

# Reframing the frame: Reflections of a community service psychologist

Lisa Padfield  
Private practice

## Abstract

The paper offers a narrative description of a clinical psychologist's community service year from an experience-near vantage point. The socio-historical context of the placement, clinical populations encountered and very real limitations of undertaking brief psychodynamic work at the primary health care level are explored. Case material is drawn on to illustrate helpful aspects of thinking about the clinical work from a self psychology perspective. Elements of the psychoanalytic frame such as space, privacy and consistency are suggested as significant to patients' self-experiences. Modifying the psychoanalytic frame for community service, while still holding the frame in mind together with a sensitivity to context, offers the possibility of doing meaningful work despite challenges. The therapist's attempts at empathic immersion, her role as a selfobject and her ability to think are potentially mutative, but such settings also require a capacity for self-care.