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# Article 5: Book Review: Ravet, J. Supporting Change in Autism Services:  Bridging the Gap Between Theory & Practice (2015), London:  Routledge.

## Reviewed by Prof. N Martin, London South Bank University

Title:  Supporting Change in Autism Services:  Bridging the Gap Between Theory & Practice (2015), London:  Routledge.

Author: Dr Jackie Ravet

**Review**

Ravet’s book is beautifully and coherently structured and presented. It is clearly theorised, well-argued and practically useful. She is careful to unpack terminology and concepts which are often based on taken for granted assumptions in literature. Terms such as ‘challenging behaviour’ for e.g. mean different things to different people and Ravet thoughtfully articulates the contested nature of the idea. She follows the thinking through by discussing ‘challenging situations’ with reference to social model thinking.

‘People with autism’ is Ravet’s chosen people first term and she argues this through and refers to the alternative identity first term ‘autistic’. The word ‘disorder’ is also discussed and thankfully rejected in keeping with the views of many autistic people who have written on the subject.

Her discussion of ideas such as labelling are theorised in relation to medical model thinking and applied in a pragmatic way in relation to service delivery. Ravet carefully articulates the necessity of understanding the autistic person as an individual operating within a context, i.e. moving beyond the label.

Importantly she clarifies the requirement to understand the impact of environmental factors on the autistic person. Gender and ageing are themes which are given less attention but there is always scope for a second edition. Similarly, college and university are somewhat neglected but could receive careful attention in future publications.

Ravet uses excellent diagrams to put across her understandings in ways which practitioners and policy makers can apply in context. She underpins her thinking in relation to policy drivers relevant to the UK. Although the book is UK focussed in relation to policy and legislation it has international reach in terms of practical application in other respects. The Equality Act 2010 is mentioned briefly but could possibly have played a more central part alongside international human rights legislation and conventions. This could be strengthened in a future volume.

Vignettes are effectively deployed and Ravet is careful not to compromise individuality and to represent the life world of autistic people with respect. It is difficult to represent a wider range of experience in a small volume. Autistic parents, university students and elderly autistic people access services and these examples could be explored in future.

My slight disappointment is that few autistic scholars are referenced here, although the book was produced four years ago and the relative explosion of the work of autistic authors such as Chown, Milton, Stewart, Ridout and Lawson is more recent. This is something for next time and I am interested in collaborating in a volume which places autistic voices centre stage. The Participatory Autism Research Collective is gaining international recognition as a rich source of autistic scholarship.

This book will be on the reading list of LSBU’s MA Education / Autism. I feel that it would do some good in the world if it were to be widely used. The work has the capacity to influence positively the thinking of people who work directly with autistic individuals as well as those tasked with developing policy and services. The idea of ‘nothing about us without us’ of course would strengthen the narrative.

If you want to know about autism ask an autistic person.