

ways. A useful case study of two older gay men, Alec and Peter, illustrates ‘the complexity, diversity and contextual nature of sexuality and care’ (p. 80). The task of interrogating ‘common understandings of sexuality and gender identity’ (p. xi) is progressed enormously by chapters focusing on bisexuality (Jones) and trans people (Alley and Jones).

These chapters should have come earlier in the book as they challenge entrenched views such as biologically-fixed sexual and gender identities and homogeneity within LGBT categories, whilst examining the ways people embrace and/or reject identity labels. The links to health and social care are clearly made, as are suggestions about developing good practice. Jones and Ward conclude that in order to have a progressive health and social care agenda which embraces difference and inclusivity, there is a need to understand the complexities of sexual and gender identities, challenge hetero-normativity, and highlight areas of inequality. This book goes some way to doing this by raising complex and important issues in a powerful yet encouraging way. It makes a much needed contribution to the debates within health and social care policy and provision about equality and access to services for all.

Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care,  
Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

RHIANNON JONES

doi:10.1017/S0144686X10000826

Lisa Snyder, *Speaking Our Minds: What It's Like to Have Alzheimer's*, revised edition, Health Professions Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 2009, 200 pp., pbk \$21.95, ISBN 13: 978 1 932529 50 0.

This wonderful empathic book is a revision after a decade of the author's *Speaking Our Minds*, which portrayed the experiences of seven people with Alzheimer's. Lisa Snyder updates her responses to the narratives of these people who all live in the United States of America. The book has three main sections: Listening, Speaking and Responding. The first, Listening, instantly brings the reader's attention to the interruption in people's biographies caused by Alzheimer's. Listening to their personal reflections helps us understand what it is like to live with the condition. The author defines Alzheimer's from medical, historical, sociological and personal viewpoints. Bea, Bill, Jean, Bob, Booker, Betty and Consuelo unfold these personal definitions for the reader: their individual responses train the reader to listen. Readers diagnosed with Alzheimer's can compare their own opinions with these seven memoirs, and are encouraged to read the stories with their carers to trigger discussions about their own relationships and responses to the condition. For professionals these narratives are a reminder ‘of the people who form the core of our commitment’ (p. 10). The author endeavours to unite and connect different types of readers and challenges us all to recognise commonalities in adversity.

The second section, Speaking, has seven subsections named after the seven people with Alzheimer's, each with their own story. Their onset, diagnostic processes, reactions and responses, relationships, emotions, determination, hopes and despair are revealed. *Bea* is not new to loss and grief. Her demeanour is

gentle, co-operative and candid. Unimpressed and unforgiving of some of her diagnostic experiences with professionals, she sends out one clear message – the need to be compassionate. *Bill* seeks refuge in pursuing a healthy body determined to slow down the progression of the disease. He is invigorated when he and his wife Kathleen meet their peers through an educational support group. *Jean* has a fighting spirit and directs her outrage at the disease itself rather than on her relationships with others. Her protest quietens over time, and her sense of loneliness and what this means penetrates through to the reader. The changes in her bring insecurity. The quality of the relationship between Jean and the author seems mutually profound. *Bob's* dry humour hides his anguish and his desire to dissociate with anything to do with Alzheimer's. His relationship with his wife is increasingly firm, yet his role shifts. This conflict leads him to be rebellious; he does not want her to be over-burdened, he does not want to give up his self-reliance, but he also recognises his limitations. *Booker* has grace, is philosophical and 'accepting' of his condition but is not complacent. He actively fits into the daily structure and support his daughter has arranged for him to allow her to continue to care for him. In return, he expects people to be gentle and not hurt him. His upbringing is deeply rooted within him, and he teaches the reader the importance of sensitivity and love. *Betty* turns her analytical abilities on herself and her profession, social work. She teaches us we must learn to accept our own deficiencies before we can accept others. We must also see beyond these deficiencies and be curious about who people are. *Consuelo* at the age of 33 has been told she carries the gene for early-onset Alzheimer's. The reader is privy to the impact this has on her and her husband's future. Consuelo's identity remains masked. She could lose her job, but her voice is heard and we must listen.

The third section, Responding, provides up-to-date knowledge about prevention, treatment and advanced directives, and discussion questions at the end present additional opportunities for individual or group learning. The growth of Alzheimer's organisations, advocacy, self-help groups, and website networks represents a collective effort to understand and support people with Alzheimer's. The reader vicariously experiences empathy through the author's relationship with these seven people. Seeing them as our mentors, peers, friends and patients, we can move toward a shared awareness and understanding of each person's life. Every page of this book provides us with a different observation and sensitivity. The book is for sharing – to be read together amongst persons with Alzheimer's and their carers. It is for professionals and their students. For this reviewer, a nurse educator, it provides a rich array of personal accounts to sensitise nursing students and encourage them to open their minds and hearts to their fellow human beings who have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

University of Stirling, UK

ANNE MASON