'DON'T PUT ME IN A BOX'
Social construction of whiteness, migrant’s narrative on identity discourse & rise of populism: Grand challenges for social work.

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KEY FOCUS

1. ‘Othering’ & Building of walls
2. Social Construction of Whiteness & the Media
**USE OF LANGUAGE: ‘US AND THEM’**

**IMMIGRANT**

- A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.
- Carries negative connotations, includes 'foreign worker', 'migrant'
- Those less privilege and mostly the 'other' (BBC, 2018)

**EXPATRIATE**

- A person who lives outside their native country
- Carries positive, preconceptions and assumptions about class, education and privilege, and 'being white'
- Associated with westerners settling in other countries. (BBC, 2018)

**What makes one person an expat and the other an immigrant, foreign worker, migrant?**

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1. A ‘need to keep the empire intact’ triggered Hadrian’s Wall in AD 112.
2. Mission was to separate the Romans from ‘Barbarians’.
3. 2000 years on UK mirrors this nationalistic legacy- keeping the ‘other’ out- as part of immigration policy, legislation, rhetoric/sentiment & current western discourse. (Malik, 2018; Lang, 2017)
OTHERING: HISTORY

48 years ago after Enoch Powell’s speech

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1. More walls have been built worldwide since 9/11/2001.
2. Countries are both walling themselves in and walling undesirables out.
3. **Focus:** Illegal immigration and terrorism
   
   (Valle & David, 2012)
THE MISSING MIGRANTS PROJECT
Migrant Deaths on World Borders, Jan-Sept 2014

Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>3072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US/Mexico Border</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay of Bengal</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn of Africa</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sahara</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Regions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4,077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These figures refer only to deaths that have been reported; unknown numbers are not recorded, and as such this map represents only a base minimum.

** This refers to deaths that occurred in Europe other than the Mediterranean (7) and India (1). Although deaths are occurring in Central America, non-disaggregated data makes it difficult to isolate migration-related deaths.

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www.missingmigrants.iom.int
THE WORLD’S TOP 10 REFUGEE HOST COUNTRIES

- TURKEY (2.5M+)
- IRAN (979,400)
- PAKISTAN (1.6M)
- LEBANON (1.5M+)
- CHAD (369,500)
- JORDAN (2.7M+)
- ETHIOPIA (736,100)
- KENYA (553,900)
- UGANDA (477,200)

World Economic Forum 2018
THE MEDIA, ‘OTHERING’ & LANGUAGE
IMPACT OF ‘OTHERING’

When societies experience big and rapid change, a frequent response is to:

1. Narrowly define who qualifies as a full member of society
2. ‘Othering’ while showing today’s power structures and dehumanise groups
3. Reshape government, institutions and our society

- Othering is largely driven by politicians and the media, as opposed to personal contact.
- Overwhelmingly, people don’t “know” those that they are Othering.


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1. Use of language that degrades & de-humanizes migrants & contributing to moral panic.
2. The media questioning their status as human beings and seen as a threat.
3. Subtly suggesting they have not risen above their animal origins -sentiments with colonial language- savages. (Wilson-Hunt, 2018; Virdee & McGeever, 2017)
4. The effectiveness of the press’s representation of immigrants as threatening, as invasive creatures, is increased by the general uncertainty over the contextual and legal status of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. (Wilson-Hunt, 2018; Tanyas, 2016)

How do we change this discourse as social workers?
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS - MEDIA

1. The narrative remain unchallenged and becomes normalised by politicians using similar language. e.g. Brexit Campaign & D. Trump - USA

2. Coverage of immigration negative dominated by discourse that immigrants undermine British culture/values.

3. Negative rhetoric constructing a binary opposition.

4. Migrants seen as immoral invaders, criminals versus the lawful, hardworking and innocent British host society.

(Wilson-Hunt, 2018; Virdee & McGeever, 2017; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Langlands, 1999 cited in Tanyas.)

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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS

1. The notion of superiority of other races e.g. Whiteness signifies ‘race less’ normalised identities against which black or other identities are ‘othered’ (Frankenberg, 1993, cited in Dowling & Flintoff, 2015, p3)

2. Whiteness tends to focus on the inadequacies of ‘other’ or focus on the race relations between ‘us and them’ rather than examining whiteness as a system of privilege & different multiple identities. (Dowling & Flintoff, 2015; Lewis, 2013)
RISE OF POPULISM: EXAMPLES

Independent- Friday 25 August 2017

Damning report accuses Government of stoking anti-immigrant sentiment as hate crime rises

‘Rather than defusing public concerns regarding demographic and cultural change, officials have unnecessarily stoked anxiety over immigration and encouraged the growth of populist anti-immigrant sentiment,’ cross-party group of MPs say. (All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, 2017) Rise of populism in Europe
GRAND CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL WORK

1. Ensure healthy development for all youth-1
2. Advance long and productive lives-4
3. Eradicate social isolation-5
4. End Homelessness-6
5. Create social responses to a changing environment-7
6. Reduce extreme economic inequality-10
7. Build financial capability for all-11
8. Achieve equal opportunity and justice-12
1. ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’ UNHR Article. 1

2. The denial of migrants’ rights is often closely linked to discriminatory laws and to deep-seated attitudes of prejudice or xenophobia.

(United Nations Human Rights, 2018)
CONCLUSION

1. How do we as social workers influence society with our values when the very people we want to help are stigmatized, de-humanised and seen as less equal or less than humans.
2. How do we engage and challenge the same media to restore social justice and change the discourse and rhetoric?
3. How do we demand politicians to respond to real issues e.g. impact of neoliberalism, poverty, housing, foreign policy which leads to displacement in the 1st place?
REFERENCES


EDITH LEWIS- SENIOR LECTURER