

REVIEWS

Independent comment on audio-visual and print materials

A MORNING WITH OLGA SILVERSTEIN [Video]. Produced by The Victorian Association of Family Therapists Inc., available from Olga Silverstein Video, c/- Barbara Fraser, Boroondara Consulting Group, 140 Barkers Road, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122. Ph +61 3 9819 9877; +61 3 9819 9118. Cost \$60, including postage (cheques payable to VAFT).

Twice recently, once sharing a ski lift ride with a friend amidst the spectacular landscape of the Snowy Mountains, and on the next occasion with friends at dinner, I was drawn into a familiar conversation. This time I was searching for ways to convey the idea that how we become who we are as men and as women is profoundly shaped by social and cultural expectations. I did not want to finish this conversation in resignation, nor was I willing to subscribe to the view being put forward that these were predictable effects due to biological gender differences.

It has been a pleasure, subsequently, for me to review *A Morning with Olga Silverstein*, a video recording of a workshop organised by VAFT and presented by Olga in August, 1995 at what is now called The Bouverie Centre. The two and one half hour recording includes 60 minutes of conversational style presentation and questions from workshop participants (the sound quality is excellent) followed by a dubbed ninety minute video of Olga interviewing a client and subsequent questions (where the sound quality is very poor). This is an opportunity for viewers to hear Olga Silverstein discuss some of the social and cultural beliefs that impact on the mother-son relationship, how that is achieved, and at what cost. The client interview is used to demonstrate how Olga's ideas can be put into practice.

In describing a gender split that has become costly to all, where men and women have occupied distinct spheres and performed different tasks with corresponding personality attributes, Olga skilfully connects aspects of gender politics and therapy. She builds on the interface between the personal and professional in a way that invites reflection. She describes how dimensions of modern western culture work together to perpetuate the myth that only a father can make a boy a man. She deftly challenges the mythology surrounding such cultural practices and calls on therapists to look at our own assumptions, behaviours and expectations that contribute to maintaining patriarchy.

Olga draws on the evidence of war, poor health and high suicide rates to call into question the assumption that men, when motivated by prescriptions of success, ambition, status and emotional independence, have all that is required to survive well in a tough world. Acknowledging that our culture is in the process of significant change provides an opportunity for reviewing

previously held gender stereotypes. Olga suggests that to be strong and able to survive well in the future will require of men that they develop compassion, capacity for intimacy and emotional connection to self and others—qualities that have been, in the main, attributed to women.

Olga suggests that the greatest hope for ending the division between genders lies in the transformation of the mother-son relationship. This is not simply because it is the responsibility of women to initiate and maintain such changes. Although this point is not developed in the workshop, Olga refers to the post World War II barrage of mother blaming which continues to the present day, and has had profoundly disabling effects on mothers (Silverstein and Rashbaum, 1994). Olga argues that for a long time raising sons to be independent and emotionally self sufficient has been very painful for women and for their sons. She suggests that there is so much to be gained from raising sons to be loving and connected to others that having to courage to do so will benefit all.

In a little over an hour, Olga touches on a wide range of issues and prominent among these are some of the powerful myths that perpetuate restrictive definitions of masculinity:

- that heroism through war, sport, financial status and emotional independence equates with success
- that male children must be removed from a mother's influence to escape the dangers of too close a relationship with her
- that a boy needs a father figure—a male role model—to become a man
- that love and competence, authority and compassion, strength and emotional connection are mutually exclusive

Olga's book, *The Courage to Raise Good Men*, supports and develops the workshop material, and the warm manner in which Olga presents provided me with a strong invitation to reread it. I have gained something immeasurable from this rereading, and at the same time have felt grateful and loving towards the many women with whom I have shared hours of talking about the hopes and hurdles we face in raising sons. I know we have, and continue to need, courage to find ways around and over the obstacles.

In the next stage of her presentation, Olga discusses how she has begun to transfer this body of ideas into therapy. Olga shows her first interview with a Cuban American woman and her Afro American son. The children's father had been murdered and the family faced ongoing oppressions related to culture and socioeconomic background. It is in this context that Olga develops a conversation exploring aspects of the mother-son

relationship. Olga says she is working to validate the mother's competence so that she can feel good about her contribution, and simultaneously, to assist the young man to access his tender feelings. She makes it very clear to the mother that raising children alone is a tough job for any woman, and especially so in the situation she faces. When Olga says 'you need help', she conveys her awareness of the woman's hardships, and the community's responsibility to support her. She does not expect the mother to make these changes alone. Unfortunately, the poor quality of the client interview limits the usefulness of the tape. I watched the tape on two different machines and both times could barely hear much of the conversation.

As I have been writing, images of some of the men I know and love—my father, my partner, my son and special friends—have kept surfacing. These are men who do value relationship and who have to struggle with requirements placed on them in order to make choices about their lives. I am sure that there are many others who want for themselves and for their sons the experience of knowing and loving themselves so they can know and love others. Continuing to develop new possibilities for female and male roles and relationships offers great hope. How can we make sure these possibilities find their way into the therapeutic conversations we have on a daily basis?

Reference

Silverstein, O. and Rashbaum, B. (1994). *The Courage to Raise Good Men*, NY, Penguin.

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LOSS OF A BABY—DEATH OF A DREAM.

Margaret Nicol. Pymble, HarperCollins, 1997. First published 1989 by Bantam Books. Paperback, 201pp. ISBN 0 7322 5869 3. \$19.95.

Margaret Nicol, a clinical psychologist, has written a moving and beautiful book which she dedicates to all the mothers and fathers who have grieved over the loss of a baby, and to the memory of those children. In his Foreword Professor Russell Meares says that the book 'concerns a relatively neglected part of the catalogue of human loss. It focuses particularly on losses which many people in a woman's environment do not respond to as if they were significant or painful events'. Such events include miscarriage, abortion, infertility and stillbirth. Few people realise the intensity of such losses, and inept and hurtful comments abound. These comments of course increase the woman's sense of isolation in her own family as well as amongst her friends and acquaintances. Other more clear cut losses are dealt with, such as neonatal death, sudden infant death syndrome, the birth of a handicapped child, and adoption.

The subtitle describes the theme running clearly through the book—the dream cherished and built on in

imagination, and often shared with few people, if at all, is shattered. Life in a sense stops, and it can be very hard to get it on track again. Few people understand how intense the grief is.

The book abounds with the stories told by women who have lost babies or pregnancies in various ways. Because of this it can be appreciated equally by women who have experienced such losses, by therapists who listen to their stories, and by those doctors who experience the loss with their patients. It is also for the families of the women who are often at a loss to understand, especially when they themselves are grieving in a somewhat different time frame.

In her introduction, Margaret Nicol says she initially set out to write on maternal grief following stillbirth or neonatal death, but as she talked to women, she began to realise that the themes in all reproductive losses were similar. What's more, the experiences were those of many women. Two epidemiologists at the University of Western Australia estimated, after analysing statistics on reproductive losses (1984–1986) that of all women in Australia of reproductive age, ten percent will suffer some such loss each year and that on average, every woman will suffer approximately three reproductive losses by the age of forty-four. When to that are added the losses she may experience as a grandmother, and the grief that impinges on her via her sisters and friends, the sum of grief is considerable.

In 1980 Margaret Nicol did a lot of her research via SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support Group). In 1982 she was awarded the Women's Fellowship by the WA Government for her work with bereaved mothers in the community. She travelled widely in England, Canada and US, studying innovations in services for bereaved parents. There is no doubt that things are much better for women than they were even 30 years ago, but there is a long way to go in fine tuning. Margaret Nicol's book is a valuable contribution to this.

Loss of a Baby is intense, with little light relief. Many times I found myself in tears as I read the women's stories. Although one tends to want to read on, it is undoubtedly better to read the book in small portions so that each new topic can have its own impact. There is no attempt to comment on the stories or to analyse them, and I feel that this is wise. How can one judge anyway? The experiences are those of the women themselves and each one is unique in its own way. Margaret Nicol does however comment in each chapter on her findings and her insights as a result of her research. Many will find her comments on the grief of men and of children very useful.

I recommend this book to therapists and to doctors and to women who struggle with reproductive loss. One finds that such loss is, in reality, much harder than we ever imagined it would be. *Loss of a Baby* helps us to realise that we are not alone.

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SOMETIMES MY HEART GOES NUMB: LOVE AND CAREGIVING IN A TIME OF AIDS. Charles Garfield, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1995. Available now from Prentice Hall. xxii, 316pp. Hardback \$34.95, ISBN 0 7879 0105 9.

In approaching this review I am aware of how closely this book relates to significant research and practitioner experiences of my own. It poses the question: 'What does it mean for me to care for you as you die'? Perhaps this may be called 'care in the personal mode'. It is costly, and transforming of personhood. Such committed care for the dying is embedded within social, institutional, familial and other relational contexts. People encounter each other in direct, physical ways that make it difficult to hide from the vulnerabilities within carer and recipient alike.

This book is not framed within any major theoretical paradigm, though it honours the importance of personal narratives. Primarily, Garfield provides us with powerful accounts of volunteers' lives as they reconstruct their experiences of caring for people dying of AIDS. He provides insights into the meanings of these events for the people concerned and in so doing contributes to the question of what it means to be human. His informants are opened to their own hurts and pain and in these unique caring relationships they too experience inner healing. We too, are touched, and challenged to make our way towards the accomplishment of our own humanness.

Garfield's involvement in caring in the personal mode is well established through his community volunteer initiative in the US, the Shanti Project. The Sanskrit word means 'the peace that passes all understanding' or more briefly, 'inner peace'. People are educated and supported towards compassionate, non-judgemental care based on their own journey towards such an experience of inner 'at-homeness', and from this centredness provide support to the dying, their friends and families. This deeply personal caring complements the tasks of medical care for the patient's body which often leave professionals with little time, energy, or commitment to care for the patient's self.

The inevitable costs of such caring are discussed more fully in the closing chapters; carer trauma, loss and grief exact an enormous toll. These chapters make a valuable contribution to the legitimising of carer pain within the health professions. Also valuable is the recognition that refusal or inability to face one's own pain can lead to 'compassion fatigue' and burnout. Likewise, persistent open exposure can lead the carer to the self-protective mechanism of 'psychic numbing'.

This book will be of interest to people working with AIDS sufferers and their families or with other families immersed in chronic or terminal illness. While not providing the family therapy practitioner with direct clinical insights or intervention strategies, this book approaches the underlying nature of care within human suffering with considerable depth and power. Support

and supervision for therapists is an important aspect of self-care that can be extrapolated from this book. *Sometimes my Heart goes Numb* deepens our sensitivities; without such sensitivities even our best professional practice falls short of the human integrity that we want to achieve.

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DIVORCE AS FAMILY TRANSITION: WHEN PRIVATE SORROW BECOMES A PUBLIC MATTER. Margaret Robinson. London, Karnac Books, 1997. Softcover, 78 pp. ISBN 1 85575 148 8. £11.95.

Margaret Robinson is a distinguished marital and family therapist, family divorce mediator and social worker, who was one of the founding members of the Family Mediation Service at the Institute of Family Therapy in the United Kingdom. She writes from the perspective of her work with children, families, and the legal system. *Divorce as Family Transition* addresses the larger system issues involving not only the interaction between children and parents, but between the helping professionals and the family, as well as the interaction between the helping professionals themselves. This book builds on Margaret Robinson's previous publications, *Family Transformation Through Divorce and Remarriage* (1991) and *Step by Step: Focus on Stepfamilies* (1993) which primarily address child and family issues. Robinson provides personal reflections on the principles underlying her ideas, which are based on her own work experience and the influence of other family therapists. It is refreshing for a writer to acknowledge the significance of others in her own professional development and how people like Lynn Hoffman and Judy Wallerstein have contributed to her thinking and practice of family therapy and mediation.

This book makes a significant contribution to the field of family mediation. The focus is on how the English Family Law Act of 1996 will affect the process of divorce and the practice of the mediators, therapists, solicitors and attorneys who are involved in such cases. Although the intent is to describe desirable changes in the English system of divorce, Robinson's argument applies equally well to other countries and to the practice of family therapy with divorcing couples in general. This is not a cook book approach to work with divorcing couples and their children but rather an attempt to address the importance of language, communication and the collaboration of professional helpers involved in the divorce process. A clear and concise diagram illustrates the English legal system and the changes the Family Law Act will make as it is instituted by 1999. There are very useful descriptions and charts illustrating children's cognitive understanding of divorce and the family life cycle. A particularly helpful chart describes the dislocations of the family life cycle during the divorce process. Family

therapists can use this chart to assist divorcing couples in recognising the tasks that a child and parent need to accomplish in order to proceed through the transition in a constructive manner. Other issues such as domestic violence and child abuse are briefly addressed as significant considerations in deciding whether to consider mediation or therapy.

In fact, one of the most significant aspects is the book's succinct description of the difference between family mediation and family therapy. Again, an informative chart is used to compare the distinct fields of mediation and marital and family therapy according to their different goals, tasks, relationship and role of worker, and intervention strategies.

I believe that Robinson's biggest contribution lies in making this distinction between family mediation and family therapy, and in the stress she places on the importance of the helping professionals working together during a divorce. The use of a mutual language, more shared knowledge of legal proceedings, child development and family processes will be important considerations. There is an excellent balancing of facts and figures with explanations and professional experiences that hold the reader's interest. I would recommend *Divorce as Family Transition* to anyone working with couples or children experiencing divorce.

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FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES—
PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY AND PRACTICE.
Edited by Joe Hudson, Allison Morris, Gabrielle Maxwell and Burt Galaway, Annandale, NSW, The Federation Press, Criminal Justice Press, 1996. Soft Cover, 240 pages, \$30. ISBN 186 287 2015.

This book is a collection of papers on the origins and purposes of variations within, and current research on, Family Group Conferences within New Zealand, Australia and other western countries. It could not be described as riveting. It is, however, a good solid text that fully explains the philosophies behind Family Group Conferences and their implementation, albeit with some repetition by the various contributing authors.

Family Group Conferences are decision-making forums. Their main feature is promoting the right and responsibility of families to participate in the decisions being made about them as a family. They are essentially utilised within the child protection and juvenile justice systems, the latter incorporating a restorative feature that involves the participation of the victim as an important part of the process.

The basic assumptions and values underpinning Family Group Conferences are described as: valuing and strengthening the integrity of the immediate and extended family; looking to the family and the com-

munity for solutions rather than to the state; making decisions with the family rather than for them; and demonstrating respect and sensitivity for the culture of the family. Decisions are made collaboratively, with the intention of ensuring the safety and well being of the child/young person, and/or accountability of the young offender. These principles are very similar to those that have swept through the Family Therapy field in an attempt to challenge discourses that pathologise and marginalise families.

Within welfare circles, New Zealand has generally been credited with leading the way in the introduction and development of the concept of Family Group Conferences. However, similar principles and practices around empowering families to participate in decision making about their children were also evolving in parts of Britain and Oregon in the late eighties. The evolution of such thinking was in response to the poor track record of many governments in ensuring that the quality of care provided by the State was in fact superior to that which could be provided by families in some cases. The new thinking was also a challenge to the seemingly intrusive and often culturally insensitive interventions of experts that left children, families and extended families devastated. The Maori community in particular, 'felt that the processes by which decisions were made about their children were alien to their values and traditions and damaged the fabric of Maori society' (Hassall: 22).

The question of power and equity in decision making is given a rather cursory glance when discussing the participation of professionals representing the State, the Justice Department, and other persons of authority within Family Group Conferences. It rests with the conference coordinator to ensure that decisions are made equitably. It is perhaps naive to believe that the skills of an individual coordinator can alone address the power imbalances that operate within a meeting comprising numerous professionals and representatives of the State, and the families who are subject to child welfare investigations and juvenile procedures. This is a subject that warrants more in depth structural analysis. Pennell and Burford (Chapter 13) showcase a model operating within parts of Canada that incorporates 'feminist labour theory' with the 'criminological theory of shaming' (207). These projects focused on family violence, and perhaps more than any other paper, Pennell and Burford's demonstrates an attempt to integrate theories and practices that challenge social, gender and cultural oppression.

What is most striking throughout the book is the disproportionate representation of minority cultural and lower socioeconomic groups within both the child protection and juvenile justice systems. Whilst it can only be applauded that Family Group Conferences mark the beginning of an attempt to redress the discriminatory practices that operate within social welfare systems, there is still some way to go in challenging the broader societal, political and structural contexts that lead to certain groups being routinely disadvantaged.

A common issue for the majority of contributors is

the lack of funding to resource the conferences adequately and to ensure the required follow up services and assistance, after plans have been formulated within the conferences. More than once it is noted that Family Group Conferences have been effective cost savers for the State, through keeping children and young people out of state care and away from the courts. It thus seems ironic, in the current climate of economic rationalism, that something which potentially saves the government money is then so poorly resourced, perhaps indicating the general lack of commitment to the welfare of children, adolescents and their families.

This is a book that will be of great interest to professionals working within child protection and juvenile justice who have been, or expect to be, involved in Family Group Conferences. As in New Zealand, this type of intensive focus on the involvement and utilisation of the immediate and extended family networks should perhaps be a mandatory prerequisite before making any decisions in child welfare. Unfortunately, it has been the experience of this reviewer in the Australian context that decisions are too often made in the vacuum of limited time, resources, and at times of crisis. This is a book that will also be helpful to therapists working with statutory clients, who may either be invited to attend a Family Group Conference or who may wish to inform their clients about, or advocate for their right to access, such a model in their dealings with child protection and juvenile justice services.

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COUPLES GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY: A CLINICAL PRACTICE MODEL. Judith Coche and Erich Coche, New York, Brunner/Mazel, 1990. Hard cover, 169 pages. ISBN 0 87630 598 2. \$50.00.

This is a clearly written and practical book for the clinician already experienced in group and couples therapy who wants to embark on running therapy groups for couples.

The authors' treatment approach involves a commitment from the leaders and the four couples in each group to fortnightly sessions over a whole year, as well as a residential weekend workshop. The reader is provided with all the clinical assessment and structuring principles, policies (e.g. on out-of-group contacts, absences, confidentiality, fees, concurrent therapy), guidelines and assessment forms from first contact to final evaluation of the couples involved in the process. The group sessions include a structured experiential section as well as time for free discussion and interaction amongst group members. The Coches discuss all the vital aspects of groups: screening, group formation and cohesion, stages of group development, couple themes

(sex, money, children, in laws and families of origin, gender and power imbalances, illness and death) co-leader issues, levels of intervention (individual, couple, interpersonal and group-as-a-whole), and trouble shooting (adherence to group rules, roles in groups, clinical emergencies). The work of the authors is inspired by a wide familiarity with the literature, including cognitive behaviour therapy, systems, existential and psychoanalytic theory. The authors illustrate each aspect of their program with vignettes from four couples in one of their groups. There is a flyer describing the companion videotape *Techniques in Couples Group Psychotherapy* available for purchase from the publisher (US\$75.00). This book is a good source for practitioners who have been working in the field for a long time. It does not have the depth of illustration or of theoretical material which would give beginning therapists the necessary grounding in either of the complex therapeutic endeavours of working with couples or groups. However it provides them with a glimpse of the territory to be covered should they wish to move in this direction. It is a welcome addition and complement to the work of James Framo (1973) who is perhaps the person best known (at least to this reviewer) for his work with couples in groups.

Reference

Framo, J. L., 1973. Marriage Therapy in a Couples Group. In D. A. Bloch, (Ed.), *Techniques in Family Psychotherapy: A Primer*, New York, Grune & Stratton.

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FROM CONFLICT TO RESOLUTION: SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY. Susan M. Heitler. NY and London. Norton, 1990. Paperback, 330pp. \$29.95. ISBN 0 393 31090.

From Conflict to Resolution blends a comprehensive overview of established theories and ideas, and Heitler's own clinical experience. The premise on which the book is built is that 'poorly handled conflict lies at the core of emotional distress' (3), and that with conflict as part of daily life, it is essential that we learn how to have our conflicts satisfactorily resolved. Heitler asks readers to take a universal view in relation to conflict and resolution, believing that if the individual can't resolve conflict then this problem flows on to the family and in turn, to the community and the world. Whilst this view is stated early on, in general, the focus of the book is in the clinical arena.

For family therapists, this text would generally serve as an excellent resource for accessing an understanding of other theories around conflict. Systemic thinking is woven throughout the text and reference is given to well known family therapists such as Betty Carter, Salvador Minuchin, Jay Haley and Julian Hafner, but much

of the text includes theories from other therapies, for example 'game theory' and 'negotiation theory'.

This work is extremely well organised, in three distinct parts: Section One looks at healthy functioning; Section Two focuses on conflict as a phenomenon, Section Three focuses on conflict resolution. In the main, Heitler conforms to academic protocol in her writing. Every point is justified and validated through already established theory or research. Luckily for the reader, this is broken by case vignettes and the odd personal aside. These greatly assist concentration and enhance understanding of the ideas being presented. Unfortunately this human touch is vitiated by the use of 'patient', 'pathology' and other medical model terms. This use of language seems to jar with the stated stance that conflict and problems with conflict are a part of everyday life. Given the writing style, this is a book to use as a resource text and for dipping in and out of, rather than for reading from cover to cover. Heitler herself sees this book as filling in a gap in the therapy literature: she perceives that the 'process of conflict resolution' has not really been focused upon in past writings on conflict.

'Comprehensive' is the word that keeps coming to mind with this book. Heitler looks at everything from the grammatical structure of sentences expressing conflict and those expressing resolution, to the DSM labelling of, for example, depression and psychosis and how inability to deal with conflict (as we would expect) underpins these states. Many techniques are also covered: some systemic, some psychodynamic, some cognitive. Even the always present therapist dilemma of points of entry is discussed.

This thoroughness is a reflection of the key hypothesis Heitler carries through her work: that conflict should be viewed in two aspects, firstly intrapsychic conflict, where resolution is brought about through verbalising internal voices and secondly, interpersonal conflict where the focus is on what is happening between two or more people. Each chapter has more or less the same structure and the generous provision of summaries, headings and subtitles makes it easy to access information within the text. Heitler believes that treatment should generally follow three steps. Firstly, symptoms (this includes assessment and interventions); secondly, content (looking at clarification of the conversations around conflict and resolution), and finally, process (clarification of patterns for processing conflict and developing healthier patterns). Despite all this complexity, there are some delightfully simple concepts presented. For example Heitler uses Beitman's (1987) model to capture the essence of all psychotherapy and the universal processes of engagement, pattern search, pattern change and termination—regardless of therapeutic style.

In conclusion, this is an excellent resource text, and whilst bits and pieces are in other texts, the uniqueness of this book is in putting them all together in a very structured and accessible format. The index lists particular problems, assisting clinicians who would like a

reminder of, or some fresh ideas on, ways to work with some clearly identified difficulty. The book casts a wide net, and as a result much of the content would not be of interest to family therapists who are firmly planted in a systems view, but it would be helpful to therapists struggling to fit family therapy and psychodynamic therapy side by side.

Reference

Beitman, B., 1987. *The Structure of Individual Psychotherapy*, NY, Guilford.

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MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY: ISSUES AND TRENDS. Beverley Aboosh, and April Collins (Eds), 1996, Toronto, University Press. 161 pp. ISBN 0 8020 7412 \$45.00.

This is a good book. It is not a great book. You will want some clarification of my tempered enthusiasm.

Overall, the strength of *Mental Illness in the Family* derives from the breadth of perspectives that it examines in relation to families and their struggles with mental illness. It has chapters on subjects which are rarely examined in this field, for instance 'The Forgotten Sibling', whose title is appropriate to its task. Another chapter which tackles a topic so difficult it is easy to pretend it doesn't exist is 'From Mad to Bad: Helping families cope with mental illness and the Criminal Justice System'. Again, the title tells all (well, about the attitudes, not the details): people with mental illness do sometimes behave in anti-societal ways. These behaviours are difficult for those people, their families, the courts and the therapist, and no simple answers will be apparent. The preparedness of the chapter author to share her experiences, both the triumphs and the shortfalls, adds significantly to the book. In fact, the general formula used in many, but not all, of these separately authored chapters, is a summary of the literature, followed by a well-documented case study and a discussion. In the conclusions, the experience of the cases are related to the theory in a way which generally makes for quite enjoyable and informative reading.

The two factors which jarred for me both related to the primary source of material. The Department of Social Work at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto hosted a conference bearing the same name as the book. Three of the chapters were originally delivered as keynote addresses at that conference. Although in the Introduction we are promised that the original papers have been expanded and updated, I noted that the references did not always back this statement. In the first chapter, 'What do Patients say about Program Planning? Perspectives from the Patient-Authoring Literature', the only reference quoted which is later than 1988 is dated 1989 and is the chapter author's own work. I

assume that patients have had something to say in the years between 1988 and the year of publication, 1996. When I read a review article dated 1996, I like to believe that someone has done the work of ensuring I am up to date with what's about. Several other chapters seem quite out of date in a similar way, and I presume a substantial new review of the literature was not undertaken between the conference (1991) and publication (1996).

The use of separate speakers at a conference has engendered a second problem for the reader and that is one of repetition. If you didn't know that Frieda Fromm-Reichmann coined the phrase 'schizophrenogenic mother' which led to work by Lidz, Cornelison and Fleck (1958) on the purported family causation of schizophrenia, their theories are reviewed by three or sometimes four separate authors, so you should never forget them!

Returning to the strengths of this book, I observe that the first few chapters each give information about adult patients and their families from differing perspectives. This varies from patients' own views or those of their siblings as already mentioned, to a good historical overview of the interconnectedness of families and mental illness, with attitudes and approaches changing over time (Froma Walsh). John Trainor gives an excellent summary of the increasing influence that families have on the whole mental health system. He describes the animosity in North America between the 'family movement' and family therapists, and the political influence these consumer-family groups have had. These themes are echoed in the next chapter, and are followed by the knowledgeable and empathic writing of Agnes Hatfield, who has been a leading contributor to changing attitudes about families' role in mental illness. She emphasises the grieving and adjustments that patients and their families must undergo to deal successfully with a chronic illness. The last several chapters focus on mental illness in people with small children. Having made the transition myself from Family Therapy (note the capital letters) to Infant Mental Health and perinatal psychiatry in the last few years (yes, I've seen a number of people I know from Family Therapy days at the Infant Mental Health conferences I now attend), I was delighted to see a bringing together of work from this field with work about the adult population. The best potential we have is in prophylactic work in this field, so I enjoy seeing these views purveyed. The best of this section was 'Mental Illness and Parenting Capacity: Assessing for Risk and Planning for Children'. The writers have spent several years developing a very useful series of Guidelines to use when child protection becomes a dominant focus with a mentally ill parent. Their case example spells out the complexities of working in this area, and the need to share the ambiguities, uncertainties and angsts. Overall, I was delighted that this book landed on my desk. Our team will use the information, and if you work with families of the men-

tally ill, you will enjoy reading it.

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MAN AND DOG: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A
RELATIONSHIP. Reinhold Bergler. Oxford,
Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1988. Hardback, 188
pp. ISBN 0 632 02479 8.

As a dog owner and dog lover since childhood, I looked forward to this book for some sort of affirmation of my misty eyed affection for our canine partners. It was indeed affirming that 12% of West German households and 25% of British households share my uncritical view that having a dog naturally makes one happier, healthier and wiser and that they are hardly any trouble. Bergler sets us straight. He makes a careful comparative study of 340 dog owners, 305 other pet owners, and 280 individuals with no pets. Bergler's thesis is that as the relationship between men and pets ceases to be taken for granted as something natural, the relationship becomes problematic and a proper object for scientific study. His hypothesis is that the more people perceive that a dog will satisfy central subjective needs, such as personal health, humanity, being understood and having a good marriage etc., the more likely they are to have dogs. Interestingly, dog owners and non-owners are not different in their aspirations. The difference is that dog owners assume that the dog will contribute to these aspirations. Dog owners minimise the financial and practical costs of feeding, exercising, loss of flexibility in life, etc. It comes as no surprise that dog owners tend to be better off family people. A further interesting aspect of Bergler's research is his study of the perceptions of dog owners towards non-owners and vice versa. It turns out that dog owners are more paranoid than they need to be; quite a few non-pet-owners think dogs are lovely, but just think that the cost benefit analysis doesn't add up.

So what does all this mean for family therapists? Bergler's study supports the general notions of narrative therapists: it is not the objective facts, but what dog ownership means to people, that explains their choices. In other words, Bergler objectively demonstrates that dog ownership is based on subjectivity. There is no specific mention of dogs in relation to family therapy though the general area of dogs as cotherapists is briefly discussed. In short, this is a book for those interested in psychological research. It has little to do with the actual experience of dog ownership.

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