the remaking of sociopolitical identities is ultimately more intrusive' (p.147). In distinguishing the complex differences between digital access and digital literacy, Amster does us, the digital natives an important favour by bringing to light the insidious ways that technology leaves us little place for safety and sanctuary. Amster's pedagogical reflections on digital justice are an important, and optimistic, way to close the

academic articles in this special issue and point readers towards pragmatic praxis-based change and resistance.

Even after these six unique articles, the fun does not end! Three book reviews follow that all address our current epoch in critically important ways. Justin Harmon provides an analytical reading of ‘The New York Times’ bestselling *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent* by Isabel Wilkerson (2020). Arguing that Wilkerson’s second book offers little that is new, Harmon contends that her ‘claims come off as semantic exercises’ (p.171). Our co-editor, Jeremy A Rinker, reviews Kathleen Belew’s paperback release (2019) of *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*. Rinker in arguing writes that the book is well-worth a read as it clarifies the ‘historical reading of White Power’ given ‘recent political events in early 2021’ underscores the importance of knowing historical context for achieving justice.

Finally, Cathryne Schmitz reviewed Alicia Garza’s (2020) *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*. Schmitz reading of Garza builds on the lessons that Garza learned as a founding member of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement. Beseeking us to not lose hope in the possibilities of transformational change, Schmitz’s review of Garza’s important book reminds us that ‘growing a movement requires developing alliances that tolerate disagreement versus demanding agreement’ (p.179).

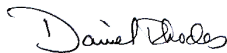
A further reminder of the breadth and depth of fast-moving events can be found in the Kaleidoscope section at the end of this publication.

As this issue goes to press we remain in the throes of a global pandemic that places enormous strain on already vulnerable communities and creates its own unique form of trauma that we will need to address down the road; complex and multifaceted trauma that will require restorative justice, healing, and so much more. The United States, often attempting to project itself as the paragon of ‘democracy’ by directly and indirectly influencing political systems in other countries, especially the Global South, experienced its own attempted political coup when Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol in January. Spurred on by months of misinformation and direct lies that the election was unfair and ‘stolen’, these insurrectionists were brazen in their attempt to track down specific political figures and hold them accountable in what they considered to be a rigged 2020 presidential election. This event demonstrates how politics are not immune to unmet needs and trauma. What forms of reconciliation will be deployed to address the harms caused by political figures? How will the collective healing that communities need to engage in developing as we move forward with 2021? We hope this special issue provides some insight into these important questions.

Once again, thank you for reading the JTPP and again welcome to this transdisciplinary knowledge-building exercise. We are glad you are here with us

exploring peace praxis. We hope you enjoy reading these six articles and three book reviews. We remain convinced that the JTTP, as exhibited through this profound collection of articles in this special issue, represents a critical voice for the power of knowledge in processes of change. As you turn the pages of our sixth issue be reminded that justice, like healing, takes time. Although the contributions in this special issue only scratch the surface of our understanding of healing and justice, we hope that they open avenues for further research and thinking. Again, please share this issue with friends, colleagues, and fellow activists to help build our journal's readership and reach. If you like what you read, please ask your University (or local/municipal) library to subscribe by following <https://jtpp.uk/subscription-plan/>. May the articles in this issue of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* (JTTP) provide hope, healing, and at least a glimpse of justice. As always, we welcome your feedback!

With Metta (loving kindness),

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# Embracing an Ecosocial Worldview for Climate Justice and Collective Healing

Sandra Engstrom & Meredith C F Powers

## ABSTRACT

We are faced with an ongoing global climate crisis, the more recent public health crisis brought on by COVID-19, increased racial and police violence, ableism, and the intersecting injustices surrounding gender and sexuality. From an autoethnographic perspective, we argue the urgent need for a shift in worldview from one that is more human-centric to an ecosocial worldview that takes into account the global connections that we can no longer ignore. An ecosocial worldview acknowledges the inextricable relationships of humans within our context of a global ecosystem. When we embrace this worldview, we can approach and address injustice and in doing so, can prove to be beneficial to and healing for both the planet and the people living in; it has to be understood as climate justice. We reflect on our journeys to an ecosocial world view and discuss how climate justice works from an ecosocial worldview, can promote the repairing of broken relationships among individuals, communities, self, and the planet. This paper shares reflections and perspectives for individual and collective healing, such as eco-therapy, gratitude, teaching, and adopting a sustainable, life-enhancing pace. These healing and reflective practices within the context of climate justice are also important factors in building and maintaining individual and community resilience to current and future crises.

## KEYWORDS

Ecosocial worldview, climate justice, autoethnography, social work, healing

## INTRODUCTION

We would like to start with a recognition of gratitude, first, for Mother Nature who sustains us and revives us physically and emotionally, for the privilege to have this opportunity for contemplation of the many scholars and leaders who have come before us, and for the opportunity to collaborate over the years despite the distance and distractions. Also, we are grateful to the readers for joining us on this

journey as they consider their worldview, the potential to embrace an ecosocial worldview, and how it can promote their own healing, collective healing, and specifically their involvement in creating climate justice.

Globally, we are experiencing a convergence of chronic and complex injustices, including colonialism, ableism, oppression, and violence based on race, gender and sexuality, structural inequality, and climate injustice (Canty, 2017; D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2014; Spencer, M S, Fentress, T, Touch, A & Hernandez, J, 2020). These converge with the recent global health pandemic of COVID-19 and the resulting economic repercussions (Amadasun, 2020; Lavalette, Ioakimidis & Ferguson, 2020). At the time of writing this paper, there have been over 68 million confirmed cases and over 1.5 million deaths as a result of COVID-19 and the numbers are increasing exponentially (WHO, 2020).

Due to the potential lethal spread of the virus, health and mental health suffering are exacerbated as many people are unable to rely upon known support systems, such as meeting with and enjoying close contact with family, friends, and support groups. Many have had to limit their movement, even within their homes and communities, having little to no contact with neighbours or connections in nature. Others have had to carry on, as frontline, essential workers, risking their health and mental health in care of others. Many experience the impacts of these injustices differently due to structural inequalities that deprive the majority of the world. However, these disparities are not merely 'risk factors', as some may euphemistically call them, rather 'indicators of oppression' (Flores, 2020) that must be recognised and addressed as such. The consequences of staying the course on our current trajectory are wide-ranging for all species and the planet itself, ranging from overpopulation, displacement, and forced migration due to scarcity of viable air, water, and land that will sustain life, and extinction. The current context is further evidence of the likelihood of increasing pandemics related to zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19 (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014).

Due to all this, our 'surge capacity', a collection of adaptive systems that humans draw on for short-term survival in stressful situations, is increasingly depleted (Halle, 2020). This is because we are burdened by so much ongoing and anticipatory grief, including ambiguous loss, with no end in sight and no way to fathom what could be lost. These complex problems are chronic, ongoing stressors, or 'wicked problems' (Koloko, 2012) that must be rectified, despite the difficulties in where to start. The challenge to prioritise what to deal with and in what order can result in mental paralysis, increasing mental and physical distress and illness. Social workers have expertise and skill-sets to offer as they often operate in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, but the impact on the social workers themselves has also been exacerbated in the current context (Lavalette, Ioakimidis & Ferguson, 2020). One angle that we, the authors, approach these wicked problems

The challenge to prioritise what to deal with and in what order can result in mental paralysis, increasing mental and physical distress and illness. Social workers have expertise and skill-sets to offer as they often operate in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, but the impact on the social workers themselves has also been exacerbated in the current context.

is through our work on climate justice. Through what we call ‘radical self-care’ (Lorde, 1988; Powers & Engstrom, 2020), we have found we can often overcome our mental paralysis and promote our healing as we work towards collective healing through climate justice in our roles as social work teachers and community engaged researchers. We define climate justice broadly as approaches and actions that address injustices to the entire ecosystem, which includes all species, humans merely being one (Powers, Rambaree & Peeters, 2019). Environmental justice is one aspect under the broader umbrella of climate justice, being the narrower and specific justice issues related to how humans are impacted by the environment (Bullard, 1994).

It is undeniable that our world is inextricably connected. The current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, while an ongoing tragedy, has also created space and time that allows us to intentionally and explicitly slow down to re-evaluate the current systems and processes upon which we rely. Instead of blindly perpetuating the structures and practices that resulted in the injustices we fight, we can take this moment to pause and establish a new normal. As writer and activist, Sonya Renee Taylor (2020) proclaimed,

We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate, and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.

Increasingly, research and arguments have called for this slowing of our life pace and changing our ways as we reassess, mitigate, and redress the damage that humans have done, and continue to do, to the environment and each other (Dominelli, 2012; Peeters, 2012; Powers & Engstrom, 2020; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). Much of the current injustices of oppression, over-consumerism, exploitation, and materialistic practices are the result of structures and systems

based on a human-centric worldview, where humans are seen as the centre of all relationships and prioritised over other species and the ecosystem (Dominelli, 2012; Rambaree, Powers & Smith, 2019). Thus, we must embrace an ecosocial worldview, which acknowledges the inextricable relationship between all life on this planet, including humans and more than humans. The ecosocial worldview or lens requires us to critically examine and question our current societal structures, practices, policies, routines, values, life-pace, and patterns of production and consumption. We recognise that we are entrenched in this temporal and physical context through global connectedness, along with the reader.

As leaders at the nexus of climate justice and social work, we are trying to be transparent about our struggles and ways of coping as we move beyond paralysis to action. We present our journeys of embracing an ecosocial worldview and how it has informed our practice to create true climate justice and collective healing. This paper contributes uniquely to the discussion and ongoing research in today's context as we share our particular voices on the ways we are impacted and are trying to make impacts. We acknowledge that we are also among those that require healing and we intentionally situate our voices and experiences in the broader discussions and research (Canty, 2017; Powers & Engstrom, 2020; Schultz et al, 2016; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). This is why we have chosen to write this article from an autoethnographic perspective. We are not trying to add to the method of autoethnography, rather we are creating this collaborative autoethnography as a way to explicitly practise radical self-care as we promote the embracing of an ecosocial worldview in social work and the broader climate justice discourse. To this end, we also present our work in community engaged practice and research using an ecosocial worldview and discuss ways we are centring ecosocial worldview in the profession at large and within teaching. Without embracing an ecosocial worldview, we are doomed to our current trajectory of injustice and certain global demise. But, if we, and future generations, embrace an ecosocial worldview, we can change our individual and structural practices to promote authentic healing, especially concerning climate justice.

## METHODOLOGY

As stated, we have chosen to write this article from an autoethnographic standpoint. This is due to our intimate experiences with the topics and our own need for radical self-care. The framework and process of combined autoethnography provided an additional structured space in which to reflect upon individually, and in conversation (Schon, 1983), about how the more we adopted this ecosocial worldview, the more we gained true hope that this is the way the world will ultimately be healed and bring about climate justice. The process of combined

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autoethnography was, and remains, an act of radical self-care for the both of us. Writing our stories was therapeutic as we sought to make sense of ourselves, our experiences and questioned conventional storylines about how we should live (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001). This is more than mere reflection and dialogue, rather we utilised autoethnography as a mindfulness practice that promotes radical self-care as it moves us to action and impacting change on the very things that are causing us distress in the first place (Powers & Engstrom, 2020) and in recognition that we are more than mere researchers or academics in this context (Canty, 2017). This is also in part due to our agreement that an autoethnography demonstrates our commitment to revealing socio-cultural inequities, injustices, and

oppressive practices, including how they are reproduced and resisted, and what might be done to facilitate change and make a difference in the world (Ellis, 1999; Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008; Smith, 2017). These are commitments that stem from the ecosocial worldview we embrace.

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Critical elements of autoethnography are woven throughout this article to strengthen how this process relates to our understanding and experiences of climate justice. First, there is the use of storytelling. People are storytelling creatures and need stories to help make the world meaningful and provide a template to make sense of what we pay attention to and respond to (Smith, 2017). We believe

that ignoring stories would disregard an essential part of how humans can live in society and work towards meaningful change. Second, there are the elements of note-taking, memory work, narrative writing, and interview (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008). We are, both, regular journal keepers, regularly practise eco-photography, and intentionally and mindfully situate ourselves in the natural world regularly for eco-therapy, as will be reflected upon below. Also, throughout the writing of this article, we interviewed each other and supported deeper reflection about how we came to understand an ecosocial worldview, how we engage in our lives, both personally and professionally, from an ecosocial worldview, and what work we are doing to fight for climate justice and promote healing. In other words, coming together on this writing from a collaborative autoethnographic stance also enabled us to reflect on how we individually already engage in regular autoethnographic practices without putting a label on it. Unknowingly, we were ascribing to the belief that 'autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, reflexively' (Ellis, 2013). This only deepened our interest in creating this article in a way that emphasises the importance of being deeply situated and integrated within an ecosocial worldview to work towards climate justice for our individual and collective healing.

We also ensured the incorporation of the process and reflection of time and space within our writing. Autoethnography can alter an individual's perception of one's past, present and inform one's future (Custer, 2014). Ellis (1999) wrote that an individual can 'zoom backward and forward, inward and outward' as one gazes through various lenses, voices and experiences to gain insight and expose a self that has been impacted by history, social structure, dialogue and institutions. For several years, we have discussed and reflected on our upbringings, our professional and personal practices, and our interactions with each other, others, and the natural world. Thus, we have been able to sustain focus and concentration on our knowledge and experiences over time (Wall, 2006).

We acknowledge the critiques of autoethnography as being insufficiently rigorous; however, we are more strongly pulled to the strength of the method as autoethnography was partially developed to counter and resist colonialist, sterile research that can be exploitive and advocates patriarchal, heterosexual and white biases (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001; Oswald, Bussey & Thompson, 2020). We believe that researchers must continually challenge and push methodological boundaries (Taber, 2010), especially when it comes to complex global issues, such as climate justice, that call for radical self-care including introspection, reflection, analytical and emotional responses to change the world for the better. Upon further reflection together, we believe it is precisely because we embrace an ecosocial worldview that autoethnography appealed to us as we seek to disrupt

and transform through decolonisation, eco-feminism, anti-racism and degrowth.

## COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING AND MEANING-MAKING

As we are two separate voices, we are specifically creating a collaborative autoethnography. Combined autoethnography allows us to create a collaborative story as we make meaning of the data; ‘the analysis itself is a form of storytelling’ (Smith, 2017). Humans are storytelling beings (Frank, 2010; Smith, 2017). We can attest to the power of story and endeavour to moving the conversation forward in the global context of stories which are interwoven with our relatives, the plants, animals, land, water, air, and Mother Nature. Additionally, we concur with Ellis, Adams and Bohner (2001) who state that ‘autoethnographers value narrative truth based on what a story of experience does, how it is used, understood, and responded to for and by us and others, as writers, participants, audiences and humans’ (282). We believe that combining and sharing our collaborative story mimics, Senehi’s (2008) belief is that narratives can enhance peace (or in this case, an ecosocial world view); engender mutual recognition and promote consciousness raising that ensures collective perspectives to interrogate a social phenomenon, creates a unique synergy that we could not attain in isolation, and supports a shift from individual to a collective agency (Chang et al, 2012; Lapadat, 2017). We also agree with Oswald, Bussey and Thompson (2020) that such collaboration provides solidarity and group identity that transcends individual, institutional and international boundaries. This solidarity has provided mentorship and support as we continue to navigate healing in ourselves, the world, and fighting for climate justice.

We set for ourselves the following research questions to guide our collaborative autoethnographic process:

- ❖ How did we come to understand an ecosocial worldview?
- ❖ How does this inform our academic and professional practice?
- ❖ How does our ecological worldview lead us to promote climate justice?

We thought the following suggested question was beyond the scope of this paper and more related to our role as educators and have incorporated this idea into our conclusion about the next step in terms of research and writing.

- ❖ What does our practice tell us about how effective we are in changing hearts and minds around issues of climate justice?

Moving forward, we encourage the exploration of the effectiveness of embracing an ecosocial worldview on climate justice and, also, how our efforts may be contributing to this positive change.



We first discussed these questions, informally interviewing each other, then separately we each wrote a reflective narrative in response to these research questions. Then we came back together to discuss, analyse, probe each other to go deeper. During this time, we made some expected and unexpected findings. At times these will be presented individually; otherwise, we will combine our findings to showcase the effect of relationship and autoethnographic collaboration in generating knowledge. We utilised video conferencing, email exchanges and a shared Google document to analyse our data from our individual and collective perspectives. This allowed us to co-create a multi-layered story and investigate our collective experiences which resulted in the themes that will be presented in the remainder of the paper.

As friends for several years, there were no substantial tensions or difficulties in this process. However, there were aspects of our mental health and well-being that needed to be tended to that, at times, would prevent us from writing collaboratively. We had originally planned for this article to be written earlier in the year, however, amid the current COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing crises, various pressing health and capacity needs took priority. This additional time, however, allowed for further deepening and enriching our process of bringing our voices together. As we collaborated, we were also tapping into the mutual support we so desperately needed to promote our own individual healing as we also completed the collaborative autoethnography and writing tasks.

### *Positionality*

It is important to note our positionality as autoethnographers. Both authors are of the same generation, White, cisgender females, from North America, although one has been living in the UK for ten years. We, both, have earned PhDs in social work and have extensive practice experience, totalling over 35 years of expertise between us. We are both currently academic scholars, working as professors in formal academic settings (Scotland and the USA). While on paper we may seem similar, there are significant differences in how we were raised, our lived experiences, our social work academic journeys, our practice as social workers, and importantly, how we came to an ecosocial worldview at different stages of life. There are also differences between our current and historical national contexts, our familial configurations, as well as how we engage with our grief, anxiety, and other emotions related to the widespread convergence of injustices. These similarities and differences allowed for the analysis to be multidimensional and supported a deeper more analytical component (Lapadat, 2017).

We became acquainted through global, professional networking opportunities in the Green/Ecosocial Work Collaborative Network and the International Federation

of Social Workers (IFSW). Together, we have been leaders in the advancement of ecosocial worldviews and climate justice in the social work profession and beyond. We both found ourselves navigating life as new professors and academic scholars amid, more often than not, unrealistic expectations (e.g., quantity and production levels). We were each, individually, questioning and trying to prioritise our own needs for health and healing, however, were finding little support. We were drawn to each other as a result of recognising our similar values of pushing back against this unhealthy atmosphere and found sustaining solidarity. Since then, together we have sought to disrupt and transform those spaces, beginning with creating our own, mutually supportive space of respect, which honours and nurtures the health and wellness we deserve but are not apt to get from our broader contexts. To this end, we have collaborated on presentations, articles, and books. Perhaps even more important than the successful outcomes, we pride ourselves in the collaborative process of going at a sustainable, life-enhancing pace, that promotes health, honours and respects our need to seek times to connect with nature to re-centre and is truly nurturing and mutually supportive. We see this paper as a sequel to our most recent collaboration on an article called 'Radical Self-Care for Social Workers in the Global Climate Crisis', where we presented the idea of developing a sustainable, life-enhancing pace (2020).

## HOW WE CAME TO EMBRACE AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW

Acknowledging that autoethnography is both a process and a product (Ellis, 1999), we now present some of our autoethnographic data to render visible the social and temporal locations that individually led us to support and situate ourselves in an ecosocial worldview and the recognition of the importance of this on climate justice.

Sandra: Growing up in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, it was quite rare that a month would go by that my family did not spend time outdoors or outside camping, hiking or skiing. As a child and young person, I didn't put a lot of thought into what this meant towards my development or wellbeing, other than the fact of initially not liking it and always wanting to know when we would go home. Looking back I can see that spending

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so much time outdoors when I was younger, and today, has a direct influence as to how I see and interact with the world. Even now, in the context of having my 'wings clipped', so to speak, as I am not able to travel back to Canada due to the COVID-19 crisis, I feel an ache in my body at not being able to spend time in the mountains or to be surrounded by the familiar forest sounds and smells.

Reflecting on this personal dimension of how I understand and relate to the natural environment, I can now see it as central to an ecosocial worldview. My truth and my identity are so interwoven with the natural world that at times I do not know where one begins and the other ends. I am the mountains and the mountains are me. I remember later in my studies reading Joanna Macy (2007), E O Wilson (1993) and Fred Besthorn (2002) and feeling an emotional connection with their writing and agreeing with the biophilia hypothesis and deep ecology, that all living things have intrinsic value and that humans have an innate tendency to seek out nature. I can now see that this is exactly the experience I needed to have to later be able to reflect on the healing that desperately needs to occur within ourselves and the healing of the natural world, let alone the healing of that relationship between the two.

I recently spent an extended time with an isolated group in the woods and one of our tasks was to look at a tree, flower, blade of grass, or another piece of the natural world and ask this natural being one simple question 'What is your secret to living in perfect harmony?' For every natural, non-human entity seems to have an innate system in place to live its life in perfect balance with everything in its surroundings. I return to this practice regularly now that I am back in the city due to the impressively powerful conversations that emerged when I asked a tree and a moss-covered rock that question. Being consciously aware of this interconnected relationship between my humanity and the natural world strengthens the understanding of how my well-being and the well-being of others are dependent upon the collective well-being of and justice for all living things. This process of writing and reflecting on my experiences brings with it an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness and interdependence which could potentially be a challenge to those that have not been able to have this connection or have avoided this relationship and practice for so long. Emotions linked to shame, guilt or anxiety could emerge as there is an increased awareness of how we have failed the earth, failed ourselves; I know I have these feelings at times. It can be overwhelming to think about how to navigate these conversations and feelings and I'm grateful that psychologists and other health professionals have started to acknowledge the importance of spending time in nature and how this can help with processing these emotions. It seems as though we are now being forced by these 'wicked' problems, by COVID-19 and by the climate crisis, to question fundamental assumptions and economic and societal messages that we

are confronted with daily and this is an uncomfortable place to be in. However, we need to feel this discomfort to transform our relationship to other species, change our frame of reference to that of connection and interdependency, towards understanding and interacting with the planet and move forward with our moral responsibilities.

MEREDITH: Though not brought up with an ecosocial worldview in my culture of origin, I was taught to cherish and respect our natural world, seeing it as a gift that we were entrusted to be good stewards of. I have always turned to nature for my refuelling and re-centring when my world feels like it is spinning out of control, and to prevent myself from getting to such a poor mental and physical state. I do this in many ways, but particularly by getting muddy with pottery or trail hiking. Being with nature brings me greater mental clarity and peace and recalibrates my rhythms as I begin to remember what is important, and what is not. Early in my career as a social worker, working with refugees, I quickly became burnt out. And, the pace of the culture in which I live continues to propel me into stress and burnout. Thus, for over two decades I have been learning (and unlearning) for myself and teaching other social workers about stress, burnout, and the need for a sustainable, life-enhancing pace (Powers & Engstrom, 2020). In navigating the demands of such a busy life of work and family responsibilities, I have come to love the quote that anchors me in an ecosocial worldview, 'Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished'—Lao Tzu. Similarly, a friend recently, knowing my passion for the degrowth movement (D'Alisa et al, 2014), said, 'Meredith, you need to degrow your agenda'. Now, by learning to embrace an ecosocial worldview, I often must re-educate myself and often remind myself, I am not in nature or reconnecting to nature, but I am part of nature and can go at the pace of nature. I have learned, we are not able to disconnect from nature, rather are simply reinvigorating our connections, or becoming more mindful of them. During my Master's in social work programme, I had an epiphany about the professional roles and responsibilities to address the environmental crisis beyond my passions. I came to this realisation in one elective class on social work and sustainability, taught by my amazing professor and now friend and mentor, Dee Gamble. This not only shifted the entire trajectory of my social work career but also began my recognising of my human-centric worldview and gradually embracing an ecosocial worldview throughout my doctoral programme and beyond. Additionally, my shift towards this ecosocial worldview has also broadened my work to climate justice from my original work more narrowly addressing the human-centred injustices of environmental justice.

For my dissertation, I did qualitative research on why and how social workers were addressing the environmental crisis in their professional roles. For the literature

review, I found and cherished the work of Fred Besthorn on deep ecology (2002), Lena Dominelli on green social work (2012), Nancy Mary on sustainability in social work (2008), Kati Nahri and Aila-Leena Mattheis on ecosocial work (2001), Jef Peeters on ecosocial work and sustainable development (2012), Kim Zapf on people as place (2009) and so many, many more. I was beyond thrilled to find that I was not alone, that there was so much amazing scholarship and thought developed in this arena! I was truly humbled to be standing on the shoulders of giants. Additionally, I was amazed to learn that the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (2010-2020)* had included as one of the four pillars, the promotion of sustainable communities and environments (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW, 2012). While I was relieved that I was not alone, it also deeply saddened and troubled me that I had not had much exposure to these ideas during my own formal social work education.

Since then, I have been continuing my journey of embracing an ecosocial worldview. I am humbled and awed to learn from the writings by indigenous scholars, for example, Miriama Scott, who wrote the foreword to our second volume of a co-edited workbook series (2018), and Robin Wall Kimmerer, who wrote one of my all-time favourite books, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013). I have been honoured to collaborate with such fantastic colleagues from around the world, who challenge me to keep learning and growing as we move the conversations forward within and beyond social work.

On my journey of embracing an ecosocial worldview, I began to feel even more compelled to teach and help professionally socialise social workers to embrace an ecosocial worldview, an expanded person-environment framework, and their roles and responsibilities to promote climate justice. My healing has continued even during the current, intersecting crises, as I have opportunities to connect with nature and as I feel I am making an impact on the lives of my family, my students, my community, and the profession at large through my climate justice work.

## COLLABORATIVE MEANING MAKING

Collaborative meaning-making addresses some of the critical gaps in the knowledge field related to how an ecosocial worldview can help one promote one's healing, collective healing and climate justice (Boetto, 2017; Boetto, et al, 2020; Canty 2017; Powers, 2016). Our collaborative autoethnographic journey of comparing and contrasting our individual reflections allowed us to analyse our narratives and experiences, and see certain themes emerge. Specifically found the *why* and *how* we apply an ecosocial worldview in our practice as teachers and community engaged scholars and researchers were of key importance. Our data supports the

previous research by Meredith on pathways and responses to the environmental crisis (Powers, 2016), which we will explicitly discuss in the following sections.

## ‘WHY’ WE NEED TO EMBRACE AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW IN OUR PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

As social workers, we are taught to see how things are interconnected and to work with the whole system, not just an individual’s ‘presenting problem’, known as the person-in-environment framework (Germain & Gitterman, 1980). We often work in situations to intervene with service consumers when their environment is no longer healthy or sustainable, such as in a case of domestic violence, where we would support and encourage the person to move out of harm’s way, while also working to provide intervention services to the victim and perpetrator. Or, in a case with an older adult who may desire to move from their home to an assisted living facility for increased health care and socialisation benefits. However, often mainstream social work education teaches this person-in-environment framework more narrowly, focusing exclusively on social, political and economic environments and excluding the physical environment, both built and natural (Powers, 2016). However, if we embrace an ecosocial worldview, we can take a broader person-in-environment framework (e.g., ‘people as place’ by Zapf, 2009) that allows us to acknowledge and address the whole context of problems that involve the social, political, economic *and* ecological environments (Berger & Kelly, 1993; Besthorn, 2002; Boetto, 2017; Coates, 2003; Domenilli, 2012; Matthies, Närhi & Ward, 2001; Powers, 2016; Soine, 1987; Weick, 1981; Zapf, 2009).

For example, through this ecosocial worldview and broader person-environment framework, we can see the connections between climate change and migration, such as with regards to the conflict in Syria, as water and climatic conditions have played a clear role in the deterioration of conditions (Gleick, 2014). From this lens we can see these experiences of political unrest, war, famine, disaster, economic hardship, and more, lead back to the environment, and are exacerbated by climate change. Whether the environment was slowly degrading and becoming inhospitable for growing crops and sustaining livelihood, or whether people were fighting over natural resources, either locally or with international political powers at play, or whether there was a catastrophic disaster—these environmental issues all led to migration under duress (Powers, et al, 2018).

From our autoethnographic analysis, we found that we specifically varied on our pathways to embracing an ecosocial worldview (Powers, 2016). Sandra came to the profession of social work with it, and thus as she learned about the profession, she interpreted the person-environment framework and understood social work roles and responsibilities through that lens. Additionally, she had professors, such as Kim

Zapf, who promoted an ecosocial worldview throughout her formal education. Meredith on the other hand had what she calls an ‘epiphany moment’ when it dawned on her during her sole class that offered an ecosocial worldview (an elective on social work and sustainability in her Master’s programme). This epiphany showed her that she had been limited through a human-centric worldview during her formalised education and culture, which in turn shaped how she viewed a narrower person-in-environment framework and narrower social work roles and responsibilities that excluded the physical environment, both natural and built. However, since embracing an ecosocial worldview she began to see how she, and others, could *and should* adopt this broader understanding of the framework, roles, and responsibilities that include a response to climate injustices. These differences, while subtle, have motivated us differently in how we approach our work on climate justice. Sandra, rightly, continues to make automatic connections and assumptions from an ecosocial worldview, but would at times forget that these are not necessarily the perspective of her students, other social workers, or the world at large as she addresses climate justice. However, through this autoethnography journey, she has been reminded of various perspectives and can help challenge human-centric worldviews of others to promote an ecosocial worldview for climate justice and healing (Engstrom, 2019). Meredith on the other hand, having made this shift in worldview later in life, and specifically about social work in climate justice, wants to help others avoid missing out on what she felt was missing in her professional socialisation. She has been ‘shouting it from the rooftops’ and seeking every possible avenue to help other social workers who do not already embrace an ecosocial worldview. She not only explicitly teaches social work students an ecosocial worldview (more details presented below), but has also worked tirelessly to disseminate at local, national, and international levels within the professional social work bodies (e.g., National Association of Social Workers, International Federation of Social Workers) via newsletters, journal articles, co-edited book series, conference presentations and founding and directing the IFSW Climate Justice Program. In analysing our various pathways to embracing the ecosocial worldview, we are both better equipped to help others reflect on their worldviews and discover if they need to shift to embrace an ecosocial worldview to help them better work towards climate justice and healing.

### ‘HOW’ WE PRACTISE AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW

We have both seen first-hand the benefits of eco-therapeutic activities, such as spending time in nature, in terms of the impact that it has on personal awareness and sense of self, and as a form of radical self-care in times of climate crisis (Powers & Engstrom, 2020). Utilising eco-therapy allows reflection on how we interact with

Humans cannot exist apart from their place in the ecosystem and universe. If there is a resistance to recognising a high power, perhaps gratitude can instead be focused on Mother Nature, the animals and plants, all species, and more than human beings that sustain our life.

others and is mindful of our deeper connection to nature and about being curious about the human-nature relationship, as well as human-human relationships (Jordan & Hinds, 2016). Throughout our years of conversations since meeting each other, we believe that holding an ecosocial worldview recognises the relationships that are central to ‘living in perfect harmony’ and brings an understanding that more people who have this worldview, and who show gratitude to all beings for performing the role they were designed to perform, will allow for deeper and more sustainable, individual and collective healing.

Thiebault (2011) states that a change in consciousness is needed (for those who do not already hold an ecosocial worldview) that allows us to find a sense of wonderment and display gratitude towards nature. This shift needs to involve a deep reflection on human fulfilment and discovery of their true identity as a human species within ecology that leads us to reconsider our relationships with all beings and the natural environment. Without this shift, it seems unlikely that the appreciation, respect and gratitude needed to heal the planet will emerge as central values in human experience. Only this deep-rooted shift and experience will allow us to get a glimpse as to who we are, what the universe and natural world represents, and how to act accordingly. For example, Meredith’s epiphany moment, described above, led to her shift in worldview and then her understanding of professional framework, roles and responsibilities related to climate justice.

Humans cannot exist apart from their place in the ecosystem and universe. If there is a resistance to recognising a high power, perhaps gratitude can instead be focused on Mother Nature, the animals and plants, all species, and more than human beings that sustain our life. We have both read *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013). Her exquisite writing on gratitude resonated deeply in our relation to an ecosocial worldview. Through our discussions, we agreed with Wall Kimmerer that gratitude is not a radical idea for cultures that do not follow a mainstream, human-centric worldview. Many indigenous peoples across the world, despite a vast amount of cultural differences, are rooted in cultures of gratitude, as opposed to the American and Scottish cultures in which we are situated. We especially would like to highlight and give gratitude to those that



shared the knowledge of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address Greetings to the Natural World, which came to our attention through Wall Kimmerer (2013). This address, in Haudenosaunee territory, is spoken whenever people gathered, no matter the size of the group, before anything else is done (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). This invocation of gratitude sets gratitude as the highest priority and reminds you every day that you have enough, that everything you need to sustain life is already here and accounted for; something to be immensely grateful for.

SANDRA states: A gratitude practice allows me to shift my perspective and remind myself that no matter what is going on in the world, I have things I can be grateful for. When I practise gratitude in a way that focuses my attention on knowing that everything I have and everything that I need to sustain myself is already in my life, I can disengage, even if only for a moment, with wider societal structures that emphasise over-consumerism, materialism and exploitation.

#### HOW WE PRACTISE: EXAMPLES FROM OUR EXPERTISE

We acknowledge that we navigate multiple roles simultaneously: academic, practitioner, activist, global citizen, conservationist; however, these roles increasingly overlap and more urgently demand our attention as these global crises become more frequent and widespread. We see embracing an ecosocial worldview as being the starting point for creating climate justice and healing, for ourselves, for others as individuals, for our ecosystem. By embracing an ecosocial worldview, and seeing the expanded person-environment connections, for example through a gratitude practice, we will then further recognise the need to include all voices equitably to share their expertise on what they need for justice and health in their own individual lives and communities. Equity can no longer be something we only give lip service to, while those in power never truly share the power, rather seek to keep the status quo. We must involve all people, especially those most impacted by climate injustices in decision making processes and actions for collective solutions. We must have equitable processes if we are to have equitable outcomes. We must also find ways to move to action, this is not just a time to acknowledge our grief and despair; rather we have the opportunity to create real change to tackle structural inequalities, through working amid our grief and despair as we embrace radical self-care (Powers & Engstrom, 2020).

Below, we offer practice examples from our expertise and experiences which highlight the themes from our autoethnographic analysis of how we embrace an ecosocial worldview in our work towards climate justice. This includes community engaged scholarship and research, professional networking and dissemination to impacting the profession at large, including as we teach future social work professionals.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH FROM AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW

SANDRA notes: Working with the communities in the community resilience project highlighted to me the role that we all have to play in combating climate change. I know just as well as anyone else how paralysing it is to think about the long-term consequences of our past and current actions on the natural environment. The unfairness of it all can bring an overwhelming expression of anger and sadness. I know I am just one person, but when I reflect on my daily habits, and my passion to work with communities to support each other and make sustainable changes, I feel stronger and better able to handle whatever comes. Reflecting on this mindset and process, I now believe that this is because I've had this ecosocial world view for as long as I can remember. I've been able to rely on the strength and feeling of being grounded that it has provided me through some tough times.

One of Sandra's primary research interests is looking at community resilience to climate change (Engstrom, Docherty & Robertson, 2019). Engaging with community groups and stakeholders allows her to encourage others to see their connection to the natural world and develop their ecosocial worldview. Nationally and internationally, this has broadened the conversation about what is our relationship to the natural world and how has this impacted our day to day lives. Communities around the world are starting to feel the brunt of extreme climate change related weather events. Recently, she ran a series of workshops that brought community groups that are primarily impacted by climate injustices in Scotland, government officials and academics together to evaluate and conceptualise what community resilience looked like for some of the recent extreme weather such as flooding and a significant snowstorm in 2017. Specifically, the concepts of shared memory and connections were shown to promote resilience. This was not necessarily only between human to human relationships but was also in regards to human and non-human relationships. These results coincided with the concepts of place attachment (Raymond, Brown & Weber, 2010) and biophilia (Wilson, 1993), which reflect the idea that these communities and individuals have emotional connections to the natural world which is one aspect of an ecosocial worldview.

Meredith offers another example of a community engagement project, that provides not only a way to work towards collective healing and climate justice, but also provides eco-therapy for those who are typically denied access to nature. She has recently initiated a memorial garden project in her local community, 'The Service and Bravery Commemorative Garden' (SBC Garden) to honouring military service members and veterans who are transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary.

To this end, MEREDITH notes: Working on the SBC Garden project for the past few months has been my saving grace. It makes me feel like I'm making a difference in my community, creating climate justice and opportunities for my healing as well as others it will serve. It allows me to connect with and bring people together, it has helped me, an avid globe trotter, feel anchored to my hometown, it has offered me opportunities to teach my child, as I bring her along for social distance meetings at existing garden spaces as I meet community partners to learn more.

The SBC Garden is tentatively set to celebrate its grand opening mid-year in 2021. The SBC Garden will foster opportunities for individual and collective contemplation, reflection, healing, care and growth as community members are invited to enjoy the garden, as well as opportunities to assist in maintaining it. This is key in addressing structural inequalities that deprive the majority of the world from accessing nature as a healing tool. As it will be located in an urban, downtown, public space, the SBC Garden will be very visible and attractive, benefiting the entire community by creating eco-therapeutic space to sit, stroll or meet others for contemplation and celebration of honouring the whole self and the beauty of the ongoing journey of becoming, of progress, and of dynamic life-cycles in the ecosystem and in the lives of individuals and the community. Additionally, permaculture gardens fall in line with an ecosocial worldview with the ethics to promote people care, earth care and fair share as the approach to gardening/landscaping.

## CENTRING AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW IN THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK

Together we have collaborated on multiple efforts to impact the social work profession at large and help it to embrace an ecosocial worldview and mainstream the actions and roles of social workers to promote climate justice. For example, soon after Meredith founded the Green/Ecosocial Work Collaborative Network, Sandra and she began connecting and expanding the group's platforms and began co-administering it on Facebook, Twitter, and as a Google group. Additionally, Meredith and her co-editor, Michaela Rinkel, approached IFSW to publish what became a three-volume workbook series (Powers & Rinkel, 2017, 2019; Rinkel & Powers, 2018), leading her to partner with Sandra as a contributing author (see volume 1; free pdf downloads of all workbooks at <https://www.ifsw.org/shop/>).

Additionally, both authors have collaborated on the development and implementation of the IFSW Climate Justice Program with Meredith as Founder and Director, and Sandra as a member of the Global Advisory Council to the

programme. The overall programme is a way for people to take action to redress the injustices we all contribute to with our personal and professional consumption patterns. The IFSW Climate Justice Program aims to: Educate—ourselves and others; Advocate—for changes in policies and practices; Be the Change We Wish to See in the World—by reducing our harmful impacts that lead to climate injustices and supporting projects that create local solutions in communities most impacted by climate injustice.

## PROMOTING AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW BY TEACHING FUTURE PROFESSIONALS

One of the primary ways we have both been inspired to address these complex issues and centre it in the profession is through teaching future social workers. This role allows us to further explore our worldviews as we engage with current literature and research and seek to impact our students in their professional socialisation processes before they embark on their professional career paths. This not only impacts individuals but has a ripple effect on the wider profession, as those entering their profession bring to it their ecosocial worldview and thereby shape the dynamic profession (Powers, 2016).

Mainstream social work education tends to teach a narrower, person-in-environment framework, anchored in a human-centric worldview. Thus, one way we embrace the ecosocial worldview and promote it in practice as academics in our teaching, both the content and the process. We teach not only what worldviews are, and how to embrace an ecosocial worldview, but we also seek to create a learning environment that embodies this worldview.

As noted above, mainstream social work education tends to teach a narrower, person-in-environment framework, anchored in a human-centric worldview. Thus, one way we embrace the ecosocial worldview and promote it in practice as academics in our teaching, both the content *and* the process. We teach not only what worldviews are, and how to embrace an ecosocial worldview, but we also seek to create a learning environment that embodies this worldview. For instance, educators can infuse and integrate content in generalist courses and special electives (Powers, Schmitz, Beckwith Moritz, 2019), as well as explicitly structuring the learning process (e.g., pace and assignments) in courses with an ecosocial worldview in mind.

## CONCLUSION

As we write this, the world at large continues to face complex challenges and injustices. We have approached these wicked problems, primarily by seeking to address our personal healing and seeking collective healing through our work on climate justice. We, despite the increased stress and workloads during this context, have sought to practise our ecosocial worldviews and adopt a sustainable, gratitude-based, life-enhancing pace.

Throughout this paper, we have suggested shifting from the mainstream, human-centric worldview to an ecosocial worldview. We believe mainstream practices and structures do not work and often only serve to create, perpetuate and exacerbate the problems. We chose autoethnography, firstly as it resonated with us as a way to disrupt mainstream, biased forms of research and writing. We see the autoethnographic process as being part of the solution for healing ourselves, for others as individuals, and, ultimately, for climate justice. Secondly, as autoethnographers, we are encouraged to consider how our engagement with our field contributes to our self-understanding (Holman Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013). This collaborative autoethnography process allowed us to create multi-layered narratives and transparently examine *why* we have embraced an ecosocial worldview and *how* that allows us to address wicked problems through a broader understanding of our personal and professional identities as social work academics (including roles and responsibilities). Finally, our collaborative autoethnography journey served as a piece of our radical self-care as we built solidarity and as it allowed us an avenue to contribute to the solutions for the problems that create some of our stress in the first place (Powers & Engstrom, 2020). We collaboratively questioned the mainstream ways of doing things (oftentimes required by our jobs) and disrupt and transform our practices for our healing. We further explored our processes, structures and policies in our classes and community engaged research endeavours which in turn not only addresses climate justice but also promotes healing for our students, community partners. And, we discussed our impact on the profession at large, and ultimately our contributions to the larger actions to promote climate justice in the world.

Much of what we shared in this context of global crises and a pandemic is nicely summarised in this poem by Kitty O'Meara (2020):

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

Despite the ongoing tragedies and loss of life due to multiple, intersecting crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been grateful to find space to pause and collaborate on this paper. We hope that our reflections and discussions shared will inspire the reader to reflect on their own worldview, question mainstream policies and practices and inspire further discussions, as we collectively learn and seek to create individual and collective healing and justice.

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