Book reviews

Book review policy

The policy of Social Work Review is to offer books for review to ANZASW members in the first instance. New reviewers are welcome and any member who would like to be added to the list is invited to write (preferably by e-mail) or telephone the Book Review Editor. It is most helpful to the Editor if you are able to identify specific titles from those offered below that match your area of interest. If you wish to discuss any of the books, or want to make a more general inquiry about book reviewing you are most welcome to make contact. Once a review is completed, the book becomes the property of the reviewer.

There were a lot of requests for the books on domestic violence that we listed in the last journal. The books listed below include a number that relate to children and young persons, justice and social exclusion.

Publications available for review

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At the recent Australian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (ACCAN) several presentations made the point that the voices of children and families are largely missing from social work research. Paradoxically, there were several presentations that focused on ‘the fit’ between qualitative research and social work practice. Qualitative research methods, premised on the inclusion and analysis of actual and lived experience, for example those involved with social work services, provide an important solution to resolving the ‘missing voices’ debate. Liamputtong and Ezzy’s *Qualitative Research Methods* is a book that provides social work practitioners with the necessary knowledge and practical skills for undertaking and making use of qualitative research.

Two things attracted me to this book. Ezzy and Liamputtong have written elsewhere about qualitative research methods, and I have found their earlier work accessible, interesting and useful for my social work practice, research and, most recently, in the teaching of qualitative research methods. This book is consistent in that respect, and didn’t disappoint. The book is educative and practical in its approach to the topic. Tutorial exercises provide practitioners, students and teachers with an opportunity to learn through participation, while social workers can apply these exercises in reflective ways, grounded in their own work experiences.

The book is divided into three sections: Background to Qualitative Research, Types of Qualitative Research Methods and Applications of Qualitative Research. There is a logical order to the chapters, as they traverse the philosophical and ethical debates in section one, before presenting chapters on particular methodologies in section two. Section three is where I think social work practitioners will gain much. Social workers are increasingly expected to be drawing on and applying research in their practice. Through knowing more about how particular research results are produced, social workers can apply a more critical eye to their use of research in their practice.

A major strength for me was Chapter 10 ‘Researching the Vulnerable’. This chapter is sensitive and enlightening in demystifying how research can be undertaken with groups traditionally regarded as requiring freedom from exploitation. The argument here is that groups regarded as being ‘marginal’ or ‘vulnerable’ are in fact the very groups society needs to learn more about. Practising ethically and in a sensitive manner is sound social work
practice; it also, as argued in this chapter, reflects sound principles of researching vulnerable people and groups. Perhaps the weakest chapter, for me, was the discussion on memory work as a tool for research. I would have liked to have seen more discussion about the strengths and limitations of this method. One limitation discussed was the need to attend sensitively when researching areas such as sexual abuse and abortion (p. 158).

Still, there is much to offer students, teachers and practitioners in this book. I have set this as a text for my Qualitative Research class next year. I was interested in the book because of my practice background in HIV/AIDS and child protection, both practice areas where this book offers much. This book is a welcome addition to the qualitative research literature. It has a bright red cover, and this is refreshing (my shelf contains several books in this area, and most are dullish in colour – this one certainly stands out from the crowd). The book is of use to social work students, their teachers and practitioners. This is particularly the case in researching with vulnerable people. Research and social work practice are inextricably linked: both require skills in analysis and sense making. Both are also about building and sustaining relationships. Research is one of the least attended to areas of social work practice, and this book challenges any argument that research is too hard, time consuming or resource restricted. Social workers are doing versions of research every day, as they build understandings about client issues: in that way we are all researchers. Qualitative methods have a comfortable fit with social work practice, and this book is a valuable guide in that respect.

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References


This book addresses our responses to adversity and presents a multidimensional approach to understanding human development across the life span. The book is broken down into five parts and nine chapters. It commences with a conceptual overview discussing the multidimensional approach. Next, it explores the critical contexts of human development which look at social, relational, structural and cultural dimensions. Thirdly, it examines coping with adaptation across the life course from infancy to late adulthood, and fourthly, how we adapt to specific life events such as stress, trauma, loss and grief. Finally, it draws all the themes together.

The term ‘multidimensional approach’ illustrates that there are many different ways in which human development can be understood. There is our inner world of biological, psychological and spiritual dimensions and the outer world of rational, structural and
cultural dimensions. How a human being then adapts is dependent on the inner and outer world resources.

*Understanding Human Development* is a useful resource for social work, but the ideas and issues are more general to those in the helping profession and the book does not appear to address bi-cultural or multi-cultural issues explicitly.

Within the book there are terms and phrases which would be useful to have an understanding of in social work such as adaptation, resilience, protective factors, ecomap, attachment, genogram, defence mechanisms, learned helplessness, trauma, post traumatic stress disorder, grief and loss, reflective practice and supervision.

If you were studying the topic of human development, the text would be good as supplementary reading. This book gives you a taste of terms and ideas which you come across as a social worker, but does not have the depth of other texts. For someone contemplating moving into the helping profession this text is like an appetiser.

I personally enjoyed this book for the clear, concise way in which it was set out. Important terms are bolded, there are summaries and questions at the end of each chapter and links to websites are provided to aid further research.

For someone, like myself, who has been a social worker for only a short time, the book encouraged me on how much I have learnt since I began practising social work and reminded me of important concepts.

This book is one for the bookshelf and one which you may refer to often.

Andrew Davis,
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Social worker Kelly Carter wrote this book after being part of the ‘Positive Parenting from Two Homes Program’ in Canada and realising the potential of the information she had gained and the benefit it could have for the wider world. The main objective of this book is to help children and families heal after separation and divorce.

This book is a practical hands-on workbook for children. It is primarily designed for children and parents to complete together, although I see great scope for use in therapeutic sessions. It is recommended for children aged 6-12 years. This book is well illustrated, brightly coloured and is full of expression.

Carter begins the book by writing initial letters to parents and to children. These letters ensure that children know that separation and divorce are never their fault, that all their feelings are okay and that sometimes talking will help. They ensure parents remember to tell their
children that both their parents still love them and remind parents that children of divorce and separation can be healthy and happy. Types of families are explored and changes that separation and divorce can bring for children are highlighted. Family violence is then discussed and feelings are examined. The games that parents and children sometimes play are made overt and there are highlighted boxes which include ‘tips’ on how to limit these games. Near the end of the book the words often utilised by adults during times of divorce and separation are explained in a way that children can understand. Some questions that children are often afraid to ask such as ‘will my parents get back together and am I still related to my relatives after the divorce?’ are also worked through. Again the highlighted tip boxes assist children in this area. In concluding, the book focuses on some good things that can happen when separation and divorce occur and highlights the important things to remember.

Although published in Canada, I felt that this book fitted well into the New Zealand context. The children are able to define who is in their family and what their family looks like. It is realistic as to what changes occur for children in separation and divorce and it is written in a way that children will understand. The inclusion of family violence was excellent as it is often a subject which is eliminated from many books and it is pertinent in so many of our families today. Making the games that both parents and children can play during separation and divorce overt is another big positive. Often these games remain covert and are not openly discussed; this book changes that and it is a great tool for learning, communication and growth.

My only criticism about this book is the font used, particularly in the ‘tip’ boxes which, due to its linked style, some children may have difficulty reading.

I believe this book is a great addition to this area of practice and it will be a tool I will utilise within my practice.

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*New Rights New Zealand* provides an account of the emergence and growth of the New Right in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1984 - 1999. Dolores Janiewski and Paul Morris take an international perspective on the rise of the New Right economic theories embraced by New Zealand. Similar programmes of economic change which were instigated by the Regan administration in the United States, by the Thatcher government in the United Kingdom and by a John Howard led Australia, are interwoven throughout this account and signify an international network of New Right reformers in which, Janiewski and Morris claim, New Zealand was immersed.

Depicted as a movement every bit as passionate as any other, this text draws on biblical analogies as a means of analysing the New Right experience. A professor of religious studies, Morris uses myth as an instrument for understanding this period. He draws attention to conflicting visions of the ‘ideal’ society. On the one hand is the pre-1984 ‘Godzone’ vision
of Aotearoa New Zealand. The alternative image is that of ‘the New Right’s Promised Land’ (p.21). The authors argue that this ideological divide strengthened both the supporters of the vision of the ‘Promised Land’ (the New Right ‘evangelists’), and those who did not (the proponents of ‘new rights’ and ‘social justice’). It is argued that the New Right ‘prophets’ were convinced the supremacy of the market would generate freedom, personal responsibility and moral behaviour, while those advocating the ‘new rights’, espoused nationhood, intertwined with notions of citizenship, social justice and a belief that the regulation of the economy is essential in the facilitation of well being. At the heart of this clash, Janiewski and Morris argue, is a ‘clash of two moral systems’ (p. 37) – collective morality and the individualised morality of the New Right.

It is claimed in this text, that the support for the notion of individualised morality explains the resurgence of the conservative religious right. In a society where it is the individual rather than the state who is making moral decisions, and where the ‘traditional’ restraints on the market are removed, other means of ‘control’ are required. This is where the virtues of Christianity are deemed essential to managing the excess of the market place. This conservative Christian element is particularly evident in the United States of America and is growing in Australia. While Aotearoa New Zealand has the ‘smallest religiously active percentage of the population’ (p. 4) compared to the United States, Britain and Australia, the establishment of the Maxim Institute, the political success of United Future and the emergence of the Destiny Church, is evidence of a burgeoning conservative Christian constituency.

Returning to the analogy of the ‘Promised Land’, the authors portray Roger Douglas as the fourth Labour Government’s equivalent to Moses. Seeking to lead the people ‘from slaves to free men and women living under the new law, secure, prosperous and independent’ (p.88), Moses was not able to do so without the support of his brother Aaron – the orator. In Janiewski and Morris’ version, Lange is Douglas’ Aaron – ‘the voice … (with) popular appeal’ (p.88), without whose support the reforms could not continue. The demise of the Labour Government introduced new characters as the story continued. Janiewski and Morris refer to ‘Jim’s Gospel, Ruth’s Book and Jenny’s Code’ (p. v). In the new ‘Book of Ruth’ (p. 20) Ruth Richardson considered New Zealanders were ‘adrift somewhere in the Red Sea’ (p.20) in a boat which would reach the shore under her steerage. From here the march to the ‘Promised Land’ would go on.

Continuing with this theme, chapters eight, nine and ten explore the journey to the New Right ‘Promised Land’ alongside the march towards ‘new rights’, focusing on the issues of sexuality, education and welfare. Here the authors explore the contradictions inherent in the ideals of freedom, the right to choose and moral conservatism

In conclusion, Janiewski and Morris claim that Aotearoa New Zealand’s experimentation with the New Right provided the springboard for the current pragmatic ‘Third Way’ approach. The authors’ claim that our flirtation with market economics based on notions of self interest, individual morality and the need to target the ‘undeserving poor’ for moral remoulding, ‘clashed with our … egalitarian myth of New Zealand’ (p. 177) being a classless society – hence the subsequent fusion of the New Right and ‘new rights’.

A fascinating account of this period, New Rights New Zealand: Myths, moralities and markets, offers a thought provoking glimpse of Aotearoa New Zealand between 1984 and 1999.
The global context highlights the inter connectedness of nations. The myths paint pictures that shine the spotlight on illustrations that might otherwise remain hidden. The clash of ideologies, each claiming to be a path to the ‘Promised Land’, reveals a philosophical divide along which we continue to travel.

*New Rights New Zealand: Myths, moralities and markets* will be of interest to anyone reflecting on this time of major social and economic upheaval in our history. This text will supplement other works associated with this era, adding another dimension to the tale told.

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Addressing a wide range of issues impacting on the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender population, this large volume is divided into four sections. Section One, ‘A context for social work practice’, provides a historical overview of the journey for the non-heterosexual population from an American perspective and explores sexual orientation as a social construct. It outlines gaps in knowledge and skills and provides general principles for anti oppressive social work practice. The use of the acronym GLBT throughout this section is rather off-putting. The discussion around American laws and statues is not specifically applicable to Aotearoa New Zealand, however, there are some parallels.

Section Two, ‘Identity development and coming out’, outlines ‘The Cass Model’, first introduced by Vivian Cass in 1979, and is based on Interpersonal Congruency Theory (Secord and Backman, 1961, 1964, 1974; Secord, Backman and Eachus, 1964). The six stage model is recommended for use as a general framework only. McCarn and Fassenger (1996) provide a four stage model of lesbian and bisexual identity development (Weinberg Williams and Prior, 1994). Martin and Yonkin provide recommendations for affirmative social work practice when working with Transgender people, pointing out that ‘practitioners should continuously work to increase their knowledge about transgender people’. Mallon (1999) recommends the use of a narrative approach, combined with an ecosystems model to empower individuals and enable clients to reveal the quality of the interface between themselves and their environments. Practitioners are encouraged to be prepared to intervene at the macro level also. Mental health statistics quoted in this section are given as a warning to practitioners to be aware of and to ensure that adequate supports are put in place (Morrow 2006). Morrow provides useful guidelines for social work practitioners ‘in helping clients address issues of disclosure’ (Ibid: 140-144).

Section Three provides an overview of ‘Relationships and families’. Cohen, Padilla and Aravena (2006) state that some of the first feelings expressed by families of individuals coming out are those of shock and disbelief. They recommend practitioners support families using a three stage model outlined in the text. Marrow (2006) outlines risk factors impacting on the young (between 12 and 21 years) gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender population. Practitioners would be wise to take particular note of these and to assess the current level of disclosure using, for example, the Cass Model. McKinney (2006) explores social factors
effecting gay male couple development and social work practice with gay male couples and their children. Parks and Humphrey (2006) point out that lesbians are a diverse group ‘and there is not one experience that is uniquely lesbian’. There is a range of information throughout this section of the book which will serve to guide practitioners to work more effectively, including Arlene Lev’s (2006) two models for transgender emergence (Ibid: 268, 269). Lev recommends practitioners adopt a strengths based perspective, with systemic interventions to assist in the healthy restructuring of family relationships. Chapter 13, focusing on aging, provides a sensitive overview of issues impacting on ‘older’ gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals and communities.

Part four, ‘Society and culture’ provides an overview of health concerns (victimisation, sexual health, HIV, substance abuse, co-morbid mental health issues and physical health); direct and structural violence; hate crimes (more often perpetrated against gay males); hate language; religion and spirituality (examining biblical scriptures within a protestant Christian framework and how this influences the ongoing debate about human sexuality in American society); a range of workplace issues and social welfare policy and advocacy, including the stated position of NASW, and a review of federal and state social policies and laws. The final chapter offers a guide for affirmative practice, synthesising all of the suggestions which have been offered throughout the volume.

I would recommend this volume for all practitioners. It is comprehensive, thought provoking and challenging, with a range of models and theories recommended. Its weaknesses include repetition of some of the information due to the large number of authors contributing to the book, and a lack of material from a tangata whenua perspective.

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