

Book Reviews

Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape

Nicola Gavey

London and New York: Routledge Taylor Francis Group, 2005, 268 pp.
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Reviewed by Rosemary Du Plessis

Slippery boundaries, persisting power, possible futures?

Just Sex is a sustained inquiry into the ways in which everyday/ everynight understandings of gendered heterosexuality and their associated social practices provide the cultural context – or scaffolding – for coercive sex. In this carefully crafted book, Nicola Gavey argues consistently and persuasively that, while most heterosexual practices among adults known to one another are not rape, constructions of what is expected in heterosexual interactions allow for significant ambiguity with respect to the relationship between coercive sexual encounters and ‘just sex’. She locates the preconditions for rape in heterosexual scripts about women’s passivity and men’s activity, scripts that persist despite alternative understandings of women’s rights to sexual pleasure and accounts of women as sexual predators. At the same time, Gavey argues that attempts to keep women ‘safe’ from rape can perpetuate ideas about women as victims and facilitate coercive sex. Can everyday talk about women as actual or potential victims make them more rapeable? Does attention to the prevalence and impacts of rape contribute to women’s vulnerability?

Drawing on fifteen years of her own research, research conducted collaboratively on the use of Viagra, and the supervision of a range of student projects and theses, Gavey provides

a critical feminist post-structuralist analysis of rape that connects this research to an expanding international literature on sexual coercion and the construction of heterosex. While the analysis offered of how rape is both ‘just sex’ and not ‘just sex’ is complex, the writing is wonderfully direct, clear and conversational. It is as if the reader was poised across the table while Gavey, in response to their curious questioning, laid out a history of shifts in ideas about rape, legislative changes and the ways in which rape is both an aberration and closely connected to the ways in which women and men negotiate their sexual interactions.

The analysis offered in *Just Sex* is supported by extensive and carefully analysed interview material, including conversations with women who resist the definition of their experiences as ‘rape’, yet talk about the contexts in which they had penetrative sex because they could not choose otherwise. Analysis of women’s talk about women as sexual aggressors is also subjected to critical analysis – can women rape men, and if so what constitutes rape? Is it appropriate to view the female attempts to pursue sexual encounters with reluctant men in the same way as male attempts to coerce women? Can the cultural context of understandings about women and men’s sexuality mean that similar acts by women and men (such as initiating sex while they are asleep with a non-consenting partner) have

different moral resonance? The focus throughout the book is on the need to challenge simplistic assertions about heterosexuality and the necessity for understandings of heterosexuality that assume the more equitable pursuit of sexual pleasure.

At the core of Nicola Gavey’s analysis is a Foucauldian understanding of power, discourse and sexuality. What Gavey draws from Foucault and feminist scholars who have addressed the body as a site of politics is presented in a deceptively accessible chapter that looks at heterosexuality as socially produced and historically contingent, rather than a natural expression of human desire. Discourses, including discourses about heterosexuality, are introduced as ‘shared cultural products’ and distinguished from individuals’ ideas or personal opinions. These collective sets of ideas and established ways of doing things are productive in the sense that they make possible certain ways of behaving as well as experiences of desire and pleasure. According to this model, discourses are a source of ‘disciplinary power’ – as people act on their socially produced desires they produce normative behaviour and are subjected to power which is most effective because invisible and defined as personal choice. Discourses also become embodied and material as they inform day-to-day bodily actions. In these ways women can be disciplined to want more penetrative heterosexual encounters, while at the same time consider themselves more active agents than their mothers.

Gavey defends Foucauldian analysis against feminist criticism of its neglect of agency and recruits Susan Bordo and Nancy Fraser to counter the arguments of other feminist analysts like Kathy Davis and Louise McNay. She asserts that, while there is no escape from discourse, there are

alternative sets of understandings about heterosexual intimacy that can open up new lines of action and potential agency. Ending rape requires new collective understandings of gender and sexuality that constitute women as socially and physically powerful and do not eroticize male power and not just increased assertiveness by particular women. In this respect Gavey offers a post-structuralist twist on established radical feminist agendas.

It is a pleasure to read a book in which New Zealand based research is used so skillfully to address issues that transcend this context. At the same time, the pursuit of this internationalism entails minimal attention to the specifics of context and ethnic and socio-economic diversity. Gavey is writing for an international audience, for a publisher with readers primarily in the UK and the USA and draws on papers she has published in international journals on this theme since 1992. She is explicit about the international and generalizing components of her analysis early on in the book arguing that the focus is on shared cultural patterns rather than the local or the particular. At the same time she acknowledges this does not always sit easily with post-structuralist critiques of such generalizing agendas. In the final chapter this generalizing strategy is complemented by attention to the significance of local contexts in developing particular actions directed at ending sexual coercion, but the alignment of specific contexts and interventions is not developed.

Gavey writes as a feminist psychologist, but the analyses offered are of interest to anyone with an interest in the critical study of heterosexuality and rape. In this text the contributions of sociologists and philosophers mingle with those of psychologists and educationalists. The focus is on how to explain the unwanted and coercive heterosexual practices that are documented in the research she reviews and the interview material included in this book. Disciplinary boundaries, while acknowledged, are largely undone in the pursuit of empirically informed critical analysis. The author's commitment to seeing people as 'always already social' and individuals as inexplicable except through attention to their social and

cultural contexts, and the subjectivities they enable, may in fact place her closer in disciplinary terms to this reviewer's location in sociology than her own discipline of psychology. Gavey avoids attention to psychologically orientated rape prevention strategies that focus on behavioral and attitudinal change in individuals and looks critically at simplistic understandings of agency. Her focus is on what understandings, institutions and practices of heterosexual engagement would make forced heterosex inconceivable. At the same time Gavey argues that: "It is not therefore a simple matter of imagining a new cultural fabric and then expecting individual people to suddenly fall into new patterns of experiencing and acting within a cultural context that is, for the present, largely unmodified." (pp. 227-8) New conceptions of sexuality that challenge conventional gendered scripts will not magically produce new practices. Change requires a variety of different interventions and will occur over a longer time frame than feminists envisaged in the 1970s.

This is an accomplished, wide-ranging and well argued book and it seems churlish to focus on what it does not do, or does relatively superficially. However, in a book directed at change with respect to rape and sexual coercion, a greater focus on how some women and some men have resisted normative understandings of heterosexuality would have been appropriate. Gavey advocates the 'queering' of sex and sexuality, but only a few pages of her book focus on how coercive, male active/ female passive, coital focused heterosexuality is being challenged. Self defense classes that encourage women to respond with frustration and anger rather than compliance when they are sexually pressured, and sex education which explores alternatives to conventional heterosexual practices are components of our cultural landscape as well as images that erotize men's violence against women. Gavey argues that post-structuralist feminism focuses on challenges to dominant heterosexual discourses. These are some of the sites in which these discourses are, and will be, challenged.

Gavey (p. 222) states that it is not enough for particular women to "throw

off" what might be called "feminine shackles" through involvement in self-defense training. She argues for the exposure of girls and boys to different ways of being, and considers the positive consequences of girls' experience of "an active, strong physicality" (p. 223) through training in an aggressive sport. However, a more change orientated analysis would have dwelt a little longer on opportunities for the achievement of some different heterosexual futures. At times, the possibility of change is weighed down by evidence of the persistence of men's power in heterosexual encounters. The reader emerges from this text with an uncomfortable but perhaps realistic sense of the difficulties of enabling "forms of female sexuality that are just as active and agentic as male sexuality" (Gavey, p. 224) as well as the challenges of achieving greater clarity about the boundaries between rape and "just sex".

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New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations

James H Liu, Tim McCreanor, Tracey McIntosh and Teresia Teaiwa (eds.),

Wellington: Victoria University Press. 304 pp. 2005.

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reviewed by Cristina Parra

Modernity, democracy and multiculturalism - can New Zealand have it all?

One can argue that in spite of significant material and social welfare, New Zealand is not a modern nation state. There is little 'New Zealand culture' with which New Zealand nationals can uncontestedly identify. Any social identity --and a modern national identity in particular-- requires a significant degree of uniformity in at least some attributes -- be they race, or language, or common understanding of history -- within the boundaries that define the group: attributes with which and by which its members identify. Particularly useful for the minority holding economic and, by extension, political power in a nation, are an ideology which can justify its natural and rightful possession of all the 'necessary' attributes, and an education system within which such attributes can be inculcated as ideals and values, and where citizens in the making are sorted and granted access to privileges according to their capacity to conform to this ideology and be 'educated'.

The development of 'our' New Zealand identity has been identified as a priority by the present Labour government. *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*, edited by James Liu, Tim McCreanor, Tracey McIntosh and Teresia Teaiwa, heeds the government's call to reflect on who New Zealanders are and asks, with due urgency: What do we want to become as a nation?

The editors' aim is inclusive. They claim to represent "the four major blocks (sic) of peoples that populate

this country: Pākehā and Māori, Pacific Nations and Asian" (p. 7) and they come from rather diverse disciplinary backgrounds. They go to great lengths to include as wide a range of disciplines, writing styles and issues as possible in the book's 15 chapters. This encouragement of diversity made the book rather hard to read at times. The editors argue the merits of an editing team where the others' instincts were trusted even if their knowledge was not always fully comprehensible. However, if a single editorial line had been imposed, it would have helped a reader aiming to read the whole book.

Combining to challenge the reader is the unclear rationale behind the chapter sequence. Given the large number of chapters, a split into sections of the chapters would have been useful. Before offering my views on this book as a whole I will allow myself an overview of the chapters in the more strictly temporal sequence that I would have used: first looking at how we got here, then at where we are and ending with where we might choose to go.

The first section would include historical, longitudinal perspectives: I would have kept Pearson's deconstruction of citizenship and national unity as the first chapter after the introduction, but followed by Byrnes' history of the concepts of nation and identity in the Waitangi tribunal reports, and Zodgekar's demographical approach to changes in the New Zealand population. I would have finished this section with the two chapters giving accounts of how specific immigrant groups have aligned themselves with the nation building project: Ip and Pang on Chinese New

Zealanders, and Teaiwa and Mallon on Pasifika New Zealanders. As someone exclusively familiar with the literature on Māori-Pākehā relations, I found the latter two chapters to be very helpful and thought-provoking introductions to their respective topics.

The next section would include the more psychologically oriented chapters. The chapter by Capie and McGhie on representing New Zealand describes the area of diplomacy and the need for New Zealand to have an identity in the international arena. Capie and McGhie use self-categorisation theory, without explicitly saying so, and provide a good transition from the previous section, since they describe different historical and geographical contexts in which a New Zealand identity has required formulation. This chapter provides a valuable insight into the challenges faced by those charged with giving a clear representation to out-groups of an in-group identity that remains a work in progress. The chapters with an explicit psychological approach would have followed: that by Ward and Lin on the different ways in which immigrants come to relate to New Zealand culture and adopt (or not) a New Zealand national identity, and how this identity itself is changing as a result of immigration, and then that by Liu on the ways in which the 'bicultural' and 'liberal democratic' narratives of New Zealand history that he identifies can affect the coexistence of Pākehā and Māori. These two chapters benefit from the engaged outsider perspective provided by their immigrant authors, in that they deal frankly and in depth with issues which are difficult for New Zealand born authors to write about.

Liu's chapter combines a 'mainstream' (quantitative) evidence base with more critical/cultural (qualitative) understandings which would provide a bridge to the contemporary critical perspectives offered by McCreanor on Pākehā identities, and by McIntosh and Borell on Māori identities. While the first two authors in my view rely a bit too comfortably on the notion that you are not expected to say anything new in a book chapter, the chapter by Borell was a good update and insight into how

Māori identities are currently developing in South Auckland. Levine's call to move beyond cultural essentialism would round off this section since it provides a strong critique from anthropology of the use of 'culture' as either an explanatory concept or a platform for political grievance. Levine's chapter stands out because of its utterly satisfying logical rigour and total disregard for political correctness. Much in it deserved direct quoting, but I will choose his final statements: "Conceiving of the right to self-determination in political rather than cultural terms may lead the state, and Pākehā in general, away from the business of arbitrating correct views of Māori culture ... The focus of the struggle for indigenous rights seems to be shifting from culture towards a firmer engagement with questions that are more productive – about power, the distribution of resources and political legitimacy" (p. 116).

The last section would include the more forward-looking chapters: Barclay on how to rethink inclusion and biculturalism, Morris on identifiable spiritual elements of a New Zealand identity for all, and the multicultural and multidisciplinary look at future scenarios by Frame, Molisa, Taylor, Toia and Shueng, keeping the afterword by de Bres on how an inclusive national identity can evolve.

It took me a while to realise that I agreed with Barclay entirely regarding what I more simplistically below call the narrow definition of culture, conveniently used to argue the 'inclusion' of Māori – because of the relational language he uses. While the apparent attempt to avoid the reification of phenomena through language is commendable, it is – as Barclay recognises – futile. But more importantly, such an attempt can lead a less motivated reader to give up before Barclay has managed to achieve his goal "not to provide a solution, the arrival or return of an inherently just space, but to invest in a more partial and difficult project of reinvigorating and expanding local possibilities for democratic justice" (p. 119).

Although Morris does provide an engaging discussion of the issues and possibilities involved in constructing a national identity for New Zealand, the obstacles preventing people from

just getting along with each other are too easily dismissed. He begins by explaining the pitfalls associated with using 'we' without specifying who is included, then goes on to say that we can all be New Zealanders, and finishes off speaking of 'us' New Zealanders. He urges us to look at a connectedness below the "ideological construction of an imagined unitary national identity" (p. 245) and to acknowledge the lived links between New Zealanders in Aotearoa who "care passionately about each other and this land" (p. 253). Where the lived links are very likely in a country as small as New Zealand, I wonder about the passionate caring. In his view, New Zealanders are all those who come to "identify with those already here" (p. 252). I would have liked some further discussion of how European settlers identified with Māori who were already here.

The consideration of future scenarios by Frame et al. takes the form of an imaginary dialogue between an elderly person who was part of the original book-writing team, and a younger person discussing 'what could have been' (i.e., discussing current predictions based on modes we choose for identity and use of resources), supported by graphs and quantitative data in table form. The format of this chapter was a tough undertaking and I am afraid it did not achieve its aim with me. I would have needed a lot more fleshing out. Possibly, there was material there for a whole other book. I consider it an honourable failure.

By virtue of its scope and the calibre of many of its authors, this is an important book. However, it bites off more than it can chew to the extent that the topic of a New Zealand national identity offers substance enough to chew.

As I read it, the editors do seek to provide a unifying picture of who New Zealanders are, or could become, in the face of challenges to national unity. The book's explicit aim is only descriptive, not prescriptive, but in social identity formation the two aims are inextricable: any description of who 'we' are will define what is normal for 'us' in terms of values, attitudes, and behaviours – so will thereby become prescriptive for the in-group. Add to that the power of self-

fulfilling prophecies made by out-groups and we get beyond essentialisation into the outright reification of identities. The editors do acknowledge this risk. They acknowledge that identities "carry ideological prescriptions that enable society to maintain and reproduce itself" (p. 15). Both McIntosh and Levine in their chapters warn explicitly against the pitfalls of essentialisation, and yet the book as a whole still conveys a clear and rather rigid prescription for New Zealand identity as liberal, democratic and multicultural, with an apparent agreement among authors that New Zealand identity should be discussed within the parameters of a specific economic political framework; as if the capitalist foundation of New Zealand as a nation and its submission to the dictates of the 'world economy' need not be questioned.

Asserting that democratisation is constitutive of modernity, as the editors do in their Introduction is highly ideological. Agreement from the reader should not be expected, particularly when so much critical and indigenous scholarship has been devoted to questioning it, and when the evidence from colonised countries points in a different direction. Linda Smith (1989) has argued that, for indigenous peoples, 'modernisation' and the establishment of 'free' trade economies has involved a constant erosion of the material basis for their citizenship, to the point where it is becoming unsustainable. One could even say (as post-modernist scholars tend to do) that to the extent that modernisation is built on the imposition of universal ideals of a common good, a modern polity cannot encompass multiculturalism other than by adding cultural offerings to the list of consumables or commodities. Does it not follow that a modern, democratic and multicultural society is a contradiction in terms? Inevitably, one of these three ideals will be sacrificed. Since multiculturalism is mainly realised as cultural relativism and political correctness, and 'culture' is restricted and relegated to the private sphere and seldom allowed political expression, I would argue that something seriously at risk in New Zealand at present is actually democracy. The cultural 'others' are being excluded in the name

of multiculturalism. I expand on these points further below.

The failure to establish a hegemonic national culture in New Zealand is partly due to a relative lack of motivation among the ruling minority. It has to do with the facts established by several of the chapters in the book: New Zealand only really became independent from Britain when the latter joined the Common Market. New Zealand's ruling classes have really only been forced to produce ideology that would legitimise the status quo in the last decade, when faced for the first time with a minority that could really threaten their internal economic hegemony: the Chinese. It is by addressing the issue of how Chinese can and have become New Zealanders that this book makes its most interesting contribution, in my view.

Māori views on Chinese immigration – apparently mostly negative – were only heard indirectly however, in the chapters by Chinese authors, while the Māori authors themselves remained silent in this respect. This could be one of the ways alluded to by the editors in their introduction in which chapter authors speak past one another. Actually, the only chapters to clearly attempt intercultural dialogue were those dealing with bicultural issues, a testimony to how much further the dialogue between Māori and Pākehā has progressed. The analogy drawn in one of the chapters, of Chinese as invited guests who arrive only to interrupt a lively argument by the hosting couple of Māori and Pākehā (and made to feel awkward and unwelcome) is a very good one. Māori and Pākehā have been in dialogue for a longer time. In the process Māori have developed a solid foundation for their arguments, which Pākehā have (only just) began to take onboard. A possibly interesting question is why the Chinese arrival is seen as an interruption of Pākehā-Māori dialogue and that of Pacific peoples was not. These issues receive some attention in the book but I would like to have seen the issue explored in more depth.

Furthermore, issues of multiculturalism as put forth by recent immigrant authors, such as Zodgekar, which base cultural claims on a narrow definition of culture, and assign remaining claims to a pure, seemingly

dissociated 'economic' basket, in my view, put much bicultural progress at risk. In this book, a multicultural option where we immigrants are allowed and encouraged to reproduce our culture but are expected also to integrate and adopt a New Zealand identity, seems to be favoured by most of the authors. That is all very well if you take the narrow view on 'culture' as that which can be relegated to the private sphere of the home: the food you eat, the language you speak, the music you make or listen to, your sexual mores. However, if culture refers to the particular way of explaining the world and (justifying) relative dominance relations – the worldview of a people – the implementation of multiculturalism in limited, contested, public spaces becomes a lot thornier. Zodgekar, in his chapter, argues that "liberal democracy in New Zealand should be able to handle immigration of other cultural groups ... under the rubrics of recognition and resources" (p. 152). Funding cultural festivals would achieve a seemingly worthwhile 'symbolic accommodation'. If I were Māori, I would be worried about immigration if only for this reason: if such arguments were applied to discussions about biculturalism, they would set that debate back a couple of decades at least. It is for me rather disturbing to think that millenary cultures like those developed in China and India could be considered to be properly recognised by a cultural festival. In Western cultures, street carnivals have only ever been for the purposes of delimiting the subversion of established civilisations. Real recognition of a culture requires funding the material implementation and reproduction of its worldview. Some of that real recognition of Māori culture is being achieved by Māori getting a share of mainstream funding for education, health, industry, etc. But a recognition by non-Māori of the validity of the Māori worldview which would allow, for example, for a Māori psychology to be taught on equal terms with the standard psychology curriculum is (very!) far from being achieved.

Although no book can do everything, this book attempted a wide enough scope which still managed to miss a few important issues: The four blocs of people in New Zealand are not equal in size. Even if the minority groups

are growing at a faster rate, Pākehā will be the majority for a while, and the potential tempering effect of this is mentioned in several chapters but not well or deeply analysed. One could argue that as long as the dominant group has a strong sense of identity, the nation will be fine. So Asian immigration and separatist Māori initiatives should not threaten Pākehā identity. But they do. Evidence of this is that, combined with the governmental apparent celebration of multiculturalism, we are seeing an equally emphatic but less public push – evident in the prescribed ESOL curriculum – for ethnic immigrant minorities to learn not only English but New Zealand values, whatever that means.

David Pearson argues in his chapter that "there never has been one standard of citizenship given the elements of exclusion and divisive ranking ever present" (p. 33) in the philosophies and practices which have historically defined citizenship in New Zealand. The difference between citizenship and national identity is an important one in my view, and I would have liked to have seen it further explored. We are on dangerous ground now if identification with a New Zealand 'national culture' is made a requirement for New Zealand citizenship. One question that should be addressed in my view, is what would happen if all national identity was lost? If people just lived here, without identifying with New Zealand, would it make any difference? Why do I need to feel like a New Zealander in order to be a good citizen?

Also, there is an important difference between identity (the claim, the adult achievement) and identification (the search, the process). One quick solution to the problem of many different established identities having to share the same space and resources, would be to let those naturally engaged in identification processes, i.e. young people, decide for us what 'New Zealand' should stand for. To the extent that learning becomes 'personalised' in secondary schools, and the whims of 17 year olds are allowed to determine the knowledge base of New Zealand universities, it would seem to be exactly what we are doing.

Although one of the challenges under consideration is 'globalisation',

Challenged by Childhood: Healing the Hidden Hurts of a Difficult Childhood.

Kay Douglas

Auckland NZ: Speaking from the Heart Publishers, 2006 (334 pp).
ISBN 0 473 10837 2

Reviewed by Annik S. van Toledo

A Strength-Based Approach to Healing from Childhood Adversity

Childhood adversity affects a great number of individuals in a variety of ways, and clinicians may come across many adults who are still affected by experiences in childhood. Such effects can range from diagnosable clinical disorders, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression, to sub-clinical problems and maladaptive coping styles. Although links to childhood adversity may seem to be somewhat common knowledge amongst clinicians, it may not always be so clear to the client, and it is important for individuals to understand the impact that childhood experiences may have on their functioning in adulthood. It is imperative that individuals who are struggling as adults due to childhood adversity have the ability to acknowledge the hurts experienced as children and to know that it is acceptable to seek help with addressing some of these issues (Briere, 1992).

In this book, Kay Douglas looks at a variety of experiences individuals

may have been faced with as children, and considers how this affects people as adults. The book provides the reader with a good overview of a range of issues related to long-term consequences of childhood adversity, allowing them to look into his or her own past and acknowledge the difficult times that may have been experienced. In doing this, Douglas demonstrates that it is acceptable to seek help in recovering from such early adversity, with her book being a useful tool in assisting affected members of the general public to begin the healing process.

Douglas, who is a practising psychotherapist with an interest in self-help, has written the book for non-professionals, employing a personal approach to the topic, avoiding the use of jargon and utilising an easy writing style. Although appealing to the lay public, this makes the book's theoretical framework somewhat difficult to identify, although Douglas seems to favour a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) focus alongside a clearly strength-based approach to this area.

The book is divided into four easy-to-follow sections, each which is further broken down into chapters and sub-chapters. She offers a supportive framework throughout the book, providing assistance to the reader to reflect on childhood experiences and offering ways of dealing with these through the use of exercises at the end of most sub-chapters. Throughout the book, Douglas supports her writings and conclusions with examples from her own life as well as providing excerpts from 60 interviews she carried out with individuals throughout New Zealand who have experienced difficult childhoods. This provides the reader with an understanding of the range of experiences people can be faced with during their formative years, with real life examples of how such early difficulties can affect individuals in myriad ways.

The first and shortest of the four sections, 'Overcoming Childhood Adversity', provides a good introduction to the topic of childhood adversity and the rest of the book. This section contains the rationale for looking into the past and acknowledging childhood hurts, as well as providing information on how to use the book, encouraging the utilisation of journals and support people (including therapists). Along with this initial introduction, the focus of the section is how adults cope with the aftermath of a difficult childhood and allows the reader the first opportunity to self-reflect on his or her own coping strategies. The use of case examples gives

there was no mention of the present global stage where New Zealand needs to have a unified identity and where the constructed Other is mainly the 'Muslim terrorist'. There was a conspicuous silence regarding New Zealand's Muslim minorities. Also conspicuously absent was any real discussion of New Zealand's relation to Australia. Emigration figures are given, passing mention is made of ANZAC and ANZUS, comparisons made here and there between New Zealand's and

Australian historical racial relations, but no in-depth treatment comparable to that given to the relations with the Pacific nations or Britain. Australia is an important point of reference for New Zealand identity and deserves special attention.

Last and least: I would have liked to see the authors' institutional affiliations and disciplinary backgrounds listed at the beginning of chapters, rather than at the end of the book, particularly since there were so many and I was only

familiar with half of them. It is not just Māori who want to know where people are coming from.

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a variety of ways that other individuals in similar, and different, circumstances may have coped throughout their lives. The exercises provided at the end of each sub-chapter is reflective of the strength-based approach used throughout the book, and gives the reader the opportunity to reflect on positive aspects of coping rather than focusing on the adversity experienced. Using such self-reflective strategies to assist in looking at one's own strengths has been indicated in therapy related to childhood trauma in the literature (Briere, 1992). Although a positive start to such a difficult topic, it may have been advantageous to have more theory in this section to educate the reader about the theoretical framework within which Douglas has written this book, thereby assisting the reader to place the rest of the book into context. Overall, this section was well written and easy to follow, giving a good introduction to the rest of the book while allowing the reader to reflect on their own coping strategies in a positive way.

Part two, "The Childhood Challenges", flows on well from the first section and is concerned with the adversities that individuals actually faced in their childhoods, and through many case examples, allows readers the opportunity to identify their own hurts and some of the coping strategies employed during their childhoods. In particular, Douglas focuses on the thoughts, behaviours and emotions that individuals would have experienced as children in response to adversity, and writes in such a way that it is easy to generalise to one's own experiences. The exercises provided at the end of each sub-chapter are useful in encouraging the reader's self-awareness of his or her childhood, identifying events that may have been challenging and looking at how he or she coped as a child, leading onto how this may affect them as adults.

By looking at the supports that were available during childhood and other protective factors such as the child's survival and defence strategies, the strength based approach Douglas utilises throughout the book again becomes evident. It is useful having supportive case examples for the sub-chapters in this section, though there

were so many that it disrupted the flow of reading and made this section the most difficult to read. Additionally, the chapters are broken down into such small sections, based on the examples from Douglas' interviews, that this section seems rather disjointed. Combining some of these sub-sections and/or anchoring them with more theory and exposition by the author would have made this section easier to follow, and would have given some basis for the grouping and titles used for each of the interview excerpts. Although the number of excerpts seemed excessive, their inclusion is helpful in aiding the reader's understanding of the concepts Douglas describes and allows the reader to identify with other individuals who may have had similar experiences. With a more thorough edit, this section might have enabled the readers to identify with other individuals who have gone through similar events and to assist them to more specifically classify or name their own childhood experiences.

The next section, "The Adult Challenges", is a logical extension of part two, indicating the way in which childhood events are reflected in our adult lives. Douglas identifies both clinical and sub-clinical problems adults may experience as a result of difficulties experienced in childhood and the coping strategies employed as children. She includes named disorders such as PTSD, depression and anxiety, but also looks more broadly at other emotional and behavioural problems people may face. This is useful, as it enables readers to reflect on the differential effects that the adversity itself and then the individual coping styles have on them in adulthood. Additionally, focusing on sub-clinical problems again assists the reader to feel that it is acceptable to seek professional help for problems and extends the process of self-reflection by making the reader aware of the broadest range of difficulties experienced as adults. This section was fairly short, but essential as it provides close links to clinicians' work.

Part four, "Rising to the Challenge", was the longest but easiest section to read. This section is very important; Douglas looks at how adults cope with the aftermath of the difficulties experienced in childhood. It begins

by exploring ways in which we may strengthen ourselves to adversity and increase our self-esteem and self-awareness. The readers are assisted to identify self-destructive thoughts and while doing this, also develop a stronger sense of self, providing ideas on how to cope and work through what may have been a very difficult time for them as children. This section ties in well with previous ones, illustrating how coping strategies developed in childhood may become maladaptive or perhaps even destructive in adulthood and may be, therefore, the cause of some of the difficulties experienced as adults. Douglas first guides the reader to identify maladaptive coping mechanisms that may have been useful in childhood, and then replace these with new and more effective ones. The end of this section is a fitting finale to the book, providing the readers with the opportunity to identify things they may have learnt due to the hardships experienced as children and how these events have made them more resilient as adults – true to the strength-based approach utilised throughout the book. It allows the reader to be validated for their experiences, and makes it acceptable to acknowledge childhood adversity. The section concludes with comments made specifically for the reader by the interview participants who were used as case example, encouraging the readers through the process of self-discovery, which again illustrates the positive approach utilised throughout the book.

Overall, Douglas has approached this difficult topic in a positive way, providing a strength-based approach for individuals, as individuals, to investigate their past. The segues from one section to the next helped facilitate self-awareness and healing in the reader, though at times, particularly in part two, the sub-chapters were seemingly disjointed and at times repetitive, resulting in the reader feeling overwhelmed with the volume of case examples provided. Furthermore, the exercises provided at the conclusion of most sub-chapters also promoted the readers' self-awareness, providing plenty of opportunity for them to identify limitations experienced as a result of childhood adversity and suggestions for dealing with these.

The main strength of this book is that it encourages the reader to acknowledge and seek help for problems experienced in the past if required. The literature suggests that most adults have experienced some degree of childhood adversity, and supports the importance of the recognition of such difficulties faced in childhood, particularly if these are affecting the functioning of an individual in adulthood (Briere, 1992). Although this book strongly encourages therapy for the readers, it tends to promote the idea that most of us have suffered negative childhood experiences and thus the over-identification with particular examples may result in inadvertently pathologising readers, making them look for problems when in fact there are none. Additionally, the polarity of some of the exercise questions, many of which are presented in a decontextualised fashion, could make it difficult for readers to provide responses that truly reflect the nature of their formative years, possibly adding to the risk of the reader over-identifying with negative childhood experiences. However, the exercises do assist the reader's self-awareness indicating that these may be useful to work through in conjunction with a clinician. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Douglas intended to pathologise the reader, with the strength-based approach utilised throughout the book minimising the risk of such negative effects. The book is also more likely to appeal to individuals who have experienced, and invite help for, difficulties experienced during their childhoods, further decreasing the risk of inadvertently pathologising the reader. After reading the numerous case examples and the positive comments at the end of the book from the individuals who have been through this process, the natural next step after reading the book would be for the reader to investigate and enlist support to work through their own hurts experienced in childhood, which would be a positive step for most individuals reading this book.

As the reader progresses through the book, the exercises provided by Douglas provide some guidance for working through hurts experienced in childhood in a positive and empowering way and can usefully be utilised in conjunction with therapy. However,

there is perhaps minor concern that some readers may begin processing their past without any assistance which may be detrimental to the healing process for some individuals. Douglas has been careful to avoid this by focusing on the positives first and providing many suggestions for accessing help, but it is possible that some individuals will attempt this in isolation. Additionally, some exercises are at times very long-winded, difficult and may perhaps be irrelevant for a given individual reader. This could result in individuals only doing some of the exercises or not at all, which would limit the usefulness of the book to them. Furthermore, the exercises make the book a lot more difficult to work through, and particularly in section two where there are a lot of sub-chapters and exercises; individuals may become discouraged and thus terminate the healing process they have embarked on. However, having a more thorough introduction to the use of these exercises and doing these in an exploratory manner, as suggested by Douglas, would provide the reader with some insight of his or her own strengths and limitations, and could be useful exercises to do in conjunction with a therapist to increase self-awareness and identify areas of strengths or weaknesses for the individual.

The book also strongly encourages the use of writing and poetry to assist in the healing process, especially when utilised alongside the exercises and more formal therapy. Although these suggestions are useful, they seem to be guided by the author's own experience, and therefore other informal strategies, such as art therapy or meditation, which may be more suited to some readers alongside formal therapy such as CBT or psychotherapy, are omitted. Overall, the exercises provided by Douglas throughout the book are a useful way for the reader to acknowledge and work through some difficulties experienced in childhood, particularly if these are used in an exploratory manner in conjunction with other helpful strategies.

Douglas avoids the use of technical jargon, thus making the book easy to read for the intelligent general reader. Although this is a strength of the book, making it appeal to a wide audience, it may have been useful

to have a bit more of a background to the theoretical framework utilised throughout, particularly to place it in context and thus aid its use by clinicians. Douglas focuses a lot on thoughts, emotions and behaviours indicating that this book is somewhat influenced by a CBT approach. Having this explained, even in the simplest terms, may assist the reader in understanding the progression of the sections throughout the book and would perhaps anchor the somewhat disjointed second section, allowing the reader to understand the groupings used for the examples and sub-chapters. Despite the fact that avoiding this explanation makes the book easier to read, having a small explanation of the theoretical framework could have been useful in guiding the reader through the book more easily.

Overall, "Challenged by Childhood: Healing the Hidden Hurts of a Difficult Childhood", is a very useful tool by which members of the general public can acknowledge and work through difficulties they may have experienced in their formative years. By utilising a strength-based approach to this topic, Douglas empowers the reader through this process, providing clear guidance through the use of exercises. Clinicians could assist clients through the healing process, with the exercises and examples highlighting areas or strengths or weaknesses that could become the focus of therapy. The major strength of this book for clinicians is that it enables the interested reader to acknowledge difficulties experienced in the past and strongly encourages the reader to look for professional support and counselling, which is promising to see in any book.

Reference

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