

The contributors, who include educationalists and government officials, enumerate a wide range of obstacles to girls' chances of receiving an education, including parents' inability to pay, a shortage of schools and teachers, the long distances that children often have to travel to school, a gender bias in favour of boys, a perception that boys have better job opportunities than girls, pressure for early marriage of girls, or the risks of sexual harassment and pregnancy. The common ingredient, say the editors, is a context of persistent poverty. The focus of action, they add, has to be at the community level, through partnerships between all those who are committed to spreading the benefits of education.

The importance that African governments are beginning to place on redressing gender imbalances in their educational systems is underlined by the contribution of ministers and government officials from Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Educating girls, say Ann Cotton and Richard Syngé, is "*an investment in better standards of living in the future, with multiplier effects in terms of health, nutrition, hygiene, smaller families and women's improved social status. Equally, the process of family and community decision-making about girls' education can become part and parcel of the removal of the family's and community's own social, economic and even political barriers to progress.*"

– Editor, *Journal of Social Development in Africa*

### **Tales from Family Therapy – Life Changing Clinical Experiences (1997)**

eds Frank N Thomas, Thorana S Nelson, The Haworth Press, New York, London, ISBN: 0-7890-0065-2 (h/b); 0-7890-0450-X (p/b), 304 pp inc index, Price: US\$49.95 (h/b); US\$24.95 (p/b).

Book reviewers can get to keep the book reviewed, but although I usually still try to avoid the onerous task of reviewing a book, this one was just too good to miss! If, like me, you find most academic books dry and difficult and would rather read a novel given the choice, then this one is for you. I could hardly put it down – innumerable (53 in fact) short and interesting accounts by therapists of cases which had moved and changed them in some way. I think both beginners and experienced therapists could learn more about the actual practice of family therapy and being a therapist through this than by almost any other means.

The book has sections which include Therapy with Families, Couples, Children, Medical Issues, Humour and just Remarkable Clients generally. Difficult Cases, Use of Self, Collaboration and Supervision are some of the other areas addressed. Although most cases are American (after all what else do you expect from Americans?), there are a few from Australia, Norway, India, Canada and New

Mexico, but they do include different cultural groups within America and I found the experiences almost all understandable and relevant in some way to our own Zimbabwean context.

What I most enjoyed was the incredibly wide variety of problems and experiences that people described, from the suicidal Pueblo Indian boy at the beginning, through an amazing array of various children and families, single parents, elderly people, jockeys, war veterans and on to the last family who were dealt with by some “expert” and later confessed they hadn’t understood more than a quarter of what had been said!

The strength of the different accounts lies in the message that change is not only possible but comes about through all sorts of unpredictable ways. The therapist’s agenda is probably the least helpful in promoting such change, whereas the ability to respect and believe in people and their own experiences is the most important ingredient of successful therapy.

Finally this collection of unique tales of the joys, fears, mishaps, ingenuity and lessons learnt that informs us generally what the human side of being a therapist is all about, is a must for all those involved in therapy and is great reading for other interested parties as well.

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