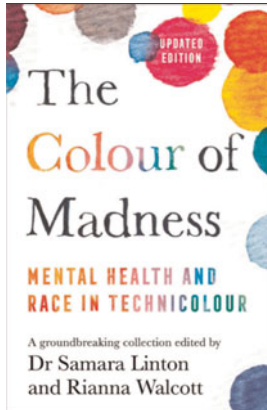


## Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



### The Colour of Madness: Mental Health and Race in Technicolour

Edited by Samara Linton and Rianna Walcott  
Pan Macmillan. 2022. £16.99 (hb). 336 pp. ISBN 9781529088496

Samara Linton and Rianna Walcott should be commended for sharing their personal experiences in this book and for gaining the trust of so many people who also share experiences. The word 'colour' in the title is used to represent different experiences, each colour speaking to a different experience. This, along with the chapter titles and the names of the authors, reminds us of the great cultural and ethnic diversity that we live in. The reader experiences the pain, hope, exasperation and suffering of the authors, as well as their love and the lack of it.

This is a journey through slavery, colonisation, racism, migration, discrimination, personal trauma and the impact of being a migrant or a refugee and of being transgender. The emphasis is on how these conditions affect people of colour. The book shares the stories of people who do not feel understood, whose culture is alien to many, who do not fit in and who are treated differently.

These stories show the extreme difficulties people have had to endure, including lack of empathy, misinterpretation of words and actions based on lack of cultural awareness, dealing with mental health problems and discrimination and the impact of both together.

These are powerful stories and I often had to take breaks while reading this book. I felt both physically and emotionally affected by the strength of emotion it conveyed. Many of the stories resonated with me as a person of colour and I am sure will resonate with anyone who has heard experiences of minority ethnic patients and staff of colour.

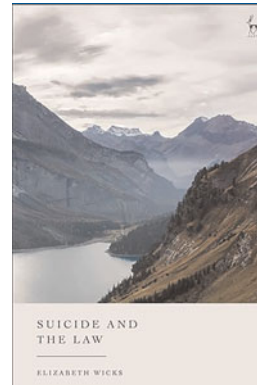
There are stories of schizophrenia, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorder, to name just a few. The reader cannot help being affected by the experiences of loneliness, social isolation and discrimination that are so vividly described, and by the positive experiences of being acknowledged, being cared for, of receiving therapy and the role of prayer. These are stories written by patients, staff, parents, children, researchers, many who have more than one of these identities. This adds so much to the richness of the book and the layers of experiences.

This is an important book for clinicians. It shows that people often hide their pain and suffering, and that routine clinical questioning do not necessarily help patients tell their stories and that there is need to provide multiple ways for people to be able to feel safe and express themselves. And even, importantly, to acknowledge one's own ignorance about the lives of one's patients.

We need more books like this, and we need to use them for training clinicians and wider society so that, step by step, perhaps we can do better.

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### Suicide and the Law

By Elizabeth Wicks  
Hart Publishing. 2022. £85.00 (hb). 232 pp. ISBN 9781509932702

The book opens by contemplating what UK law can do in response to the World Health Organization recognising suicide prevention as a public health priority whereby all suicides are preventable. As with legal texts there is much discussion around statute and case law but is written in a conversational style for readers less versed in legal terminology. It examines the 'underexplored' topic of suicide in the UK, observing law on suicide as being 'regrettably unclear and complex'.

There is exploration of the definition of suicide. This is noted as appearing seemingly unambiguous but more precise definition has heralded much debate in the literature. The book opted for simplistic definitions of 'self-caused' and 'intended' death. The challenge of getting the balance between respecting autonomy and preventing suicide is a theme throughout. The chapters detailing the evolution of law against suicide from biblical times to the modern day are fascinating. As well as the chapter concentrating on the role of the Mental Health Act, Mental Capacity Act and Human Rights Act in suicide prevention, other thought-provoking chapters include the emotive topic of suicide of children and young persons and assisted dying, with all its nuances. Specific areas reviewed where suicide presents challenges to current law include prisons, schools and universities, hospices, care homes and hospitals.

In developing the theme that mental capacity should remain crucial to the determination of the law's response to suicide risk the book argues for a heightened test of capacity in the context of choices to die. In doing so it expounds a key concept of diachronic continuity, which considers whether a decision/desire to die is consistent with a person's identity and life story. Other themes permeating the book include end-of-life treatment, where declining certain treatments is an autonomous choice and not labelled as suicide; that rational capacitous suicides, albeit rare, are possible (hence the assumption that all suicides are symptoms of mental illness is 'unsustainable'); and the 'controversial' proposition that laws should explicitly permit the provision of assistance to die in certain capacitous cases. Furthermore, the book argues that the label of suicide is best avoided because of hidden pejorative meanings and judgement, suggesting it is better to 'simply talk' about