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**Domestic violence and child protection: Directions for good practice. Edited by Cathy Humphreys and Nicky Stanley. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2006. Paperback. 224 pages.**

I really like Jessica Kingsley Publishers because of their range of interesting and relevant social work texts. And, I have really enjoyed Nicky Stanley's recent child protection research and publications, so I was very interested in reviewing this book. There is no doubt that advancing research and discussion into domestic violence and child protection interfacing is an important and necessary area of work. Yet I was left a little wanting by this book, probably because I found it more of a sound reminder than a book breaking any new ground.

The book is divided into four sections. The first sets the scene for domestic violence, and chapter one overviews the recent relevant research to the area. Section two provides a focus on children's views and needs, using their voices. Children's voices are largely missing in the practice literature and this section addresses that gap. Protection of women and children is the theme of section three, with section four focusing on working with male perpetrators. The structure of the book does tend to reinforce a 'male perpetrator – female victim' idea, something the authors make no apology for. Yet this left me wanting some discussion on same sex family violence and violence perpetrated by women to men, between children, and older children to parents and caregivers.

The high point for me was Brian Littlefield and Caroline Burke's chapter on violence and intimidation by men toward UK child protection workers. They make a sound argument that we need to think about such behaviours as forms of discursive communication, while never compromising worker safety. A low point is not so much a criticism, but an observation about a point made in nearly every chapter. Most authors echo that UK practice has been slow to include children when working with or thinking about domestic violence. Being such a core idea for most chapters shaped the overall discussion, and reinforced rather than extended my thinking. Perhaps New Zealand has been better at making the links between adult violence and the impacts for children, and so the message is already one we are familiar with. This being said the book has utility for New Zealand practitioners because it does encourage and explain interagency and interdisciplinary models of working (particularly Chapter Two).

One of the great paradoxes of New Zealand social work for me is the availability of research and literature in the domestic violence area while our family violence statistics just get worse. Perhaps you could borrow this book and read the chapters of interest. There really isn't any excuse for children falling through interagency cracks today, something this book soundly reinforced for me.

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**Where to from here? Australian egalitarianism under threat. Written by Fred Argy. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, Australia, 2003. Paperback, 209 pages.**

Australia prides itself on being a land of fair go, an egalitarian, classless society. Egalitarianism is widely promoted as part of collective identity and an ideal that has informed public

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policy for most of the Federal era. The key question posed by Argy is, is this still the case? He examines the past, present and possible future of egalitarianism in Australia. He asks what impact liberal economic discourse has had on social and cultural values and the aspirations of Australian society and the threat these pose to this treasured value.

Argy's central theme is the viability of egalitarian social values within a progressive liberal market economy. A secondary theme is a deconstruction of the discourses of economic reform and teasing apart the distinct elements of economic processes, 'progressive' liberalism and 'hard' liberalism. This book builds on his previous work, arguing that 'a vibrant and resilient liberal market economy could comfortably co-exist with a society built on essentially egalitarian values' (op cit, Preface, p. viii). From the outset, he challenges the tendency of some commentators to assert that egalitarian policies, ones that seek to redress social and economic disadvantage through government policy and programmes, are unsustainable, promote inefficiency and are unaffordable in micro and macroeconomic terms.

Economic value within Australian society is captured with a wide-angle lens, as greater than simply personal income and business taxes. Argy includes the 'social wage' (e.g. public health care, education and transport) and welfare for the disadvantaged, the middle class and the wealthy in his analysis. He examines the ways in which Australian egalitarianism has changed and been expanded to include groups previously excluded from equality of opportunity and outcome where inequalities persist. He also considers shifts in general public attitudes towards people who experience disadvantage. A fascinating component of several chapters of this work discusses process and values, distinguishing between economic means and ideological ends – with some enlightening examples where the influence of normative values of 'hard liberalism' (individual economic freedom, small government, meritocracy, self-reliance and individual responsibility) compromise the stated goal of economic reforms, efficiency.

New Zealand provides an example used by Argy analysing the effects of government policies in relation to long-term unemployment. He cites the actions of the (then) new Clark government in 1999, partially re-regulating wages and conditions, raising the minimum wage and restoring or increasing welfare benefits and raising taxes on the wealthy. 'What was the result? The third-highest job growth in the Western world and a fall in the unemployment rate to below the Australian rate (as at mid 2002)' (p. 90) This forms one among many pieces of evidence marshalled to debunk the myth that long-term unemployment is a result of wage rigidity, the welfare system and the 'undeserving poor' who are 'avoiding work'.

This work has some interest for New Zealand as a near neighbour of Australia, in geographical, socio-economic, historical and cultural terms. The exploration of social and economic data has sufficient transferable content to be relevant, particularly in the light of an election year where many economic and social policy directions are being put before the people. While some of us may enjoy policy about as much as statistics, both economic and social policies directly influence the lives of the people with whom we work. A level of economics and policy literacy adds an important dimension to social work's capacity to engage in dialogue about economic policy and advocate for social justice. This work demonstrates that it is possible to support egalitarian values as a society and not have them 'break the bank'.

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The book is a few years old now, and some information appears dated. It remains an engaging analysis of economic policy, social policy and the role both of these play in supporting cultural and national values. It would be fascinating to read Argy's analysis of the more recent events in Australia and globally.

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**Evaluating policy and practice. A New Zealand reader. Edited by Neil Lunt, Carl Davidson and Kate McKegg. Pearson Education New Zealand Ltd, New Zealand, 2003. Paperback, 284 pages, ISBN 1 877258660.**

In his foreword to this book, Michael Scriven (the first Professor of Evaluation in New Zealand) commends the book as a major milestone in the development of evaluation as an academic discipline in New Zealand. This edited collection of articles has six sections which together demonstrate the importance of evaluation, and why 'evaluation matters', as the introductory chapter is called. The sections contextualise evaluation in New Zealand, discuss how to manage it, reflect on the art of evaluation and then look at it in practice. The two final sections consider how to use evaluation and briefly provide an international overview before concluding with a discussion of where to from here.

The provision of evaluation literature specific to New Zealand is timely, and to have a collection like this which is mindful of the implications for all concerned of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is particularly important. As a result, this text provides a valuable resource for social workers and managers interested in evaluation in this country. The collection is presented within a framework in which evaluation is seen as a political enterprise, a theoretical enterprise and a practical enterprise and consequently evaluation is seen to appeal across disciplinary boundaries. It is informed by disciplines including social policy and sociology, political science, public sector management and social administration and other applied disciplines.

The ANZASW Code of Ethics states that 'professional accountability to clients and the wider community is ensured by members through regular and ongoing evaluation of agency policies and services and of their own performance' (ANZASW Code of Ethics 2008, p. 11). This edited collection will assist in all aspects of this important social work responsibility. It contains a very useful section on the practicalities of evaluation, research in particular how to adapt evaluation to meet customer requirements. An example is provided in Chris Cunningham's chapter 'An application of the Te Puni Kokiri (TPK) guidelines for conducting evaluation research with Maori' (Cunningham, 2008, pp. 142-145). Here the TPK guidelines are clearly set out and discussed so that their emphasis on research with Maori identifying the dual agendas of interest for Maori of their tangata whenua status and their citizenship status is absolutely clear.

I have found this a very accessible, easy to read and comfortable to hold textbook. The three editors come from different employment backgrounds, Massey University in Auckland, No Doubt Research Limited and the Ministry of Social Development, thus representing a useful cross section of interests in evaluation policy and practice. This book is well set out, and the publishers are to be congratulated on the overall design. There

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are helpful notes in the margins, highlighting key points. A generous supply of figures, tables and checklists enables the busy reader to assimilate information quickly. The book has a good index and the bibliography is comprehensive. The four useful appendices provide the reader with the Australasian Evaluation Society Inc Code of Ethics, Te Puni Kokiri guidelines for evaluation with Maori, key legislation and information about the contributors.

I am confident that practitioners, managers and students will all find this book worth reading and using in their work.

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#### Reference

ANZASW. (2008). *ANZASW Code of Ethics*. Christchurch: ANZASW.

**Going it alone? Lone motherhood and late modernity. Written by Martina Klett-Davis. Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire, England, 2007. Hardback, 161 pages.**

If you work with sole mothers, are one yourself or have a particular interest in this area then this book may be of interest. The appeal to a wider Aotearoa social work market however is limited. This book is the 'write up' of a research project looking at sole, or to use the author's language, 'lone mothers', in London and Berlin (women based in the east and west of the city).

Over a three-year period Klett-Davis gathered data from 70 'lone mothers' who receive a state benefit. She used in-depth interviewing and what she describes as a life history approach based on feminist theory. At times she makes comparisons between the three groups, London, west Berlin and east Berlin, but her main purpose is inductive analysis of the women's stories rather than a comparative analysis.

Underpinning her work is the thesis of individualisation, the idea that in late modernity individuals are left to construct their own biography or in her words, 'shape their own destinies' (p. 23). She argues that as our social fabric is loose and less fixed than it has been in the past individual's lives can be fluid and diverse. Of course, this also means people are bombarded with choices.

Klett-Davis uses the data she had gathered to divide the women into three broad categories, pioneer, copier and struggler. Those who fall outside those categories are put into another group she refers to as borderline, which is those women who fall in between the categories. Each of these groups is allocated a chapter and the women's narratives are used to elaborate and explore the meaning of each category. In Klett-Davis's group of respondents it was those she identified as 'pioneers' who were the most likely to succeed. They were women who could construct their biography in positive and empowering ways, however they were also the women who came into lone parenting with the most life chances, tending to have middle class backgrounds.

Klett-Davis finishes the work with some social policy recommendations and some challenges for feminist academics around the way they perceive unpaid and paid work. For

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example, for the women in Klett-Davis's study employment was not necessarily a way out of the poverty trap.

I found this book interesting, particularly the exploration and development of theory, and it enhanced my knowledge of German society and social policy. But, it is that, a European work, and anyone using it would need to make the links between the German and English context and here for it to be useful. I wouldn't recommend rushing out and buying a copy unless you are really interested in international research in this area.

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