

the well being of families and children. It provides research findings, current concerns and statistics for each of the are as chosen. It is a useful ready reference

for those wanting to quickly get in touch with current issues around the topics on display, as a starting point for decision making, action or further research..

*Reviewed by* Lloyd Owen,  
Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Social Work,  
La Trobe University

## ***Helping bereaved children***

edited by Nancy Boyd Webb

New York: Guilford Press, 304p.

This excellent book appears to have been neglected in the sparse reflects the reluctance of many adults literature of children and bereavement. Perhaps this, even professional workers, to deal with the issues of death and hence assist children to do so. Boyd Webb's book is useful for academics practitioners and parents and is written in a style that makes it meaningful for the different perspectives the reader may take. The book is so designed that the first three chapters focus upon a theoretical overview of the children's experience of bereavement and follows with application of this in providing a framework for assessment of a child who has undergone a bereavement, distinguishing between 'normal' and 'disabling' grief. The remaining two-thirds of the book, which is written by Boyd Webb and other contributors, provides a well balanced integration of theory, and illustrates this by case studies.

The book commences with a theoretical review of children's experiences of death. Boyd Webb compares the experience of bereavement of children and adults. She provides a good review of a child's stage of conceptual development in relation to understanding bereavement, but cautions in the strict application of these stages recognising that all children develop and mature differently. She also provides a review of the influence of religion and culture on the child's experience of bereavement and, later in a case study,

discusses the issue of the therapist dealing with parents' religious attitudes to death that the therapist may not share.

The case studies presented are selected for the different experiences of grieving according to the form of loss the child suffers. The two broad categories are: death in the family; and death in school and the community. Within the first category, the content addresses death of a grand-parent, terminal illness and death of father, accidental sibling death and the joint loss of death of a god-parent and separation of parents. Each case study addresses theory and presents the case, including narrative, and the therapists' planning, feelings and responses. The manner of presentation allows the reader to make their own assessment of the material presented by the child as well as understanding the therapists' responses. Although there are a number of different authors of these chapters, the style of writing is similar (or well edited!) and communicates the material well. This section also includes a group therapy intervention when children have suffered a personal loss. It also demonstrates the different manner in which children do grieve. This section also has a case in which a young child (2½ years old) witnessed his father shoot his mother and then himself. The case illustrates the importance of assisting a young child to grieve and presents a creative, sensitive the effective way in which to do so.

The category of death in school and the community is particularly relevant as children face unexpected violence and death in the school and the community. The cases presented, which include death of a peer, of a teacher, of a counsellor and in a classmate's family, explore post-traumatic stress disorder and suggest approaches for working with individual children, groups and staff. This section would be very useful to school counsellors as well as others working in communities where children have experienced such losses.

The book clearly illustrates that disabling grief can occur for many children and requires direct intervention. It also illustrates that with appropriate intervention children can learn to face their grief and move on with life. An underlying assumption of the book is that a loss is not something to 'get over', rather it is something to come to terms with emotionally and conceptually so that it does not impair the child's future life. A major strength of this book is the obvious respect the authors have for their child clients and their families. This fact, coupled with the theoretical presentation and integrated case studies, make this book a very valuable one for those interested in working with children.

*Reviewed by* Margarita Frederico  
Assoc. Professor of Social Work,  
Australian Catholic University

## ***Unequal lives? Low income and the life chances of three year olds***

by Tim Gilley and Janet Taylor

Brotherhood of St. Laurence, 1995, 173p. RRP \$16.00

This is the fourth book in a series published by the Brotherhood of St Laurence on their impressive longitudinal 'Life Chances' study which is following through a cohort of 167 children born in inner urban Melbourne in 1990. Readers may have seen some of the families in

this study appear in a television program recently shown on SBS which was based on this study. The program provided a very human face to the study and a glimpse into the everyday lives of a small number of the families. This book fills in the detail behind the faces, and presents

us with a picture of how low income appears to be shaping the experiences and opportunities of children in the 1990s. From its origins in the 1930s, the Brotherhood has fought poverty by combining direct assistance to the poor with advocacy and social action. Its high