**Book Reviews**


Two books catching the current, welcome tide of interest in the distress that may beset young people in their families, their educational experiences, and their social lives. Both titles promise a content of counselling material. The Geldards’ deliver what their title suggests, a book about adolescents/adolescence and a proactive counselling approach. Sharp and Cowie contribute helpful ways of supporting children, mainly in their educational lives, but counselling it is not and the mis-title is a pity, because it unnecessarily promises more than the book can produce.

*Counselling Adolescents*’ four-part structure initially takes us on a developmental journey through adolescence in which two experienced therapists from Australia display their own understanding, respect, and clear “feel” for that hormonal hopscotch that so often characterises this particular stage of our lives, defined as a “multi-dimensional transformation of the person as a child into a new person as an adult” (p. 2). The road carries familiar signposts and the biological, cognitive, psychological, social, moral, and spiritual challenges appear on the authors’ sketch map, supported by research references. Although we recognise the landmarks, this is often a reminiscence trip, sometimes uncomfortably so, as we are reminded of those times when, overwhelmed by unexpectedly high levels of excitement, anger, sadness, or embarrassment, we were at a loss to know how to deal with the heightened intensity of our reactions and perhaps felt disgusted and ashamed of ourselves.

The proactive counselling approach of Part 2 is presented as a pyramid, the base of which is an existential philosophy supporting constructivist thinking, the personal qualities of the counsellor, and of the adolescent/counsellor relationship, rising to proactive counsellor behaviours.

Part 3 is a digest of proactive counselling skills and strategies that rival Heinz in their variety. Micro skills include active listening, giving feedback, and challenging, which offers a variety of tips on using questions from the “miracle” question beloved of solution-focused therapists to the cognitive behavioural goal-oriented and scaling questions. Symbolic strategies such as metaphor, ritual, and a projective technique that focuses specifically on exploring the interpersonal relationships of adolescents using miniature animals, lead into the creativity of art, role-play, journals, relaxation, imagination, and dreamwork. Self-control, challenging self-destructive beliefs (courtesy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy), anger management, assertiveness training, setting life-style goals, and making decisions come in the cognitive behavioural package. A group of psycho-educational strategies offers ways of getting information, explaining relationships and behaviour and helping to change them, rating scales, inventories, genograms (providing a pictorial layout of a family), and a seven-stage cycle of violence model, which is both realistic and pertinent not only for helping young people but also those chronologically adult clients who have not yet completed their psychological adolescent journey.

Two case studies summarising the counselling sessions with the skills and strategies of the counsellor noted alongside make up Part 4. These are intended to give a post-counselling picture of the proactive model in action, rather than a lifelike, no-holds-barred encounter, which means that they lack verisimilitude. An example of the use of the approach with proactive adolescents would have added colour and congruence.

The quality of the writing between the co-authors is not seamless. It is at its best when descriptive and practical and less attractive when word repetition and pontificating prescription take charge. Generally the style is straightforward, combining psychologically informed common-sense, comprehension, cohesion, and clarity, although the suggestion that the availability and accessibility of firearms has added to suicidal risks in adolescence (p. 50) does not really fit the clampdown on the possession of small weapons in our culture, following the massacre at Dunblane.

The authors’ premise that in working effectively with adolescents it is usually not enough for the counsellor to be a quiet listener has credibility, but an over-reliance on “a variety of strategies and counselling skills from differing frameworks … opportunistically selected and combined” (p. 223), by an “integrative and eclectic counsellor” (p. 207) is surely gilding the lily.

Sharp and Cowie’s book also says important things about how children are affected by life’s events and their particular understandings, feelings, behaviours, beliefs, and responses. They look at sources of unhappiness and causes of stress, explore children’s grief, common fears and phobias of childhood, the impact of social rejection and victimisation on children’s mental health, and offer suggestions and strategies that adults, particularly in education, may consider for helping distressed children. It is the practical, management, and organisational value of many of these ideas that is the strength of their book.

Like the Geldards, they value the tried and tested creative approaches of art, drama, story-telling, and play. They emphasise befriending. Circles of Friends, and peer support, particularly that modelled on the basic interpersonal skills of active listening, empathy, problem solving, and supportiveness, which are derived from counselling and are the only index reference to counselling approaches. Helen Cowie has studied and written about peer support for several years and there are useful references to this work, particularly in relation to bullying. “When tackling bullying, adults should remember that bullying is difficult to prove, easy to overlook and resistant to change” (p. 110). A statement graphically illustrated by current events throughout the world.

The difficulties of dealing with disruptive and aggressive behaviour are behind the regrettable escalation in school exclusions, which although utilitarian in philosophy, scarp-heap children’s lives. The ideas promoted here for the proactive management (that is what this book is about) of such behaviour and replacing it with social competence could help psychologists and psychiatrists to get a handle on what happens in schools, for it does appear from some of their writing that they too are excluded from this vital experience of children’s lives.

*Pat Milner*


Although there is still a pervasive desire to believe that children are “colour blind”, many people who work with children or are concerned with children’s welfare and protection now accept...
that racism and racial abuse affect children’s lives in ethnically plural societies. Since the pioneering work of the black psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the 1930s and 40s, a variety of research has attempted to demonstrate that racism has deleterious effects on black children’s welfare and development. The interpretations of such findings has, however, been much disputed (see, for example, the peer commentary issue of The Psychologist, March 1999). In addition, there has tended to be more focus on the effects of racism on the identities and self-esteem of black children and those from other minoritised ethnic groups than on the identities of those who permeate racism or on policy interventions to disrupt racism (although organisations like the Early Years Trainers Against Racism have long attempted to document ways in which racist practices might be disrupted).

In a context where the report of the McPherson Inquiry into the murder, in 1993, of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence (published in 1999) has sharpened British sensibilities about the consequences of racism in British society, this publication is particularly timely. Indeed, the NSPCC is to be commended for commissioning Christine Barter to review the literature on the effects of racism and racial abuse on children and official responses to racial abuse of children. This would be helpful in itself. However, this publication also makes recommendations about how it might be possible to protect children from racism and racial abuse and what we need to know in order to do so.

This is a short publication. It consists of 46 A4 pages (excluding references) divided into four overlapping main sections: The Impact of Racism; Research on Racial Abuse of Children; Responding to Racial Abuse of Children; and Social Services’ Response to Racial Abuse. The brevity of the publication is partly because there is a paucity of material available for review on the topic. No review can be entirely comprehensive. However, Barter has read publications from a range of disciplines, including psychology; sociology; anthropology; and criminology. One of the most important messages she conveys is that it is clear from the evidence available that racism has undesirable, multilevel effects on children and that many children from all ethnic groups are implicated, whether as victims, perpetrators, or bystander witnesses who are emotionally affected. However, our knowledge of the specific ways in which racism affects children is limited by the dearth of research evidence available. The review is useful in documenting evidence on direct and indirect effects of racism on children of all ages and from a variety of sources, including the family milieu, the school, and the wider social environment. It is for this reason that literature documenting practical strategies with the undertones has been ignored.

Nonetheless, this is an important review that does the vital task of suggesting what those concerned with child protection and researchers can start to do in order to combat racism and racialised abuse.

Ann Phoenix


I appreciate the opportunity to review this fine book, edited and enriched by two colleagues from Northern Ireland. It is a timely recognition of Anna Freud, child of Vienna, daughter of Sigmund Freud, who loved Ireland, spending as many of her holidays at Baltimore near Skibbereen (County Cork) as she could. There she read, wrote, explored, and relaxed as she reflected on the human condition from a psychoanalytic and developmental perspective. She derived these perspectives from her clinical work and direct observations of children as well as from theory-building formulations and the model of services that she and her colleagues created in response to the needs of younger children living in poverty in Vienna, in war-torn London, and under the conditions associated with the break-up of families (divorce) and chronic physical impairments (blindness, diabetes, and congenital deficits). Her humanistic concerns (soft-heartedness) were balanced by her demands (hard-headedness) that clinical work and services be evaluated through detailed observations systematically made by multiple observers; and that such data be organised and reduced in order that it could be reviewed, stored, and retrieved (the Hampstead Index and Profile have been computerised). As this book demonstrates, Anna Freud’s scholarship and research were intended to improve services and competence of staff. At the Hampstead Child Therapy Course and Clinic (now known as the Anna Freud Centre) she also intended that her data and ideas be available for further research to refine, revise, and elaborate our clinical and theoretical knowledge base.

This book documents selectively how Anna Freud’s practice and theory construction were closely joined. Anna Freud was sharply aware of the gulf between theory and practice. In 1966 (Freud, 1966a) she stated,

"...more serious is the fact that the division between theory and practice is widespread. There are many people who work on the theory of child development, and there are many others who work practically with children. But not enough theorists have the opportunity to apply their theories, and too few practitioners are taught developmentally how to handle children directly with children."

In this respect, I have been especially fortunate all my life. From the very beginning I was able to move back and forth between practice and theory. I started out as an elementary school teacher. I changed from that to the field of analysis and child analysis. From then on, I moved...
constantly back and forth, from the theoretical study of these problems to their practical application. I agree that one has to have special luck to do this, and that most people do not have this opportunity. Personally, I have to be grateful to a number of persons and institutions for giving me that when I was still very young in psychoanalytic studies but had learned enough to apply at least some of that knowledge, I was asked by the city of Vienna to make that knowledge available to teachers of nursery schools and elementary schools. I was given the opportunity to work with small groups of teachers, to discuss their practical problems with them in easy, theoretical terms. This proved to be useful to them and immensely useful to me.

When I had learned a bit more about psychoanalytic theory, an American friend gave me and some colleagues the opportunity to begin an experimental nursery for children between one and two years of age. (It was experimental because at the time group care for children of that age was unheard of.) The children we worked with were the most underprivileged children that could be found in Vienna.

From her eight published volumes and several seminal books, the Editors of this volume have brought together those writings of Anna Freud that they think will present a clear view of her clinical and scientific legacy. Have the advances in developmental psychology, human genetics, and biopsychology rendered obsolete much of Anna Freud’s scientific and clinical contributions? The selections in this volume are persuasive evidence that she has left us with clearly stated challenges for present and future research.

In these original works of Anna Freud’s, with introductory comments and linking formulations, the Editors have effectively and memorably succeeded in “rediscovering” her legacy of showing how developmental considerations are essential for understanding and addressing normative development and the symptoms and manifest behavior of deviancy throughout the life cycle. For example, in 1981 (Freud, 1981) she pointed out that normality and pathology of development depend largely on four factors:

1) on the constitutional and experiential element in the life of an individual not departing too far from what is average and acceptable; 2) on the internal agencies of the individual’s personality maturing at approximately the same rate of speed, none of them being either delayed or precocious compared with the others; 3) on external intervention being well-timed, coming neither too early nor too late; and 4) on the ego’s mechanisms used to achieve the necessary compromises being age-appropriate, i.e., neither too primitive nor too sophisticated.

The Editors have introduced each paper and section with clarifying and updating comments that serve as a reader’s guide and as a rationale for these selections that enable them to present this as a cohesive volume, a book that can stand on its own.

In order to set this forth the Editors have viewed Anna Freud’s major writings in four parts: (1) seminal chapters and derivative papers from Anna Freud’s (1966b) classic The ego and mechanisms of defense; 2) her major papers rooted in child development—normal and pathological including clinical and observational data framed by classical child psychoanalytic observations and theory; 3) a focus on pre-adolescence and adolescence; and 4) her pioneering contributions to technique and the widening scope of psychoanalysis.

Overall, this selection from eight volumes of Anna Freud’s published writings “rediscover” what otherwise may be lost for those who seek to bring theory and practice together in their daily clinical, teaching, and research concerned with child and human development. To paraphrase what Anna Freud reflected about her experiences, in this volume the Editors have enabled readers to move between practice and theory in an illuminating and sustaining manner.

Albert J. Sobhut

References

Freud, A. (1966a). Comments made at a workshop at the Child Study Centre, Yale University.


The first edition of this book came out only a short time before implementation of the Children Act in 1989. Its publication was a very significant event, providing an introduction and overview of this distinct area of expertise, which used the skills of the child psychiatrist in a different way. Child psychiatrists have been increasingly involved in advising the Family Courts about important decisions in children’s lives. The law also has made changes and these are reflected in this very helpful book, although the most recent have come after publication. There is clear guidance given about many areas essential to effective work in a legal setting.

This new edition, which has been very largely rewritten, provides up-to-date information and advice to all those involved with children, whether their involvement is clinical or in the special role of an expert witness. The new edition is presented in a larger typeface that initially seems easier to read, but the layout of the paragraphs does not make skim reading as easy as in earlier editions.

It makes clear the very specific requirements from a child psychiatrist when an expert opinion for an assessment is requested through a solicitor by a court and deals with many contentious issues. The chapter on confidentiality and consent is particularly relevant in helping a child psychiatrist clarify their role when an expert’s report is requested. The need for such experts to consult with other local practitioners is highlighted. This edition also discusses briefly the concept of psychological trauma, an aspect of children’s needs, particularly relevant to the expertise of a child psychiatrist—again a matter of increasing relevance in the court situation.

Increasingly child psychiatrists are jointly instructed by more than one party, the responsibility a psychiatrist carries then being especially heavy. Although this is mentioned, inadequate guidelines are offered, especially for those coming to this area without experience. This book was published before the implementation of the new Civil Procedure Rules, but in any case, it is already established practice for letters of instruction and all reports to be made available and for joint instruction to be frequent in cases involving children. Further comment is likely in future editions.

There is helpful advice about the layout and writing of the report, and this new edition includes new cases written in a more approved format than the previous editions with a very helpful glossary of legal terms. There is detailed and helpful advice on fees. It is surprising that the Expert Witness Pack for Child Psychiatrists, which offers detailed help in this area including recommended ways of recording time spent, is not mentioned.

One of the tasks enjoined by the new Civil Procedures Rules is the preparation of a joint schedule of agreements and disagreements then more than one expert is instructed in a case. The management of the meetings of such experts and the relevant directions that have been given by judges are not mentioned. There is no reference to the recent introduction of
parenting decisions, or parenting recommendations that may be made by courts, especially those in which juvenile offenders are dealt with. There is an extensive list of references.

This book, with its clear directives and illustrative examples, is in my view essential reading for every trainee in child psychiatry and paediatrics. Most experienced practitioners would find the advice given helpful. It could also be read with benefit by legal practitioners and others instructing child psychiatrists or working with them.

Constance Dennehy

Violence against Children in the Family and the Community.

Trickett and Schellenbach have collected together a series of papers grappling with the issues of violence against children in the family and the community. The book is organised into five parts that examine the consequences of violence for children's development, providing an ecological framework to understand violence, summarising effective intervention and prevention strategies, and finally how to address gaps in our knowledge about violence and its effects on children as well as appropriate intervention and prevention strategies.

The first chapter by Crittenden gives an overview of 35 years of research into family violence. There are a number of useful tables summarising research across a whole range of areas.

The reviews of the research are comprehensive but very focused on the American experience. There are reoccurring themes around poverty and its positive correlation with violence and child maltreatment. While I can accept that parenting in poverty is a stressful experience, I think it would be helpful to continue to recognise that child maltreatment can and does occur in optimal social conditions. It is easy to forget that poverty is correlated with, not causative of, child maltreatment. Otherwise it is all too convenient for middle and upper income families, from whence most professionals are drawn, to comfort themselves with a belief that the child maltreatment occurs only in poor families. Middle and upper income families may have more financial resources to reduce stress in the first place and also to cover up their parental misdemeanours in the second.

Despite my reservations and the very Amerocentric overview of the issues, the book is a very useful source text. It is comprehensive in its depths and detailed in the provision of references at the end of each of the chapters. It is ambitious in trying to address violence against children in the family and the community on many different levels, from the individual to their close interpersonal systems, their wider social network, and then wider social policy issues.

Gerrilyn Smith


This book offers a collection of 15 papers, drawn from an international group of authors of diverse academic backgrounds, which focuses on the theme of "conductivism" in the context of education.

At the heart of the book is a perspective on knowledge which draws attention to the "gap" between knowledge constructions and the "reality" which that knowledge serves to represent. Von Glaserfeld (p. 24), in a short but instructive chapter, reviews the concept of the "viability" of knowledge as an alternative to the approach that sees human knowledge as providing a "true" representation of an independently existing reality. Knowledge is considered "viable" as long as it is useful in accomplishing a task or in achieving a goal and is thus considered a "tool within the realm of experience". Given this view of knowledge, then, questions are raised about educational approaches which seek to promote conceptual change through replacing "everyday" knowledge with higher-status "scientific" knowledge; Desautels et al. (p. 259) argue, instead, for a "critical-conductivist" approach that focuses upon "enrichment of the field of possibilities for students through their participation in different knowledge games".

In regard to cognition and individual learning, Larochelle and Bednarz (p. 5) emphasise the conductivist view that knowledge cannot be transmitted but is constructed by the learner. In making the further link to pedagogy it is acknowledged that "no straightforward recipe for teaching practice can be derived from conductivism" (Bentley, p. 241) but, nevertheless, various examples are presented of how conductivism has been drawn upon as a referent in the creation of teaching models. Cobb, Perlwitz, and Underwood-Gregg (p. 63), for example, report on a long-term project in a second-grade mathematics class in which the instructional approach developed reflected the conductivist tenet that students re-organise their ways of knowing to eliminate perturbations in the worlds of their personal experiences. A recurring theme in this and other papers is that conductivism does not picture the student as an isolated subject alone in face-to-face interaction with the world. The intrinsically social nature of the educational process is acknowledged and addressed by authors throughout the book.

In recent years the term "conductivism" has tended to become open to criticism and devalued, through the multiple and undifferentiated ways in which it has been used. This book offers a re-examination of the theoretical roots of conductivism as a theory of knowledge and view of learning and demonstrates how conductivism can lead to significant transformations of pedagogical practice. It is a thought-provoking book that achieves (for this reader at least) the critical-conductivist aim of prompting a "response-able" (p. 270) readership.

Philip H. Scott