Reviews

Social Work: Voices from the inside
Vivien Cree and Ann Davis.
London, Routledge, 2006, 176pp.
ISBN 9780415356831 (pbk) £19.99

Cree and Davis have provided a valuable addition to the literature using a grounded qualitative methodology that gives us a fascinating snapshot of social work 'from the bottom'.

The text provides six specific chapters examining practice with children and families, in criminal justice, mental health, residential child care, and with disabled people and older people. These core chapters are sandwiched between an introductory chapter and a concluding chapter examining 'lessons for the future'.

The book utilises a narrative approach – drawing on 'interviews with 59 service users, carers and practitioners across the UK' (Cree and Davis, 2007, p.9). Consistent with this approach the core chapters allow the participants to speak for themselves – no analysis is provided by the authors until the final chapter.

The chapters have a basically shared structure, but with headings specific to each topic. Following a scene setting introduction, a pen picture of each contributing interviewee is provided. There then follows specific material relating to each topic, followed by an examination of 'What Helps?', of 'Becoming a Social Worker' with social workers describing their work, and concluding with 'Lessons for the Future'.

For the purpose of this review I will examine one chapter in some detail – that referring to work with children and families. The current policy context is examined briefly over two pages, before moving on to provide brief pen pictures of 5 service users and 9 practitioners. The chapter then moves on to give a voice to the service users experiences of parenting. This section provides a series of long quotes which bring to live real experiences of social work. The content would not surprise any practitioner – it is the usual catalogue of human misery and resilience, but with many positive views of social work practice. The chapter then asks 'What Helps?' Here is a vivid mix of the positive and the negative, useful as it provides a voice to the service user, resonant with the 'client speaks' tradition. We then move on the professional perspective of becoming a social worker, grounded for many in their childhood experiences, and then on to describing their work. Here again is a familiar, but fascinating picture, of a real fulfilment in being a social worker, but with frustration around paperwork and organisational issues. The chapter concludes with workers expressing a mixed package of hopes and fears about

the impact of organisational and legislative change. The other core chapters each have their own character – but share a basic structure and many of the themes outlined above.

The concluding chapter is concerned with 'Lessons for the future'. Cree and Davis argue that there are unequivocal messages from service users - they want to be listened too, respected and seen within their wider context: 'They want emotional and material support to enable them to lead independent lives and manage crises and difficulties' (Cree and Davis, 2007, p.148). Practitioners express their motivation around social justice and wanting to 'help people'. They enjoy working with people and building relationships. The chapter goes on to outline the basics of a 'good social work' – which involves responsiveness, building relationships, being person-centred, providing emotional and practical support, being holistic, balancing rights, risks and protection, being evidence–based, future-orientated and there for the long term. It then explores what the good organisational context and what works and what does not work. The books ends with an up-lifting and optimistic note from a care leaver who is about to become a social worker.

This is a useful and interesting book. It is a valuable addition to the literature and will be of interest to students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It would also be invaluable to lay people wanting to understand social work or who are thinking about entering the social work profession.

I have just one reservation: I would have liked much more analysis and reflection from the authors – a reflective overview could have been added to each chapter, which would have added to the depth of the book.

Overall this is a useful and interesting book and a worthy addition to a wide-range of reading lists. This publication has a particularly helpful contribution to make to the current debates about 'workforce reform'.

Nick Frost
Professor of Social Work (Childhood, Children and Families)
Leeds Metropolitan University

The McDonaldization of Social Work
Donna Dustin
Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, 208pp.
ISBN 9780754646396 (hbk) £55.00 (online £49.50)

Donna Dustin's book provides a useful addition to the literature on social work organisation and management. The book is written with three main audiences in mind: social workers; managers; and social theorists and offers useful perspectives for each readership. With these different audiences in mind, a detailed and useful glossary of terms is provided in the initial pages. The book has three main sections though these are not related to each of these readerships.

The first section deals with a 'Macro perspective' considering the development of social work and more particularly, care management. This includes recent developments, including that of the introduction of managerialism in social work, within the wider context of globalisation. The second section is a 'Micro perspective' which presents the results of a research project examining the impact of the introduction of care management on social work and social workers. The third section combines these perspectives, both in reviewing developments to date and considering prospective developments in social work.

The enduring theme, obvious in the title, is Ritzer's (1993) McDonaldization thesis and this approach is convincingly applied as an analysis of contemporary social work organisation and care management. In summarising the approach, Dustin highlights the drive for certainty, endemic in much management thinking over the past century and more, with the attendant preoccupation with efficiency, calculability, predictability and surveillance. I felt that a longer explanation of Ritzer's approach was merited, particularly with the varied appreciation of this approach likely in the readerships of the book. In the context of social work, Dustin argues that this had led to the commodification of care, which is quite at odds with traditions of professional discretion in dealing with individual need. This further demonstrates the focus on control over uncertainty and the need from the service providers' point of view for 'consumer demand' to be predictable.

The second section of the book discusses the effect of this commodification in practice, through exposition of the research project, with illustrative quotations from respondents in social work teams. There is much detail in this second section, understandable given its focus on the micro. However, for me this section was less strong than the initial section. I felt not all the detail was necessary for illustration and that, given the pace of change in this context, some of the detail might age quite rapidly. Also some of the issues, particularly that of consumerism, merit more discussion in the first section, rather than being related specifically to the findings. I felt that the general issues of consumerism in welfare and in social work in particular might be aired at an earlier stage. However, there are many different findings, comments and quotations which will resonate with managers and practitioners in this section. These illustrate the endemic tensions in social work which the McDonaldization process does not readily recognise and which are inadequately resolved in the re-casting of service users into 'consumers'. A prime consequence of McDonaldization in this context has been the focus on process efficiency and outcome measurement. This Dustin illustrates, has contributed to preventive social work being accorded a decreased priority. The enduring tension between 'user need' and 'consumer demand' is made less explicit though than one might have expected. In a similar vein, the concept of empowerment receives reasonable discussion but both that concept and that of choice in this context, provided the potential for a more critical discussion. However, the section highlights important developments and their implications e.g. issues of de-skilling in, and a consequent de-professionalisation of social work,

The third section presents a review and future prospects. I felt that there was some repetition in this section (as there was in other sections of the book) which might have been dealt with by a more ruthless editing of the text as a whole but that is not a major

criticism. One could argue that, given the different intended readerships, some repetition might be helpful in reinforcing certain points and catering for those who might not read the book from cover to cover.

My overall criticism of the book are that some aspects of management are dealt with a little simplistically, e.g. the notions of Theory X and Theory Y managers (which in themselves are not the most sophisticated concepts) and that some of the managerial rationality might be presented as a counterweight to some points. An example of such would be the arguments of managers for increased transparency in decision-making and resource allocation rather than the (potential) covert rationing which some aspects of professional practice might promote. Similarly, managers are unlikely to accept readily, that current developments do not recognise user rights or promote user interests or empowered, which is implied at times in the text. A critical exposition of that rationality might have proved interesting. As it is, I was left with the feeling that the only way to deal with McDonaldization was through a strategy of resistance or acceptance. I think there might be other ways of responding which managers and social workers might fruitfully examine, whilst accepting the overall trend. On the positive side I think this is a book to be welcomed. It deals with complex and real issues which many involved, practitioners and managers alike, accept relatively uncritically. The book provides good explanation and examples of the potential difficulties of McDonaldization and as such, may assist practitioners and managers in articulating their concerns with current organisational and professional developments.

Reference

Ritzer, G. (1993) *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Dr. John Lawler
Senior Lecturer,
University of Bradford

Improving Children's Services Networks:
Lessons from Family Centres
Jane Tunstill, Jane Aldgate, and Marilyn Hughes, M.
London, Jessica Kingsley, 2006, 160pp.
ISBN 9781843104612 (pbk) £18.99 pbk

Having previously been responsible for the development and management of family centres I was pleased to be asked to review this book. The book provides evidence on family

centres contribution to children's services against a backdrop of challenge and survival in a world increasingly dominated by Sure Start/children's centres and the development of schools with extended days. The bulk of the research on which the book is based was commissioned in 1994 by the Department of Health as part of the *Supporting Parents* initiative. The study aimed to examine the potential of family centres to both provide services and act as a gateway to family support services. In order to achieve this the study included a national postal survey of family centres, an intensive in-depth study of 40 centres including 83 parental interviews which was then followed up by a postal survey in 2005. Whilst much of the research on which the book is based is historical, the follow up survey and the messages from the book resonate with current policy directions.

Family centres, the only individual service to be specified under the 1989 Children Act, are notoriously difficult to define. The authors argue that although they have a common philosophy they vary greatly in practice but all seek to emphasize an holistic approach to families with locally based services and maximum participation of service users.

Having examined the current agenda for children and family services in chapter 2 the authors investigated how family centres built links and partnerships with other agencies. The family centres in the study were primarily managed and funded by local authorities on approximately a 3:1 basis with the voluntary sector. Whilst they are seen as open and pro-active in building partnerships some centres were dominated by social services work although the majority had similar levels of involvement with health and education services. This split however was not reflected in the funding where:

> To put it bluntly, why should the local authority be expected to pay for all of the services, when in fact, health trusts are making significant use of them at the same time but failing to contribute to the same level? (p.39)

A challenge for future children's trusts!

Irrespective of who funded or managed family centres they all considered the welfare of children and young people to be a central element of their role. The authors identified services as being of 'late' or 'early' interventions. 'Late' interventions being those focussed on referred child protection work whilst 'early' interventions focused on the family centre as a community resource with significantly more open access. The balance between the two was in favour of 'late' intervention services 59%, with 34% early intervention services and the remaining 7% offering a mix. The authors also reported a feeling towards a push for more 'late' as opposed to 'early' intervention services.

Unsurprisingly, staff teams varied considerably in terms of size (average 7 largest 29), employment status, allocation of roles, ratio of workers to families, degree of multi-disciplinarity, gender and ethnicity. In particular family centres were likely to have a greater imbalance in terms of gender than ethnicity. The issue of gender is a central one for family centres who have traditionally found it difficult to attract male staff and to where the term

family can easily become interpreted into engagement with a mother and her children.

Chapter 8 focuses on parent perspectives of family centre and identified significant parental involvement. This involvement included committee membership or organizing groups although parents were more likely to refer to partnership in terms of being involved in their own or their children's services. Parental satisfaction of services was interesting with the authors' finding that:

> Parents participating in this study were more likely to be *unsatisfied* than *dissatisfied* in the service they received from family centres, in that they tended to *want more of the same* rather than *different services.* (p.115)

In particular parents highlighted the centre's atmosphere and the staff they encountered as being the best things about attending a family centre. This is important as the majority of parents reported family centres represented the main, or only, source of family support. Parents need centres to not only to offer opportunities for parents to address the deficits in their current parenting but also to develop their own personal and occupational skills.

In recent years the development of Sure Start and now children's centres have had an impact upon family centres with a number closing down. In fact it is now impossible to say how many family centres there are as some are offering the full range of children centre services whilst others have been renamed as children's centres. This again highlights the danger that the knowledge and expertise of family centres will be lost or potentially resurface under a new guise.

This is a well written book from the perspective of academics who have championed preventative services previously and who believe that family centres can make a special contribution to children's services. I would also have liked to have seen some attempt to engage the children and young people who used family centres for their views of the services provided. However, this book deserves to be read by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, children's services managers, policy makers, social care workers, academics and students to help inform them of the potential of the family centre way of working. In particular I leave the last word to the authors':

> We hope that the account we have presented will encourage local authorities to draw on the expertise and diverse, high-quality service provision of the centres located in their midst, and to strive towards creating in respect of children's centres the same level of credibility , respect and affection in which family centres are held by their local communities. (p.141)

Dr Hugh McLaughlin
Director of Social Work and Social Policy
University of Salford

Dynamic Security:
The Democratic Therapeutic Community in Prison
Michael Parker (Editor)
London, Jessica Kingsley, 2006, 288pp.
ISBN 9781843103851 (pbk) £25.00

Newell and Healey define the concept of a therapeutic community within a custodial environment in this collection as being '… a prison that [houses] offenders deemed to be in need of some form of psycho-therapeutic intervention.' (p. 63). Given that the prison population has far higher rates of mental illness than the general population, particularly in the diagnostic groups of neurosis and personality disorder (p.14), it would appear that there is a proven need for therapeutic communities within the Prison Service estate.

This collection of essays is primarily concerned with the position, place and processes of the 'Therapeutic Community' (TC) within the Prison estate of England and Wales. The strength of this book is that it is written by people who are and have been for many years actively involved in the TCs as workers, researchers and prisoners. The contributors are Prison Service practitioners (governors, psychiatrists, psychologists, group analysts and directors/managers of therapy), academics from a range of disciplines (forensic psychiatry, and criminology), and men and women prisoners. The book is divided into six sections:

Theory: Origins of Criminal Behaviour;
History of the Therapeutic Community in Prison;
Method and Practice;
Psychodynamic Aspects:
Inside Forensic Therapy;
Managing the Therapeutic Community; and Audit and Experience.

There are three chapters in the section that considers the origins of criminal behaviour. Murray, Cheliotis and Maruna provide a thorough overview of the social, criminogenic factors related to crime and offending behaviour. Jim Ormsby reviews 'Psychiatric Factors in Criminality' and Jo Day considers 'Psychological Theories of Criminality'. These chapters provide the more specific disciplinary context for discussing the therapeutic work of the TCs.

Having set the intellectual context of the TCs, the book moves on to consider the historical origins of therapeutic communities in prison. It considers both the British and North American contexts and also describes the development of TCs for both male and female prisoners.

In 'Method and Practice' the contributors discuss 'assessing risk and need'; 'supervision of forensic group therapy' and "Through-care, After-care: What happens after therapy?"

There are six chapters in the section entitled 'Psychodynamic aspects: inside forensic therapy. They consider work with specific groups of people: young offenders; drug users; violent offenders; life sentence prisoners and sex offenders.

In the penultimate section of the book, the focus is on managing the TC. The chapters in this section provide vivid accounts of four aspects of prison management – overall management of a therapeutic establishment, the management of therapy within an establishment, the relationship of the TC to organisations outside the prison and the problems of managing the balance between security and therapeutic needs of a prison.

The final section of the book ('Audit and experience') provides two contrasting accounts. Danny Clark and Jan Lees outline the process for ensuring a high quality of therapeutic provision across the TCs (accreditation), whilst the chapter that considers 'Therapy from the inside' provides prisoners' accounts of participating in a therapeutic community – given the nature of therapeutic communities this chapter is an essential part of this book.

In the current context of massive overcrowding in prisons, low morale within prison staff of England and Wales and draconian financial cuts, this book is a welcome contribution to discussions about prison as a human(e) environment. It recognises that security and 'treatment' (in a wide range of interpretations of this word) do not have to be considered to be competing demands on the prison resources. They can, in fact, contribute positively to each other. I conclude this review by concurring with the words of John Gunn, Emeritus Professor of Forensic Psychiatry who wrote in the Forward to the book '… I hope that this book will be read by a wide audience that includes politicians with purse-strings as well as those of us who are interested in the reduction of crime by scientific and therapeutic means.' (p. 10).

Malcolm Cowburn,
Senior Lecturer in Social Work
University of Bradford

Child Protection, Domestic Violence and Parental Substance Misuse:
Family experiences and effective practice
Hedy Cleaver, Don Nicholson, Sukey Tarr, and Deborah Cleaver
London, Jessica Kingsley, 2007 232pp.
ISBN 9781843105824 (pbk) £19.99

The book is based on a study of 357 social work case files from two London Boroughs, two metropolitan boroughs and two Shire counties during the period of August 2002 to August 2004.

The study explored children's social care response to families where they needed both adult and children's services. It identified the factors that enable different agencies to work together successfully. It reviewed the policy, procedures and protocols of the Local Authorities and data from a questionnaire to managers about their knowledge of them.

It aimed to explore children's and parents' experiences of professional interventions. Unfortunately, only 17 parents were subsequently interviewed in depth out of a target group of 42. No children were available to be interviewed although three over the age of ten years were identified as being appropriate.

The main referring agencies were the police and health services and just under half the cases were re-referrals (the national average is 22%). Interestingly half of the parents knew about the referral to children's services. Health professionals and the police were most likely to tell the parent of the referral whereas other social services including drug and alcohol teams, other adult services, schools and voluntary agencies were less likely to talk to parents before making the referral. Children's services felt swamped by the indiscriminate notification of domestic violence incidents by the police.

Many of the families had experienced domestic violence, substance abuse, mental ill health and learning difficulty in varying combinations. Overall the findings from the initial assessments highlighted the vulnerability of children living with domestic violence and/ or parental drug and alcohol misuse. Parental drug misuse had a more serious impact on families than domestic violence. As in other research, the coexistence of domestic violence with substance abuse and other problems significantly increased the risk of significant harm to children. In a quarter of the sample, there was no further action even though there were serious concerns identified in 61% of these.

The study findings suggested that there was a tendency to extend initial assessments beyond seven days whilst limiting the number of core assessments that were undertaken. Even though parental substance misuse and domestic violence were present in the cases studied it was rare for the specialist agencies to be involved in the assessment and planning stage. Agencies working with substance misuse were more likely to be involved in subsequent service delivery than domestic violence services. It was argued by Cleaver et al that the involvement of agencies working with substance misuse at the beginning may have better informed the assessment.

Cleaver et al hope that the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework will provide a common language of assessment and intervention between the agencies for children and the agencies for adults that may assist communication and more effective working. However the problem of differing timescales, differing priorities and poor recognition of problems in other service user groups continue to pose a challenge in effective interagency working. In this study there appears to have been less joint working with domestic violence agencies than substance abuse agencies. It may be that children's services' interventions are more likely to be aimed at removing the abuser than working with them.

As in other studies, joint training was considered to increase mutual respect between agencies' workers and to create better understanding of each other's roles. There were gaps in some training programmes, ongoing problems about staff being able to attend and the availability of rolling training programmes.

Overall domestic violence training was more prevalent than substance abuse training. Workers in domestic violence agencies were more likely to attend training on how their

clients' experiences affected children than workers in drug and alcohol services.

Parents' responses to interventions indicated that where they knew of the referral and felt part of the assessment process, there was a better relationship with the social worker and more honesty about the level of difficulty and substance misuse. Generally families appreciated a sympathetic approach, the feeling that they were listened to, access to services and a longer term approach. Not surprisingly a confrontational approach, threats, unannounced visits, inaccurate reports and frequent changes of worker were all mentioned by parents as making relationships with workers difficult.

The scrutiny of plans, procedures and joint protocols suggested overall that 'they could do better'. Senior managers did not always sign plans. Plans were not readily available to those who needed to read them.

The book concludes with clear policy and practice implications. Hopefully this will ensure that the study will make a significant and enduring contribution to this area of social work practice. I found it invaluable and easy to read.

Maureen Ludlam
Social worker in a Child and Family Team
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council

Competence in Social Work Practice:
A practical guide for students and professionals (2nd Edition)
Kieran O'Hagan
London, Jessica Kingsley, 2007, 256pp.
ISBN 9781843104858 (pbk) £18.99

This book is aimed at all those involved in the assessment of competence in a practice learning environment from both a teaching and learning perspective. It is a well-written, easy to read comprehensive guide to the application of the key roles and outcomes required to evidence competence in social work across a wide range of practice settings. The design of the book makes it a useful tool to dip in and out of on a chapter-by-chapter basis depending on the setting students and teachers find themselves in. In addition students are able to access comprehensive theoretical knowledge and skill discussion relevant to the area of work discussed in each chapter e.g. the issues around risk analysis (Kelly,p.152-171)), thus enabling students to make the link between theory and practice. Of particular interest are the inclusions of examples of outcomes in non-mainstream settings such as Margaret Fawcett's excellent chapter on mediation (pp.31-52).

The book opens by examining the concept of competence-based education and training and in particular the…. 'task of assessing and measuring what individuals do in a variety of workplaces '(O'Hagan, p.14) It begins by looking briefly at the background

and development of competence based training including discussion of what or how social workers should learn making comparisons between the old controversial CCETSW paper 30 and the new national occupational standards. The ensuing critique of the competence based method of assessment provides a significant challenge to those working in social work education and training.

There then follows, written by specialist in their field (e.g. John Gibson, Beverly Burke, Gerry Heery, John McLaughlin, Dorota Iwaniec), a series of chapters aimed at examining in detail how competence in practice may be achieved in a variety of settings including: Mediation, Residential Child Care, Social Work Ethics, Child Abuse Referrals, Protecting Adults with Learning Disabilities, Criminal Justice, Risk Analysis, Health Care, Working with Families, Mental Health Social Work and Child Care Legislation, Policy and Theory.

Most of the chapters follow the same format, which is useful not only for navigating your way around the book, but also for ensuring the content is easily transferable to other practice learning environments outside of the main stream of social work e.g. advocacy projects, drop in centres etc. The chapters include:

An introduction
Information about the work setting/agency and the role of the student
A case study/case scenario
The role of the student is to play in the situation e.g. group facilitator, co-worker etc,
Some background knowledge requirements (e.g. relevant legislation, policy documents),
Student preparation for the interaction including the use of supervision
Detailed discussion of application of the relevant key roles and outcomes
The students perspective including case notes, reflection use of supervision etc.

Including a chapter on integrated competence and interprofessional practice aimed at students and practice teachers involved in dual awards would have been helpful and some sort of conclusion written by the editor would have been the icing on the cake. However this does not detract from the fact this is an extremely helpful tool for anyone seeking to evidence competence in other arenas such as continuing professional development.

The books usefulness to students is immediately obvious; however it would also be invaluable to new practice teachers taking a student for the first time or practice teachers struggling to get to grips with the key roles and outcomes. Its focus on the role of the practice teacher in supporting the student illustrated by detailed case studies helps the practice teacher to allocate and structure work appropriately so as to maximise the student's opportunity to evidence the key roles and outcomes and ultimately demonstrate competence.

In addition this book would assist new academic tutors supporting students through the theoretical concepts related to competence and assist them in there marking of academic work related to key roles and outcomes. Not necessarily aimed at but in my view, also a useful tool for social work lecturers putting together practice learning documentation and designing assessments to enable students to demonstrate competence.

Finally I believe the real strength of this book is that the contributors have achieved their aim of …'producing a narrative that combined continuous reference to the new standards with compelling accounts of students striving to attain them'. I would recommend this book as one to keep not only for anyone involved in student teaching and learning in practice, but also to assist any practitioner across all of the health and social care disciplines in compiling a portfolio demonstrating continued professional development.

Gill Boston
Senior Lecturer in Social Work, and Programme Leader BSc (Hons.) Professional Studies In Nursing and Social Work (Learning Disability)
University of Salford

A Constant Burden: The reconstitution of family life (revised edition)
Margaret Voysey Paun
Aldershot, Ashgate (2006) (originally published 1975 by Routledge and Kegan Paul, UK), 254pp.
ISBN 9780754644705 (hbk) £60.00 (online, £54.00)

This book, *A Constant Burden: The Reconstitution of Family Life*, has all the hallmarks of academic excellence and scholarship that only a few ever achieve. First published in 1975, it has been republished in 2006 as one of a series of 'classics in sociology'. Furthermore, the Series Editor, the eminent sociologist Robert Dingwall, has described the text as a 'cult classic' and an 'historic text' (p.vii), and one that has achieved the most familiar sign of importance, being amongst the key texts 'that most frequently vanish from campus libraries' (p. vii), presumably hidden away as a precious resource by avid users.

I cannot improve on Robert Dingwall's summary of the book's importance:

> This book is a fascinating account of the predicament of the parents of children with severe disabilities. What is telling … is the way that this predicament is seen as less to do with the inner life of the parents or the family, which Voysey Paun shows to be essentially unknowable. She … chronicles her journey from would-be moral reformer and political advocate on behalf of people with disabilities and their carers to a recognition that her interviews can only tell her about the faces that these parents present to the world. In the end, even the best-intentioned sociologists do not change the world, merely help others to understand it. (p.vii).

It is difficult to do justice to the complexity of this text, which addresses the sociology of families where a child has a disability, within the scope of this review. The book is organised into eight chapters, with a New Introduction by Margaret Voysey Paun (pp. ix-xiii) in which she reflects on the re-publication of her book nearly thirty years after its first publication. The time when she was an undergraduate coincided with the emerging

influences of ethnomethodology, interpretive sociology and the sociology of deviance, particularly Goffman, Cohen, Cicourel, and Blumer. These influences are explicit as the conceptual approach to the research with parents whose children were diagnosed with severe disabilities, as Voysey Paun draws extensively on concepts like 'stigma', 'the presentation of self', and 'common sense accounts' of everyday life as strategies of asserting their 'competence' as parents and their moral character, as 'good persons'.

In the Introduction (pp.1-4), Voysey Paun clearly differentiates between the social and the sociological whereby the former refers to the 'discovery' of problems and appropriate services to address them, and the latter considers the contexts and conditions under which parents will 'say what they say' about their experiences as carers of children with disabilities (p. 1). The importance of understanding the sociology of social problems is especially important because services are provided in order to meet a normative (social) agenda: that is, to 'produce an ideal adjustment to the experience of having a disabled child.

In one sense the book appears to follow a conventional structure for a research text, whereby 'the literature review' (Chapter 1: Underlying Pathology and Apparent Normality) and 'conceptual approach' (Chapter 2: Normal Appearances and Official Morality) precede the 'methodology' (Chapter 3: Methodology: Some Autobiography), 'findings' (Chapters 5 to 7) and 'conclusions and significance' (Chapter 8). However, the text is also unusual in how concepts in 'the literature' are integrated with emergent theories in the 'findings' in Chapters 5 to 7 related to the interviews with parents who were the research participants. The apparent gateway between the heavily-theoretical Chapters 1-3, and the 'findings' (Chapter 5-7) is Chapter 4, The Families with a Disabled Child, which describes the participating parents, and the 'diagnosis' of their children's disabilities.

The subsequent chapters that set out the sociology of these families in how they claim competence within normative assumptions about families are organised around the sociology of deviance, particularly that of Goffman's work on stigma, and the presentation of self in everyday life. Thus Chapter 5 discusses Definitions of the Disabled Child as Rational Constructions contingent on social contexts, and represented as 'common sense'. The chapter draws on two case examples to illustrate the emergent theories for how the meaning of disability is constructed and the consequences for the identities of both the child and his/her parents. Chapter 6, The Presentation of Normal Parenthood examines how this process engages with both the private and public spheres, with the former as a set of 'normal' parenting activities that parents with a disabled child must negotiate in order to demonstrate their own competence – that becomes a 'public performance' of 'impression management'. Chapter 7, The Legitimation of Suffering, discusses how any 'suffering' experienced by parents in caring for their disabled child is legitimated through religious, medical, psychiatric and social theories, as well as agents who espouse such theories – professionals and popular culture, such as magazines for parents. In Chapter 8, the final chapter, the author discusses Acceptance and Adjustment as features of ideology, as both 'general' and 'situated', whereby parents can maintain 'respectability' within the everyday 'reality' of their lives. This chapter is especially valuable as the author engages with the tension for all qualitative researchers positioned within interpretive paradigms,

of how to understand the presence of a disabled child within an already-existing 'family' arrangement, from the unique, situated perspectives of the parents, yet avoid the problems of 'sociological solipsism' (p. 22) where everything is situated meaning '… but no means for understanding similarities and differences in [sic] parents …' (pp.21-22).

This book is a rich resource for social workers, although a challenging one. As with all social constructionist approaches to social problems, it challenges the normative assumptions that underpin social work practice in how social problems are not objective facts but outcomes of social processes of making meaning between what is considered to be 'normal' (or 'abnormal') in everyday experience.

If I have any quibbles with the text, it is its datedness. Relatively minor issues are the use of 'he' or 'him' as universal pronouns, and 'parents' as a category that glosses the predominance of mothers as carers and as research participants, although Voysey Paun does acknowledge this on page 206. More troublesome is the conflation of concepts related to criminality and disease with disability (for example, pp.26-41, Table 1, p.28, Table 2, p.29), although it is understood that the concepts are related more generally to 'deviance' and are being extrapolated to disability as a form of deviance. However for readers who are not familiar with either the sociology of deviance or social constructionism, it probably would help if some actual examples can be given to show the conceptual leaps being made. While the author does refer to social workers as agents engaged with the families (pp.174-177, 213), the social and political context of the research (1970s) differs considerably from that of 2008. Finally, one wonders what the actual relationship is between the sociological and the social. That is, with the social and political advances in the rights of people with disabilities since the 1970s, if the study was replicated today, how similar and different would be the sociology of families with children with disabilities?

Heather D'Cruz
Senior Lecturer in Social Work
Deakin University