

## Independent comment on Audio-visual and Print Materials

### Whispers from the East

Frances E. Steinberg and Richard G. Whiteside, Phoenix, AZ, Zeig, Tucker, 1999.

Paperback, 178 pp. \$102.00.  
ISBN 1891990445

**There is a saying in Chinese medicine,** 'One disease, long life; no disease, short life', suggesting that acknowledging and dealing with one's weaknesses help us to grow. How to support clients to do this can be a great challenge for us as therapists, and often requires creative thinking. Part of the appeal of books influenced by the East is the freshness of their vision, and a perspective based on very different assumptions from Western notions.

This book interweaves Eastern healing ideas with Western psychotherapy practice. It provides a good clear introduction to the basics of Chinese healing philosophy and provides an unusual lens through which to view people who present with various emotional difficulties.

The book itself is easily and accessibly divided into four parts, centred around two frameworks, that of the eight dichotomous principles (Yin/Yang; Internal/External; Heat/Cold; Excess/Deficiency) and the five elements of Chinese thought (Earth, Metal, Water, Wood and Fire). Separate chapters describe the principles and the ways that they might be used in both diagnosing and treating presenting psychological dilemmas in non-pejorative ways. Case studies illustrate strategies for addressing intrapersonal or interpersonal problems.

Both frames are used to bring light to the differential diagnosis of client issues by the common skills of looking, listening, asking and touching. The notion of holism, and the principle of respect for the interconnectedness of all things, parallel systemic notions including the idea that an intervention in any part of a problematic situation may produce profound changes throughout the whole system. We exist in a web of interrelatedness.

*Intent* is also emphasised, and is analogous to the Western therapist's focus on listening carefully and empathically, whatever model we are using. I was taken by the Samurai way of 'living each moment as if

your hair were on fire'! Such a practice may require discipline and persistence, but as the authors say, 'We owe it to our clients to bring that focus and creativity to all our interactions with them'.

While the authors note the difficulty in treating internal (deep and chronic) problems they do provide treatment strategies. They then single out psychodynamic perspectives for criticism, and I couldn't help but wonder if this may reflect a lack of understanding of psychodynamic processes rather than an accurate assessment of their efficacy. To imply that the latter approach is about dangerously dragging repressed information out of safe isolation, rather than an extremely cautious approach to integrating split off (unconscious) parts of the personality that affect a client's relational world, seems naïve. Such errors are more likely a result of inexperience and poor training, than of a model with great respect for a client's inner world.

Both Eastern medicine and Western psychotherapy are complex and profound systems, and to be fully appreciated, each requires a great deal of training, so an integration is a big ask. That this book has two authors perhaps testifies to the complexities. While it may have a limited audience, if you aspire to broad stimulation and are open to the timeless wisdom of the East, then this will be an interesting and valuable read. May your hair burn, but not too fiercely!

**William Vorobioff**

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### Risky Practices: A Counsellor's Guide to Risk Management in Private Practice

Nigel McBride & Michael Tunnecliffe. Palmyra, WA, Bayside Books, 2001.

Paperback, 133 pp. \$33.00.  
ISBN 0646 20667 2

**The authors of this Australian paperback** have aimed their text fairly and squarely at private practitioners. The first part sets the

scene by examining ethical and competence issues in practice through the lens of risk management. The authors have an accessible style of writing and provide boxed summaries entitled 'Risk nutshells' for each subsection of this part of the book. These summaries are little gems. The second part of the book consists of 50 question and answer scenarios which give examples dealing with multiple relationships, legal responsibilities, conflicts of interest, psychological testing, disclosure of professional qualifications, informed consent to different types of treatment, supervision, documentation, duty of care obligations, privacy and document storage. Finally as appendices, there is a handy glossary of terms and examples of 'Client Engagement Agreement', 'Engagement Interview Questions' and 'Employee Confidentiality Agreement'.

Thinking about counselling or therapy as a risk management process probably doesn't grab many therapists. The notion of having a fiduciary duty to clients because we have a special relationship of trust and confidence may sit uneasily with therapeutic practices that emphasise client empowerment and de-emphasise therapist-as-expert. The authors make the point that risk management begins at the client engagement stage. I would also add that risk management assumes a level of therapist self-development. It's hard to see the risk if your personal and professional development is limited. Professional training and qualifications do not always assure these attributes.

The book is interesting because it outlines effectively a code of practice which should help reduce risk, i.e. the likelihood of making costly mistakes as a professional. For those beginning private practice, the book spells out some dos and don'ts and gives some helpful suggestions which may encourage therapists to engage clients actively in the outcomes and processes of therapy. The case examples are pithy and certainly highlight common experiences when practising in the 'real world'. This book would be a worthwhile addition to the library of both experienced and new therapists, especially if contemplating private practice.

**Kaye Frankcom**

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## Therapeutic and Training Tools from St. Luke's

*Bear Cards* (\$49.50). *Bear Stickers* (\$9.90). *Strength Cards* (\$46.75). *Strength Stickers* (\$9.90). *Strength Cards for Kids* (\$49.50). *Strength Cards for Kids Stickers* (\$16.95). *The I Can Monsters Cards* (\$41.25). *The I Can Monsters Stickers* (\$9.90). *Reflexions Cards* (\$49.50). *Reflexions Stickers* (\$16.95). *Scales Pads* (\$26.50). *Scales 2 Pads* (\$33.00). (All prices GST inclusive). St Luke's Innovative Resources 137 McCrae Street, Bendigo, Victoria 3550; ph + 61 3 5442 0500; fax + 61 3 5442 0555; stlukeir@stlukes.org.au; www.stlukes.org.au. Also available from sales@acer.edu.au, tel: (03) 9835 7447, fax: (03) 9835 7499, www.acerpress.com.au, Customer Service, ACER Press, Private Bag 55, Camberwell 3124.

St Luke's is a Bendigo-based, multi-service agency that provides a range of family and community services throughout North Central Victoria. St Luke's publishes therapeutic and training tools through its training and research division, Innovative Resources. We will review the St Luke's resources that we have used, most recently in a child protection agency. We have used the tools in individual and family counselling, groupwork and educational training for other professionals, and our experience includes the use of Bear Cards and Stickers, Strength Cards and Stickers, Strength Cards for Kids and Stickers, The I Can Monster Cards and Stickers, Reflexions Cards and Stickers and Scales Pads. The Resources are accompanied with an information book outlining the philosophy behind the cards and giving ideas and examples for using the tools in practice.

We have found that St Luke's resources give us a concrete tool to assist clients to identify more easily with their strengths and to create new possibilities and new ways of talking about their lives. The resources are neutral, in that they allow clients to explore and discover their own answers rather than these being suggested by the counsellor. We think this enables the client to better transfer these meanings into their own lives.

For example, we used *The Bears* cards with a family whom we were unable to engage in conversation around their perceptions of their children. We were able to ask them to pick a bear card for each

child and then have a useful conversation around their choices, and allow space for their (negative) perceptions to be expressed and explored. As a result of this process we were able to use the *Strength* cards to assist the family to begin to think of new ways to describe their children.

Many of the clients we work with are very concrete in the way they think and using a visual tool assists greatly in meeting clients in their space. Clients have described the cards as useful, and helpful in allowing them to see parts of themselves that they have forgotten. We have observed clients who are initially unable to name positive aspects of themselves, being able to identify several positives with the use of the strength cards/stickers. This can sometimes be a stepping stone towards making further change, and can have a powerful impact upon their lives.

The bright attractive cards help to lift clients out of a mind-set which is often problem-saturated. They invite clients into the world of imagination and possibilities without this being too confronting. We have used strength cards and stickers to help clients imagine and explore hopes and dreams for themselves as individuals, as parents, for their children and as a family. We have also used the child-oriented resources, for example the *Strength Cards for Kids*, to help parents step into their children's worlds and see situations from their children's perspectives. Building empathy and insight in parents is an important part of child protection work and the cards made this more possible and less threatening.

The frequent use of animals to embody strengths and personality traits means that many of the tools are not gender or culture specific, and allows clients to identify easily with the characters.

However, it would be useful to be able to incorporate issues of gender, culture, age and disability throughout the range. This would allow more opportunities for conversations around these issues without these specific factors being the sole focus of the cards, which clients might find stigmatising and limiting. It would also be more representative of the range of problems and issues people encounter in everyday life.

We realise that some of these issues (e.g. age, gender) have been incorporated into the new *Angels with Attitude* cards but feel these issues would be more usefully included across several sets of cards. We would suggest additional cards such as (for

*Bears*) a bandaged bear, a wheelchair bear, a dirty and neglected bear. We feel these would be useful for all services working with children, not only for child protection workers.

Many of the clients we work with come from disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have a high level of education, thus the use of pictures accompanied by descriptors allows the cards to reach a greater audience without stigmatising clients with lower levels of literacy. It also means the cards can be used for different age groups from child to adult.

The flip side of this is that without the descriptors, clients can find the cards too obscure and ambiguous. This is not such an issue in individual counselling when the counsellor is able to help clients to make sense of cards or ask clients to choose a card that creates greater meaning for them. However, it can be more difficult in a group setting.

Clients unaccustomed to self-assessment have found it easy to use the *Scales*. One client felt she had nothing to learn about parenting, and that nothing needed to change in her life to have her children restored to her care. We invited her to use the St Luke's Scale Cards to help her assess her own parenting at the beginning and end of a therapeutic group. This process allowed this client to develop an understanding of the impact on her children of her previous approach to parenting and life choices, and of the need for change.

Scale Cards offer a wide variety of options; at times however, we have wondered about how to fit a particular resource to a client's situation and therefore feel that the scales are best used when options are pre-selected by the worker to fit the mode of intervention (e.g. goal setting, planning, self-assessment).

St Luke's Resources are both affordable and accessible, and can be ordered over the internet as well as by post. The cards are well made and stand up to long use by children and families. However, in our work in client's homes we have at times found the cards difficult to manage due to their number and large size. This has required us to pre-select cards. While this is a good option for smaller children, clients with limited attention span and others who may feel overwhelmed by 50 or so cards, we feel varying the size of the cards would also allow workers to purchase cards most fitting to their work situations. For example, while the 10cm

by 15cm cards may work well in a large training room, a smaller version of for example 10cm by 6cm may be more effective on a client's coffee table or for a child to hold. It may be helpful to give suggestions in the resource book on selecting out particular cards.

The *stickers* compliment the use of the therapeutic tools. Being able to take their stickers home helps clients develop a sense of ownership over their realisations and to share these with their family and friends. With children we have often used the stickers in groups to build self-esteem and identity strengths, and they enjoy choosing stickers for each other and taking the stickers home. They are also extremely popular with adult clients and we also like the expansion of the concepts into note cards (now available in the *Angels with Attitude* range). We would also suggest the expansion of other cards into this format and also into poster format.

There is a wide range of choice in St Luke's Resources and finding what works best for different clients is part of achieving success with the cards. We have enjoyed playing around with the cards and exploring different ways of using them to bring fun, creativity and a sense of possibility into clients' lives. Ultimately the cards are only limited by the worker's own imagination and resourcefulness.

**Kirsten Stafford and  
Tracey Popham**

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## Parenting between Cultures: The Primary Years: A Program for Parents from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

Catherine Blunt. Marymead Child  
and Family Centre, Kingston  
ACT, 2000.

Paperback, spiral bound. 64 pp. \$39.60  
(including GST) plus \$5.50 (postage  
and packing). Available for purchase from  
Marymead Child and Family Centre PO Box  
4260, Kingston ACT 2604, Phone + 61 2  
6295 2755.

**Parenting between Cultures is produced** by the Marymead Child and Family Centre, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

Parenting Between Cultures is a 64-page group work manual for working with culturally and linguistically diverse parents in Australia. This manual has been well researched and trialled in Canberra with four ethnic communities and is part of an ongoing project.

Having had some experience with the complex and challenging area of cross-cultural counselling with families, I am suitably impressed with Catherine Blunt's blending of solution focused and strengths based approaches, group work theory and parent education theory. I was impressed again with her candour about the difficulty of working in this area: she says, 'Balancing different world views of individualism and collectivism and taking pains to respect each caused me much angst'.

Too often I fear that the 'challenge of balancing worldviews' is simply placed in the too hard basket. Even in family therapy we have tended to drift toward single approaches and to ignore and even to disrespect other views, opting instead for the simple way out of our dilemmas by just adopting the theory and practice of the month. I think it healthy that before Catherine wrote this manual, she experienced a little angst for us!

In 2001, *Parenting between Cultures* received a highly commended award in the Valuing Diversity category at the 2001 National Child Abuse awards. This training manual is a foot-in-the-door for facilitators and workers and has been laid out in how-to format. It is also well-referenced and contains a resource chapter, which gives facilitators a list of resources for parenting education in various languages. Each session outline provides a step by step group process, exercises, and handouts. Sessions have been designed to occupy either single sessions or a six-week group. The six sessions of the manual are:

Session 1: Where do we come from and what is important?

Session 2: Keeping our culture

Session 3: Bending like a river — how do we do it?

Session 4: What happens at school and why?

Session 5: Maintaining harmony in the family

Session 6: Parenting is hard work: How to get support

More recently Jennifer Lamont, a project officer working on the Parenting Between Cultures project, has developed a facilitator's manual. This manual gives group facilitators further support in working in this complex and important area. They hope to have the train-the-trainer manual or facilitators' manual ready by the end of the year 2002.

If the family is the nexus of cultural construction, then parenting education that is sensitive to cultural difference must be of great importance for all of us as individuals and as a nation.

**Chris Lobsinger**  
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## Bringing Up Boys, A Parenting Manual for Sole Mothers Raising Sons

Jo Howard. Australian Council  
for Educational Research,  
Melbourne, 1998.

120 pp. \$49.50 including GST.  
Product code A685BK.

## Mothers and Sons; Bringing up Boys as a Sole Parent

Jo Howard. Port Melbourne  
Lothian, 2001.

288 pp. \$24.95.  
ISBN 0 7344 0186 8

Many years ago, tired of seeing a series of 'naughty boys' in family therapy with their single parents, I ran a series of groups for separated parents. All the parents who came were mothers, and almost all of them had sons. How I wish these books, by Jo Howard, Melbourne social worker and family therapist, had been available then. Howard has written two very good resource books with different purposes. The first, *Bringing Up Boys*, is a manual for family counsellors or those involved in running groups for sole mothers. The second, *Mothers and Sons*, has a 'self-help' style. This is aimed at families and also at therapists looking for guidance in their work with sole parents.

*Bringing Up Boys* (1998) comes directly out of Howard's extensive work with single mothers. Sub-titled 'A parenting manual for sole mothers raising sons', it has a pragmatic tone, yet a sound theoretical basis. Using a feminist narrative framework, it covers sequentially the steps for setting up and running a group for sole parents. The layout is attractive. The topics for sessions 1–8 cover areas such as exploring gender stereotypes, communication, setting limits, separation, grief and loss. There are options for further weeks covering issues of sexuality, parenting after violence and lesbian mothers. The book is written in a very accessible style, and would be an excellent manual for workers in community agencies. It would also be a very good resource for child and adolescent mental health services whose waiting lists are full of separated parents anxious to deal with the difficulties of sole parenting. I like the way the author invites cultural awareness in the group by inviting someone to be the 'cultural observer'. Although I am not sure why that person 'should ideally be a woman from a culture other than Anglo-Australian' (29). Why not have an 'Anglo', or two women from different backgrounds in the role? It might enhance the exploration of cultural blindness, and relieve those who are only too expert in observing dominant culture. The 'voice' of the books is positive, affirming and attempts to dispel the myths of sons only succeeding in the world if their dads are actively involved. Ideally yes, two active and switched on parents probably do contribute to a child's mental health. In reality, parents of both sexes have an uncanny knack of falling out of the picture earlier than one might wish.

The second book, *Mothers and Sons* (2001) is also comprehensive, aimed at the broader professional and parent audience. It covers tricky topics for single mothers such as: adolescent sexuality, which parent to live with and how to help kids use protective behaviours if they don't feel safe. It could be used directly with parents or by those beginning to work with this population. It is full of wisdom about the exigencies of sole parenting. It includes that sometimes forgotten, and thought to be old fashioned, view about the importance of 'good manners' (47). The author dips into some aspects of the ADD/ADHD debate, including the perplexing phenomenon that those children who have experienced or witnessed trauma and violence show symptoms similar to those manifested by children diagnosed with ADHD. Her straight advice on how parents

can help children manage parental separation is good: don't give false hope, don't denigrate the other parent, don't let them take care emotionally of you (the distressed mother). I loved Howard's caution about the use of the 'proverbial bungalow' for the young person needing space. Her presentation of negative consequences is essential reading for families at this stage (227) — sort of an 'out the back and out of sight, isn't always right' message. Howard's suggestion to face children and offer leading questions (45) could be tempered with the advantages of communicating when not looking directly at your child, such as when in the car or doing the dishes. But this is only a small quibble.

The end of the book shows how Howard advertises the groups and how she evaluates the program. It is rich with all the resource information group workers need to run the groups in different agencies. Many case vignettes are from families from non-Anglo-Saxon culture, and Howard succeeds in introducing the issues that may arise from the absence of fathers in male dominated cultures.

Both these books give good advice, useful exercises and enlist the reader in examining their own views whilst being sensitive to the needs of both parents and children. They provide details of the relevant literature. Where is the equivalent for fathers and daughters? The author Elizabeth Bowen writes of '... the two terrible things about childhood: helplessness (being in other people's power) and apprehension — the apprehension that something is being concealed from us because it was too bad to be told' (*Collected Impressions*). Howard's approach offers ways to take some of the terror out of those 'terrible things'.

**Sarah Jones**

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## Treating Huckleberry Finn

David Nylund. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2000.

Hardback, 219 pp. Price \$US40.00; \$A90.00. ISBN 078795229X

*Treating Huckleberry Finn* explores the shortcomings of the biological model in the understanding and treatment of children

presenting with the syndrome of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and presents a treatment approach derived from the application of solution focused and narrative family therapy. Ideas for the classroom are also discussed. Part One (Chapters 1 and 2) critiques the concept of ADHD as a biological disorder. Nylund discusses the alarming increase in the apparent incidence of ADHD, the subjective basis of diagnostic tools, the deficit language pervading the biological model, the impact of service policy and fiscal stringency on assessment and treatment, the failure of the biological approach to consider environmental factors, the intense marketing and profits made by pharmacological companies, and ADHD as a social construct. A key difficulty of the critique is the author's failure to acknowledge the many medical practitioners, attachment theorists, traumatologists, and developmental psychologists who argue against a solely biological model of ADHD. A broader appeal to the literature would have revealed that the biological view of ADHD, although the predominant one in significant segments of the Anglo-Saxon medical community, is by no means the only available perspective. In failing to explore these other perspectives, the author has positioned himself on one side of the battle-weary nature–nurture debate. Current research emphasises that human development relies on a complex ongoing interaction between the organism's genetic inheritance and its interaction with multiple and diverse environmental factors. In other words, the current nature–nurture debate reaches beyond, 'Is ADHD biological or is it environmentally induced?', asking rather, 'How are biological and environment factors interrelated and interconnected?' Although the author hints at these complexities, a more comprehensive review of the literature would have anchored the author's particular focus within a broad systemic network perspective, adding strength to his concerns and underlining the complexity of the ADHD debate.

Chapter three outlines the author's approach to ADHD and discusses the theoretical approaches which have informed his clinical practice. The author appropriately reminds readers of important aspects common to all good therapy including curiosity, respect and hope. He also stresses the importance of assessing the child's environment and its possible contribution to presentation with the ADHD syndrome. Further discussion of the role of trauma, abuse, chronic anxiety,

inter-parental conflict and neglect, would have strengthened this section, and focused attention on the many children diagnosed with ADHD whose symptoms resolve when abuse, trauma or chronic inter-parental conflict are addressed.

Chapter four to eight describe in detail the steps of treatment and specific therapeutic techniques used by the author. This section of the book is invaluable to clinicians and teachers working with children with ADHD symptoms and can be applied to medical or non-medical settings, and to working with children with or without other comorbid medical or family issues. The interventions described can be implemented on their own or alongside other interventions such as medication or treatment of the broader family system. Clinicians and especially trainee clinicians will find the author's clarity as to how he plans intervention and what he actually does with the child and family in the therapy room particularly helpful. Key goals of treatment are clearly stated: separating the problem of ADHD from the child, mapping the influence of ADHD, attending to exceptions, reclaiming special abilities, telling and celebrating the new story. Specific examples of useful questions are provided, techniques are described fully and transcripts of sessions illustrate the author's work in detail, as he moves through the various goals. Intrinsic to this entire section of the book is the author's ability to engage children, inspire hope, and facilitate specific goals and tasks to empower children and maximise their functioning.

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## Family Secrets: Gay Sons — A Mother's Story

Jean M. Baker. NY, Haworth, 1998

241 pp. US\$54.95 hard.

ISBN: 0-7890-0248-5

US\$19.95 soft.

ISBN: 1-56023-915-8

**This book has two major virtues: it provides supportive and helpful information for parents of homosexual offspring and it is easy to read.**

Jean Baker, the author, is a practising clinical psychologist and mother of two gay sons. Her book traces Andy and Gary's early developmental history briefly and then focuses on her shock and subsequent shame at her own reaction when Gary, the younger son, tells his parents of his homosexuality a year after entering college. She traces her own progress as she plumbs the depth of American Southern homophobia and recognises its more subtle manifestations in herself. Later she has to deal with the knowledge that Gary has AIDS and she details her pain in watching her son slowly die of a disease dreaded and poorly understood in the decade of the 1980s, when blame rather than sympathy was a common reaction to this disorder. Finally she suffers the loss of her husband and her son in a very short span of time. Not surprisingly it is some years before Andy, the older son, feels able to tell his mother that he too is homosexual. His mother's response to this information is very different to her initial response to Gary and in this we see her own development from fear to acceptance of homosexuality as a normal variant of human response and her evolution into an educator and activist for gay young people. The book itself is presumably part of this development.

Jean Baker's book is written without jargon and would be easily digested by the lay readers for whom it is partly designed. It also has an academic, formal and disciplined approach with appropriate bibliography and references suitable for professionals and community groups anxious to extend the limits of their own understanding and to work with gay young people who are struggling with their sexual orientation in a prejudiced world.

A problem with the book is that its other purpose is to deal with the author's still palpable grief at the loss of her young son; as such, it is a eulogy to him. The two functions of the book sometimes sit uneasily with each other. Gary is presented to us in idealised form. At the beginning of chapter three she says,

Jack and I were strangely oblivious to our children's flaws. Even though we were super sensitive to one another's faults, we tended to idealise our children and sometimes we were able to overlook characteristics that some might have thought less than wonderful.

She goes on to display this idealisation throughout the book; Gary and to some extent Andy are presented to us as so brilliant, loving, virtuous and brave that they become less than believable at times. Other parents struggling with their more ordinary sons might experience the author as 'protesting too much' and thus undoing some of her own good work.

Overall the book fulfils its primary purposes in that it presents appropriate information and suggestions for future direction for parents, teachers, and the wider community. It will on the whole be helpful to families coming to understand their own and their children's responses to homosexuality, in themselves and others. Hopefully for the author it was also one more step towards managing her grief for her son's death.

**Penny Roughtan**

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## Lesbian Step-Families: An Ethnography of Love

Janet M. Wright. NY,  
Haworth, 1998.

242pp. US\$64.95 hard.

ISBN: 0-7890-0436-4

US\$19.95 soft.

ISBN: 1-56023-928-X

**This book is well worth reading by all family therapists and by those of us involved in step-families.** The author's core argument is that lesbian stepfamilies provide a fertile ground for the necessary 'rethinking' of our ideas about the family and in particular motherhood (4). The nuclear heterosexual family, so valued by our political leaders, is a problematical society ideal; on the one hand it is somewhat mythical, given the significant number of children who grow up in alternative models; more importantly, from a feminist perspective, the heterosexual family is seen as the vehicle that perpetuates a society in which women are subordinated (7).

This book is the outcome of a PhD study of five American lesbian step-families. At the time of the study, Janet frankly explains that she was coping with the breakdown of her own lesbian relationship and has subsequently successfully repartnered with another lesbian who is a stepmother to

her children. My own professional and personal context is that of a child and family psychiatrist, parent and step-parent. I work with many stepfamilies and some lesbian stepfamilies. From my perspective, the text is especially valuable for the discussion of the roles of biological and step-parents and the significance of gender in parenting.

Janet analyses the different ways that step-parents can share responsibilities for parenting. She distinguishes between a co-parent stance, a stepmother stance and a co-mother stance (127). I am not sure that these categories are particularly useful; as she states, step-parents develop unique relationships with the children that depend both on the expectations of the biological parent and the step-parent, and the children are active agents in the process. Her crucial point is that the viability of step-families depends on creating a balance between the degree of responsibility for the children allocated to a parent figure, and the power they are accorded in this role (207). Janet delineates the important roles step-parents exercise as playmates, protectors, teachers, and providers and fixers. I am not sure that these roles are specific for step-families, and I certainly do not think they need to be gendered. One of the positive experiences for people surviving the breakup of a traditional nuclear family is the opportunity to discover one's capacity for roles previously denied by the prescribed patterns of the traditional heterosexual nuclear family.

More problematical, to my mind, are Janet's claims about the inherent value of the lesbian stepfamily. For example, she claims that lesbian couples start with a clean slate (101). In a thesis that substantially relies on notions of social construction, it seems inappropriate to claim that anybody can start with a clean slate. Indeed this work documents the struggle that lesbian couples have with expectations from their families of origin and with the wider heterosexual, male supremacist society.

I know what she means: two women struggling and loving together to establish appropriate and workable roles in regard to children, household and work, are less burdened by the gender role models that heterosexuals have to deal with. On the other hand they are burdened by their struggle with a homophobic society and a need to answer their children's questions

about where their biological father is. I am not clear that either 'slate' is more privileged as a site for liberation. Another problematical feature of the text is the tension between her efforts to de-gender mother and father roles and her difficulty in naming the shared role as 'parenting'. I think the unwritten subtext is the struggle of lesbian couples to deal with the demands of our postcapitalist, nuclear family based society, without falling into the same traps as heterosexual couples. Dealing with the absence of the father, that is the biological father, adds to the problem. As Dale (aged eight) wrote in his journal, 'It is Father's Day and I don't have a father. I felt kinda sad.' As Janet writes, 'We [women] can father but we can never be male'. I think this statement underlines the dilemma. I think it would be better to say that while women can fulfill the parenting needs of their children, they can never fully replace biological fathers.

Janet's book also includes other interesting sections about the methodology of such an in-depth, qualitative study of a small sample. However, the crucial contribution the work makes is the opportunity to reflect constructively on our notions of 'family' and on her affirmation of the importance of love in human life.

**Peter Churven**

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## 'Rent Two Films and Let's Talk in the Morning'. Using Popular Movies in Psychotherapy

John & Jan G. Hesley,  
NY, Wiley, 2001.

*Second Edition, 353 pages, soft cover,  
£28.95. ISBN 0 471 41659 2.*

As someone who has used films to augment therapy for many years, I found this book entertaining to read and most helpful. As the Hesleys state,

At a time when traditional philosophies and religions have lost much of their authority, films represent a source of

cultural identity through the adoption of attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, and even the language of film characters (26).

Films can be seen as a form of therapeutic metaphor.

Both involve surprise that disrupts habitual responses, both use rich images that require a client to supply personal content in order to construct meanings that are relevant, and both involve implied directives for change (9).

The initial four chapters (some sixty pages), includes:

- The introduction and history of film/video use
- The benefits of using film/video
- How to integrate film/video into therapy
- How to select film/video for use with clients

The remainder of this book is an anthology of therapeutic films categorised under headings for easy reference, including:

- Family Therapy — Child/parent relationships, single parents, blended families, sibling relationships, family conflict, letting go.
- Couples Therapy — Communication, commitment, divorce, conflict and negotiation, renewed intimacy.
- Individual Therapy with Children — Friends and loyalty, personal responsibility, peer relationships, search for identity, loss and grief.
- Individual Therapy with Adults — Recognising self-worth, conflict with family of origin, women's and men's issues, aging, bereavement.
- Psychopathology — Intellectual functioning, personality disorders, mood disorders, phobias, child and spouse abuse.
- Medical Issues — AIDS, disabilities, severe illness.
- Vocational Issues and Occupational Stress — Personal goals and values, team work, ethics.
- Inspirational — Searching for meaning, role models, personal courage.

In my opinion this book would be a valuable asset to the library of any professional who is dedicated to supporting their clients develop their own resources and creativity.

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