

Foreword

The mission of the relaunched Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), under the leadership of Mark Orkin, is encompassed in its slogan 'Social Research that Makes a Difference'. In the New Priority Area of Child, Youth and Family Development, we focus on what we term 'the people at the heart of social and economic development'. Without due consideration for human factors in our complex and changing society, no programme of innovation can succeed. All too often we hear of ambitious socio-economic interventions which flounder in response to community and organisational politics, interpersonal issues, and painful legacies of oppression which affect all our lives.

This book is modest in scope in that it focuses on the experiences of one child mental health clinic in the difficult and sometimes painful process of transformation. Different projects from the clinic are discussed in different chapters, but all the contributions are linked. The book links with the HSRC through Leslie Swartz, who has joined us as a Director in the Child, Youth and Family Development programme. He brings with him a rich and much appreciated network of colleagues.

What is clear from the book as a whole is that any serious engagement with community change must at the same time involve a high degree of introspection on the part of those trying to make this difference. In transforming our practice and in attempting to transform people's lives, we similarly transform ourselves. This book shows that without a consciousness of ourselves and our reflection in our work, we lose an important source of information.

Many of the programmes of the HSRC are large in scope and some do not permit the type of detailed analysis presented here. This book is helpful to our work, however, and to that of all those trying to make a difference in society, in that it opens for scrutiny the very source of much change – human commitment in all its challenging complexity.

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About the Authors

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CAROL STERLING is a clinical psychologist who was amongst the first to begin the Child Guidance Clinic's tradition of work with local communities. She is now in private practice but continues to remain involved in training lay people in psychological skills.

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