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*A Gift of Stories: Discovering How to Deal With Mental Illness.* Gathered by Julie Leibrich. Published in 1999, by University of Otago Press, Dunedin. Paperback, 192 pages.

As the title states this is a collection of 21 stories from people who have experienced mental illness, including the author. The author is the Mental Health Commissioner and has undertaken other social research in addition to being a writer.

The stories are people's descriptions of, and insights into, their illness and what helped them heal. Each story stands alone while simultaneously being connected to the others by common threads. The resultant themes are about things like the 'gifts', people have received through having a mental illness, including the discoveries they have made. Julie also exposes the stigma we experience and the hugely traumatic times some of us go through in the health system.

Julie has found a fantastic group of people (both men and women) willing to talk to her for her book. They come from a wide range of ages, cultures, and classes, and from across the illness spectrum. The stories are all deep, complex and candid accounts of human suffering and triumph.

Each story has a very different style; Julie aimed to have the written material as 'close-to-spoken language' (p. 189) as possible. This gave a unique and intimate flavour to each story.

Julie says that one of the purposes of the book is to 'show that not only does mental illness affect all kinds of people but that people with mental illness have all kinds of facets to their lives' (p. 190) and I think she achieves this 'and some'. This is not a clinical guide or a description of best practice, it is more significant because it is the voice from 'the inside'. And it is by listening to this voice that we can come to understand the reality of the 'other'.

In keeping with this concept and the thrust of de-stigmatisation I feel compelled to acknowledge my own 'otherness'. The stories resonate for me: I have battled the black dog (as Winston Churchill and John Kirwan call it) of depression throughout my life. Usually it is caged but occasionally escapes and 'gets away on me'. Shortly following the birth of my daughter my brain 'decided to implode' and I was hospitalised with post partum psychosis or as I like to put it, I was 'as mad as a snake'. My partner is also acquainted with the black dog although he has a strong cage of medication which works for him. The stories have an insider meaning for me and some, but not all, of the themes are things I share. I had positive experiences with the mental health team in Taranaki, whereas some of the people in the book had 'disgraceful' (p. 181) journeys through the health service. Like all those who contributed to this book, my partner and I have had to confront our own vulnerability and find a way through to a better place. One contributor got lost from his better place and ended his life before the book was completed; fittingly it is dedicated to him.

As an 'other' and a social work practitioner I cannot recommend this book highly enough. It gives such a clear understanding of the reality of madness (my word) and what it means to 'walk this road'. It is beautifully written and presented and you won't be disappointed.

Lesley Pitt  
Social Work Tutor, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki.

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***Case Studies on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression in Social Work Practice.* Edited by Lori Messenger & Deanna F. Morrow. Published in 2006 by Columbia University Press, New York. Paperback, 114 pages.**

Case studies are a well established teaching and learning method used in social work education and practice. In fact, by drawing on actual or simulated experiences, students and practitioners have an opportunity to learn through exploration. This is the core aim of Messenger and Morrow's book, as they provide 29 case studies on sexual orientation and gender expression. Sadly, the book tends to reinforce an individual focus for these socially experienced issues. The layout reflects this, as the largest and first section Individuals is followed in order with Couples and Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities, with the smallest section, Policy and Research, closing the book. The way therapeutic models have contributed to an individualist focus toward sexuality is, unfortunately, missing in this book.

The low point of the book, for me, is this individualist focus, and the potential reinforcement of a rather 'private sexuality' and/or gender experience. The majority of case studies focus on 'coming out' and identity issues, something that maintains an 'individualist' flavour for the book. Given social work's attention to social justice, and an important critique to institutional heterosexism and gender inequalities, the book offers very little in this area. The socio-political issues associated with such inequality are a glaring omission, while not altogether surprising in a book emerging from the North American context. Perhaps some attention to 'success' stories would have helped balance the rather deficit and problem saturated approach the case studies take.

What is useful in the book, for both practitioners and students alike, is the range of case studies that provide realistic experiences for those struggling with issues associated with gender and sexual identity. These are easily reproduced and can be used in class and supervision sessions to generate discussion about social, personal and professional values. Case study 8 highlights this, as it deals with a social worker's religious beliefs and homophobia and how this manifests when working with gay and lesbian clients. Importantly, case studies offer a way of transcending culture, so that multiple cultural perspectives can be applied to the same case study. Students and practitioners can identify particular roles and responses to a case study, and this can encourage reflection. Same sex domestic violence (case study 25), and issues for ageing gay and lesbian folk (case study 17) are important issues for our social work context.

The use of real life experiences is a well travelled path in social work education, and this book offers educators and practitioners some useful insights, via case study work, into often privatised experiences. However, I caution against the wholesale use of the book, for the reasons discussed above. I recommend the book as a library or reference resource. Yet, the book has left me thinking about how we can and should reflect these issues in our practice and teaching, something I am very interested in as a social work academic. There is much room for our local stories and unique cultural experiences, presented in case studies, to assist us in our work. On reflection, perhaps this book has offered me more food for thought.

Dr Tony Stanley

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***Reaching the Vulnerable Child: Therapy with Traumatized Children.* Written by Janie Rymaszewska and Terry Philpot. Foreword by Mary Walsh. Published in 2006 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London. Paperback, 144 pages.**

This is the second book in a three-book series entitled the Delivery Recovery Series. The Delivery Recover Series includes *Therapeutic Parenting*; *Life Story Work*; and *Therapy*. This book, although focused on therapy, provides descriptions of the other two strands and their use as a model of practice at the Sexual Abuse Child Consultancy Service (SACCS) in Midlands, England. It is intended as an introduction and a resource for all those in the field of, or involved in working with, traumatised children.

About the authors: Janie Rymaszewska is the Deputy Director of practice development and training at SACCS with the responsibility for therapy. She has a masters in creative arts in therapy and is a registered movement therapist with 20 years' experience working with traumatised children and adolescents. Terry Philpot is a journalist and writer whose books include *Adoption: Changing Families*, *Changing Times* and *The Child's Own Story* to name just two.

The book is separated into nine chapters: What is Sexual Abuse?; Blighted Lives, Hope Survives; Trauma; Attachment, Separation and Loss; Therapy, Establishing the Framework; the Search for Lost Boundaries, Therapy Tasks; Themes in Therapy; a Framework for Recovery Assessment; Endings and New Beginnings. At the end of each chapter there are a number of exercises the authors suggest you complete, and which certainly gave further food for thought. At the end of the book the story of the agency, SACCS, is told and until this time I was unsure exactly what it was and how services were provided. This explanation would have been beneficial at the beginning as the book really is about this agency and how it provides treatment to traumatised children.

What I really liked about the book was the strong belief that the child's recovery belongs to them, and that every child should have the opportunity to recover from emotional injuries; that there was an unconditional respect of the child's process and keeping the child at the centre of everything that is done. Furthermore the authors' view was of therapy as something that should not be set apart from daily life and that all things that are impacting on the child should be, and are, part of therapy. They also stated that the task of therapy is to facilitate the child's communication, which clearly fits with the social work perspective of working with the child in context.

There are elements of this book which are great and in particular the chapter on Attachment, Separation and Loss, however, although attempts have been made to make it relevant across cultures and in multiple agencies I believe that it is so closely aligned to SACCS and their way of working that it is difficult to see huge benefit of the book as a whole in other services. This would be especially so if you were unable to provide the multiple facets of wrap around services required. It is certainly an idealised way to practise and something to strive for, however, not a reality in most social service agencies in New Zealand. Furthermore, the book is solely focused on children that have been traumatised through sexual abuse and I feel a more apt title would have included the subject matter.

Wendy Fraser, BSW (Hons), PGDipEd, MANZASW  
Clinical Social Worker, CAFMHS.

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***Cutting it Out. A Journey through Psychotherapy and Self-Harm* by Carolyn Smith. Published in 2006 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia. Paperback, 130 pages.**

This is Carolyn Smith's first book, which is inspired by her own experience of psychotherapy and self-harm. Reading this book I was privileged to follow a young woman's individual journey, her experience at flatting in London, working during the day at a job that obviously bored her, her private and unending distress in the form of 'voices' and 'uncontrollable thoughts', her struggle with her 'madness' that she conceals from her friends and being privy to the rituals around her cutting as a way of coping with her emotions. The young woman, who remains unnamed, comes from a loving family and has had no previous history of sexual, physical or psychological abuse. For those social workers and therapists interested in attachment theory this book will be of interest to you.

Carolyn Smith skilfully describes the young woman's relationship struggle with her therapist, highlighting the importance of first building a strong rapport in the relationship, establishing firm boundaries and maintaining personal safety. Attachment theorist Bowlby (1976) believed that the client's earlier experiences affect the transference relationship and that the therapist's aim is that of enabling the client to reconstruct 'his (her) own working models of himself and his attachment figure(s) so that he becomes less under the spell of forgotten miseries and better able to recognise companions in the present for what they are'. Using narrative theory, and externalising the problem, the therapist names the 'out-of-control part' of the young woman as 'The Manipulator' which 'is very strong...and needs to be tackled'. A contract is formed between the young woman and her therapist, and their journey continues. This type of intervention is familiar to many social workers in Aotearoa and although the language used by the psychotherapist may differ from that of a social worker, I believe that the ability of the therapist to maintain a professional relationship and to contain the young woman's pain was significant for changes to begin.

Books for teenagers and their parents or caregivers on managing emotions, overcoming self-harm or learning strategies to cope with living with a self-harmer, are often text books or work books based on a prescriptive type of therapy. 'Cutting It Out' is a great book for any social worker working with teenagers and young adults. Although published in London and written from a Londoner's perspective I believe that this book applies to teenagers and young adults in an Aotearoa environment and I would recommend it for clients, their parents and caregivers.

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***The Developing World of the Child*. Edited by Jane Aldgate, David Jones, Wendy Rose and Carole Jeffery. Published in 2006 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London. Paperback, (351 pages).**

This book was developed as one part of a pack of resources commissioned by the British Government (Department for Education and Skills) for use by those working with children and their families. It was produced in partnership between the Open University, NSPCC,

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Royal Holloway College and the University of London. The editors of the book include Jane Aldgate, a professor of Social Care at the Open University; David Jones, Consultant Child and Family Psychiatrist in Oxford; Wendy Rose, Senior Research Fellow at the Open University; and Carole Jeffery, Senior Course Manager at the Open University.

The book is separated into three parts and 16 chapters. Part one focuses on child development frameworks, theories and influences; part two is children developing, early childhood through to adolescence; and part three is promoting positive developmental outcomes for children.

*The Developing World of the Child* promotes the importance of an integrated agency approach and close collaboration in providing the best positive service and outcomes for children and their families. Child development is seen as the core area of knowledge needed for all professionals working with children. The importance of taking an ecological perspective when assessing a child, which takes into account the enormous variety of influences on children and their families, is seen as essential to making sense of individual children's development. The ecological approach looks at the complex interplay of diverse factors which include children's development, including those in the child's home, school, community and also the external environment such as income, housing, social supports and the child itself.

While not minimising the experiences, the book provides real hope for recovery if agencies all work together. There is constant reiteration of the ability of children, given certain conditions, to thrive despite disruptions in their development such as abuse or loss of primary carers. The chapters reflect respect for children; seeing them as people with individuality and adaptability. The book recognises that different aspects of development are more prominent at different stages while taking individuality into account.

This resource, although citing English law throughout, holds much information for those working with children, young people and their families in New Zealand. It is great that understanding and knowledge of child development is seen as integral in this field. This book covers the area well and would be a great resource for social workers to add to their professional library. The book brings together the theories, knowledge and practice of working with children, young people and their families, and does it well. Many of the theories taught in social work training such as strengths and solution-focused approaches, family therapy, crisis intervention and task-centred practice are mentioned. As this book is only one part of the resource commissioned it would be great to obtain the whole package and/or for the New Zealand Government to commission the same.

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***Social Work and Social Exclusion: The Idea of practice.* By Michael Sheppard. Published in 2006, by Ashgate Publishing Limited, England. Paperback, 281 pages.**

Social inclusion and exclusion are terms that have been hitting the practice fields in recent times. Although relatively new terms, the author Michael Sheppard contends that social

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work is founded on enduring themes and one of them is the notion of social inclusion and exclusion. A secondary theme of equal importance underlying the practice of social work is that ideas and practice should be closely linked. It is nice to see work that gives practical depth to theoretical ideas through the use of everyday working examples, that although not NZ based, have relevance to practice in which I have been involved.

Starting with a very comprehensive look at the notion of social exclusion/inclusion, Sheppard draws from it themes around structural causes, contract rights and moral degeneracy as sources of exclusion. One is challenged to not gloss over the use of exclusion, but to question which social exclusionary practice one is responding to or indeed engaging in. Three pertinent themes are, firstly that social work is concerned with social exclusion and is engaged to ensure inclusion; secondly, social work could be involved in enhancing social inclusion, (and should be); and thirdly that social work is itself exclusionary. This last challenge is addressed by viewing social work's position as sitting between the marginalised and the mainstream. Its position on this boundary can enable social work to positively counter social exclusion, but does leave the discipline open to claims that it is captured or used by dominant groups, and perhaps is.

The author continues to challenge the profession around its use of other popular concepts such as empowerment, need, authority and self determination of the client. It is seen that these concepts all show an underlying concern with social exclusion, yet in practice social work may not meet these grandiose goals. Sheppard questions whether we would be better to use other less popular terms such as maintenance, coping and social functioning, which may be more achievable.

Further chapters seek to lead us to question our understanding around social work and reflect on whether it is art or science, or yet a tool of management for which we can have competencies. Other issues that are analysed in the text include how we make judgments and process knowledge. There is discussion around reflexivity and evidence based practice. All of these are current topical debates in the field and the authors consider that our perspectives on these matters are based on principles of how social work "constructs" human beings, and on social work's notion of human nature.

This book was a breath of fresh air for challenging traditional and contemporary practices in social work around themes inherent in current debates. I read this book to help inform my role around social exclusion, but found that this was only a part of Sheppard's undertaking. His overall conclusion is that social work is an academic discipline in its own right and as such needs to address and challenge if needed its use of concepts. I came away with a wider understanding of themes in social work, their relation to social exclusion, and with a firm grasp of social work's ever changing, though at the same time continual, role in this. This book provides a good basis for reflective practitioners who want to 're-look' at their profession and challenge their current practice.

Toni Ashmore

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