Women's Perspectives on the Solution Focused Approach by Anne-Marie Wulf & Jacqui Von Cziffra-Bergs (Editors)

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Anne-Marie-Wulf and Jacqui von Cziffra-Bergs (editors)
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In summary, the eight questions were about how gender influences their SF work, how others might see SF in what they do, how the approach has been adapted to become their own, why they stay with the SF approach and what advice they would give to other female SF practitioners. The authors come from 15 different countries in every populated continent. Their work contexts include trauma, domestic violence, children and families, LGBTQ+ and supervision. On a larger scale, there are chapters about working with the Australian Veteran Wellbeing Support (SF by stealth), in the New Zealand prison service, in a male prison in South Africa and in governance and politics in Mexico.

Every chapter is followed by a dialogue between the two editors with their reflections on the author's responses to the questions. The first and last chapters are written by Anne-Marie and Jacqui themselves, giving their own impressions of what they call 'SF DNA' and women's place in the SF

a Jenny Clarke, now retired from work as an organisational consultant and coach, is delighted to hear new voices and see new developments in the SF world.

world, topics not often discussed. Three women distinguished in the field write forewords: Eve Lipchik, Yvonne Dolan and Jane Lethem (who led the first SF workshop I attended).

For me, the most interesting responses were to the question about how the contributors have adapted the approach and made it part of their SF DNA. Jane Tuomola, who writes about her work as a supervisor, raises challenging thoughts about unwitting messages that could be transmitted by questions like "how will you notice that you are dealing with things better?" which may fail to acknowledge issues of power and injustice. Olga Zotova, Emma Burns and others also write explicitly about the need for awareness of the social contexts in which people live. Similarly thought-provoking is the re-labelling of SF from strength-based to efficacy-based, by Teri Pichot from the Denver Center for SFBT.

There are also comments about working in problem-focused environments, such as where psychiatrist Ursula Buehlmann works. I like her response to clients who want to talk about medication: "supposing the medication has exactly the effect you hope for, how would you know that it works well?" p87

What do we learn about the impact of gender in SF practice? Many of the respondents were puzzled (as I would have been) by the suggestion that gender might have an influence. Despite this, there are frequent references to female sensitivities, with emotion and empathy often being cited as important elements of their work. Perhaps the most succinct response on this topic came from Sofie Geisler in her chapter *In the space between governance and politics*: "Thinking about my gender as some kind of determinant has felt like a way of reducing the influence of my own competences, personality, history and contributions as a person, as Sofie, and not as a woman." (p25)

Although they hadn't thought (and still didn't think) about their gender as relevant, for many the questions prompted new thoughts about the environments in which they work and how they operate within them. What we find in this book is an insight into how these women live and work in a wide variety of family, cultural, religious, economic and political contexts. Gender is just one of the many different ways we could be categorised. Or perhaps, like our clients, we are all unique.

Now for a confession: I skipped most of the dialogues between Anne-Marie and Jacqui which follow each chapter. However, the introductory and final chapters of the book are vital elements. Chapter 1 describes the origins of the project and sets out the editors' own SF DNA. Chapter 18 includes a final dialogue and draws conclusions about common factors they observed while working on the project.

The book is a fascinating collection of female voices. And the editors are to be thanked for giving voice to so many women "standing in the shadows, quietly going about their work and yet not being given an opportunity to be heard" (p8). Alesya Courtnage pays tribute to these women in her answer to the question *Which female practitioner inspires you and why*: "I have most

likely not met the female practitioner who inspires me the most because she is too busy and overwhelmed attempting to balance her home and work life. She has likely not attended a conference because she doesn't want to leave her children at home. She has not written a book because she is exhausted at the end of the day ......" (pp 60-61)