Child Abuse, Psychotherapy and the Law
R. Kennedy

Roger Kennedy, Consultant Psychotherapist at the Cassel Hospital, is introduced by Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss in recognition of the contribution of the Cassel Hospital to decision making in civil child protection proceedings, where the issue is the ability and willingness of abusive or neglectful parents to learn and sustain new skills which will enable them and their children to live safely together.

The material is anecdotal and therefore riveting, and is strongly recommended for those wishing to learn about intense, highly disciplined team work drawing on psychotherapeutic, social work, nursing, and medical skills in a residential setting. The emphasis on staff ‘support’, to which so often only lip-service is paid in terms of resources allocated, is impeccable in its insistence on the need for disciplined, consistent insight into staff functioning, individually and in terms of staff interaction, if a safe environment is to be provided for vulnerable children, and good-quality data obtained. Rather than offering open-ended therapeutic help, the data obtained must also define situations in which children require alternative parenting.

This book does not cover (and this must be a matter of regret to all those involved in planning and sustaining child mental health and child protection services on the basis of limited, often decreasing, human and financial resources) indications of the cost of this work. The Cassel is a centre of excellence, working with small numbers of parents and children in its family unit, but it lacks resources for longitudinal outcome studies other than of an anecdotal nature. An account of costing, and the establishment of externally funded and monitored outcome studies, would be of the greatest value to commissioners and providers of services in other settings.

This book is recommended, in particular because of its chapter on the treatment of families where one member is psychotic, in post-natal breakdown, and focused and intensive work on three families with fabricating or induced illness in a child. The useful, comparatively brief, reference list is psychodynamically oriented. All in all this book is recommended as one contribution to a psychodynamic approach to work with highly disturbed parents and their children, child protection, and child placement.

Jean Harris-Hendriks
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Counselling Children with Chronic Medical Conditions
M. Edwards & H. Davis

As part of a series on communication and counselling in health care, this book provides a practical training resource in basic counselling skills to those working with sick children and their families. The book is structured around a detailed description of the counselling process based on Kelly’s Personal Construct Theory. Central to this model is the recognition and understanding of the child’s personal and unique experience and perception of chronic illness, within a network of relationships with family and wider community of friends, school, and health professionals.

The opening chapters provide a brief overview of factors affecting a child’s and family’s experience of and adaptation to illness and how illness and its treatment may be construed. Whilst recognising the authors’ focus on the importance of individual experience, regardless of age, nevertheless I felt it would have been helpful to set this more firmly within a detailed description of developmental tasks and skills mastery at different stages. The ensuing chapters provide a clear and detailed account of counselling children, from initial engagement, through ways of understanding individual experiences, to therapeutic approaches to helping with specific issues, such as pain control and coping with medical procedures.

As with the other texts in this series, it is assumed that the reader may not have prior counselling experience or detailed knowledge of the psychological issues. The book concludes with a chapter on communicating with dying children, followed by brief closing remarks on professional issues and the importance of obtaining personal supervision and further training. In appendices, the authors provide a very helpful resource list of book titles for use with children with specific medical conditions, plus the names and addresses of useful British and American organisations with a brief description of their remit.

The central tenet of this book is the need to provide supportive communication to children with active listening as the core skill. Through their clear and sensitive prose, conveying the authors’ own clinical expertise and experience, the reader is enabled to do just that. The text is well illustrated by case studies, and bullet-point summaries at the end of each chapter enhance the presentation. A couple of slight niggles: the difficult issues of informed consent merited greater discussion, and adolescents were given rather short shrift—perhaps they need their own book?

I would strongly recommend this book to all those in the early stages of professional training, as well as to those unfamiliar with working with children or who seek to enhance their communication skills in this field.

Daniela Hearst
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Working with the Dying and Bereaved: Systemic Approaches to Therapeutic Work
Pauline Sutcliffe, Guinevere Tufnell, & Ursula Cornish (Eds)

Because you and I are dying and at different times and ages, it seemed fitting that this book should mix personal and professional, anecdotal and academic. But I have come to dislike multi-authored books and there were, as I feared, several chapters with definitions of ‘systemic’, highly repetitious and slightly differing.

But there is good news. In the most personally revealing chapter on the relevance of tears I found a fascinating and...
moving story around deaths among the original Beatles group, one of whom was the brother of one of the editors. That some people go on crying does not necessarily mean bereavement is not ‘properly’ done.

How schools can be helped to deal with pupils’ deaths is beautifully explored in the accounts of two consultations. They throw in for good measure the skills of working within the institution’s hierarchy and the head’s authority.

I found most joy in Eia Asen’s chapter on suicidal teenagers, which gave a clear definition of ‘systemic’—explanations and illustrations. Ideas and tips on bringing in different levels of the surrounding systems make a thoroughly clear chapter. I wish it had been more prominently placed as a key, unlocking readers from repetition and jargon elsewhere.

The chapter on work with old people opens a little-described field. Although I wished it had gone further into the dynamics of old people’s groups and what sort of attachments best suit the time when so many break, it inspired me the most.

Funny about the title: in 200 pages only two people seem to die. That they are a couple is interesting and moving: the account brings out homosexual homophobia in a way that is difficult to forget.

It can help us to make a better job of dying: don’t miss the book.

Peter Bruggen
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Family Group Conferences in Child Welfare
P. Marsh & G. Crow

The basic principle behind the Family Group Conference is manifestly appealing: genuine involvement of families and their support networks in order to find better solutions for children and their parents in difficulty. The model has been developing in the U.K. since the early 1990s, although it has a longer history in New Zealand and elsewhere. The rationale for FGCS is explained in the early chapters, making much of the consonance between the partnership approach, the appeal of this model to families from minority cultures, and the philosophy of the Children Act. The FGC comprises four basic elements: an independent coordinator to engage the families and set up the conferences; a broad view of the families’ potential support network; private family time to aid decision making; and negotiation of a plan acceptable to all the relevant parties.

The book documents the challenge of establishing the new system in different settings and the task of threading it into existing procedures and customs. Referrals came slowly at first and some families and social workers were resistant to the FGC model; thus any evaluation must take these rates of nonparticipation into account.

The role of the coordinators is crucial, involving a significant shift in the power balance between professionals and families and requiring a complex mixture of communication and organisational skills with the capacity to maintain an independent stance. However, the coordinators cannot stand aside entirely from assessing whether the agreed plan might involve significant harm for the child.

This examination of FGCS is a summation of six local evaluation projects coordinated by the University of Sheffield, although it is not entirely clear whether a common methodology was employed. A number of questions arise. First, were the cases referred to the FGC comparable to the routine range of referrals? The authors tried to establish that these cases were, on the basis of rates of risk registration, no less severe than a national sample, but the child protection cases were skewed more towards neglect than abuse. This does suggest that the model was used more for children in need than at immediate risk.

Second, how did the participants evaluate the FGC model? The families and professionals generally gave good satisfaction ratings of the conferences, although they found them stressful, and full agreement that the plans were in the children’s best interests was achieved in 74 out of 80 cases. This is encouraging news, although it remains to be seen whether this positive response remains if the model joins mainstream services. The authors are aware that it needs sustained and energetic agency support to succeed.

Third, what were the outcomes at follow-up and how did they compare with other approaches? The research team was only able to assess the outcome of four of the six projects at 1-year follow-up and there were no comparison groups. Claims to superiority of the model are therefore based on attempts to place these findings alongside evidence from other U.K. research samples, although they are not fully comparable. Nevertheless, on this basis, the benefits claimed included less need for separation of children from home and more stable return home, a reduction in further child protection procedures, lower re-abuse rates, and improvement in family relationships.

Last, to what extent were the conference plans implemented? The rate of implementation should have been much higher if family backing had genuinely been secured. The study was weaker here because limited research resources did not permit a systematic check on the outcome of each aspect of the detailed conference decisions. However, researcher ratings indicated that in 75% of cases the intent of the plan was followed. Future research will need to refine the outcome assessments by making closer inquiry into the developmental progress of the children themselves, their health status and educational progress, and to assess whether material circumstances and parenting had improved. In summary, this is clearly a worthwhile practice initiative and this book marks an essential first step in its evaluation.

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The Development of Social Cognition
S. Hala (Ed)

This book brings together some of the more traditional theories of social development with new thinking and current research in this topical area. It is a highly readable, up-to-date, and well-edited text aimed primarily at third-year undergraduate psychology and postgraduate child development courses, or for those trained some time ago who wish to update their knowledge.

Recent years have seen the field of social, emotional, and cognitive development move on considerably and there has been a flourishing in the publication of texts of this nature, but the emphasis here is more on the social, emotional, and affective elements of development, which have sometimes been overlooked in other books that tend to focus on the more cognitive aspects. It is therefore a complement to other such texts rather than a duplication.
Suzanne Hala writes a very comprehensive introduction to the book, which is divided into three parts. The first is essentially theoretical, and is a mature and critical analysis of the theories and research of Piaget and Vygotsky, exposing and modernising the philosophical tensions that still exist in current thinking on human development. The second part focuses on the very beginnings of social and cognitive understanding and the development of communication, affect, and emotion in infants. The final part extends the sphere of reference from infants to childhood and adolescence, though perhaps with greater emphasis on the younger ages. ‘Theories of mind’ are explored together with the influence on understanding and behaviour of transient emotional states, enduring personality traits, and the greater complexities of social development in terms of empathy and moral development and the cultural context.

All chapters are clearly organised and referenced and the continuity between chapters is excellent. The authorship is international, all contributors being well known and well published in their field. The main strength of this book lies in the authors’ abilities to link the ‘traditional’ with the ‘new’ and to integrate theory with current research practice. In so doing, the reader is invited to question and rethink (or consolidate) previously held views and this makes for stimulating reading. From a clinical psychologist’s perspective, the component lacking is the clinical application. Whilst Suzanne Hala, in her Introduction, alludes to the value of this research for the understanding and early detection of autism, for example, this more clinical position is never really developed further.

In summary, this is an intelligent, balanced, ‘state of the art’ review of the recent empirical literature in social-cognitive development, and well worth reading for those who wish to be updated in this field.

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Patterns of Adoption
D. Howe

This text is one of a series that looks at work with particular children and families. As the title infers, the book offers an overview of the research currently available in the field of adoption, and organises the findings using a framework based upon attachment theory. The results are presented in sections that look in detail at the outcomes of baby and later adoptions, and it considers the various types of attachment that might prompt the various outcomes. The processes are illustrated using case examples from the author’s own practice, which I found helpful both in illustrating the theme as well as tying the theoretical discussion to concrete situations (although I found the use of family surnames a little disconcerting).

Each possible type of attachment outcome is accompanied by a useful checklist of behaviours, characteristics, achievements, and personality traits. The author considers each of the main attachment types in turn, and concludes that anxious attachment tends to arise from delayed baby adoptions, or the rare situations where late adoptions have occurred but the child’s initial care has been good. By contrast, he suggests that late adoptions where initial parenting has been poor is the precursor for angry attachment, though the origins for such attachment in baby adoptees are not understood. Finally, Professor Howe suggests that avoidant attachment tends to arise from a history of hostile, cold, and critical parenting, and the group that he describes as nonattached has its origins in being raised in institutional nurseries, or by a succession of poor carers, or by parents who have had severe psychiatric illness.

This is a useful text, not only because it brings together the various strands of outcome research in an easily accessible form, but also because it offers a potential framework for understanding the difficulties that pre-adoption histories may bring about. I am sure it will find its way onto the shelves of practitioners working in the field of adoption, and will be a useful source for anyone new in the field.

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Wednesday’s Child: Research into Women’s Experience of Neglect and Abuse in Childhood, and Adult Depression
A. Bifulco & P. Moran

Longitudinal research of this quality is hard to come by. This publication reviews the research collected from the 1970s through to the 1990s. It tracks, develops, and amplifies themes first put forward in the groundbreaking studies of Tirrill Harris and George Brown, which focused on the social origins of depression in women.

It is easy to read, being clear and concise in its presentation of the information. The aim of the authors is to disentangle the elements of adverse childhood experience responsible for poor adult mental health outcomes, in particular depression. Additionally, they attempt to identify particular positive experiences that mitigate the negative consequences.

The authors helpfully draw the reader’s attention to the inter-relationship between neglect and emotional, physical, and sexual abuse experiences. Their research clearly supports the cumulative negative effect of these experiences, suggesting that young women exposed to multiple experiences of abuse enter adulthood in a vulnerable state, which can set them on a pathway of further damaging experiences (p. 137).

The conclusion and synthesis of this research have clear implications in relation to current practice—especially the issue of ‘significant harm’ in child case proceedings; as well as to appropriate interventions for the individual female, the relational aspects of her life as a child, a future partner, and parent and at the social policy level of reducing known psychiatric risk factors.

Although mention is made of gender at a number of points in the book, this theme is hardly elaborated. The reader is reminded that the focus on women was to a large part a pragmatic one, in that women were easier to research as they are less transient than men and more likely to be available to be interviewed. There is scant reference to wider research on gender differences.

Moreover, sexual abuse, although documented, is discussed without reference to additional studies. As a consequence, there is no discussion on how the findings of their studies relate to other research. For example, the authors state that in their London Women series ‘sexual abuse occurred most commonly in step-parent families’, though not necessarily by step-fathers themselves (p. 91). This later is restated as ‘we know that sexual abuse of girls is almost exclusively from males and in most cases from an adult living outside the household’ (p. 181). No references are given to other literature regarding inci-
dence or prevalence figures on sexual abuse.

The authors also appear to comfort themselves in relation to ethical issues regarding ongoing abuse by assuming that ‘since the abuses ended some years ago, the ethical issues over intervening to halt the abuse were no longer pertinent’ (p. 85). Given the chronicity of sexual offending problems, in particular assuming that the passage of time alone removes our ethical responsibilities regarding ‘halting abuse’, this is perhaps optimistic and naive. Many adult survivors make similar assumptions only to confront the reality that, far from stopping, their childhood perpetrator has targeted a new generation to abuse, often the children of the adult survivor.

Despite these quibbles, the book is invaluable in gathering together and analysing the evidence on adverse childhood experiences for girls and the impact on later depression.

Gerrilyn Smith
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Books by Members

Maurice Chazan, Alice F. Laing, Diane Davies & Rob Phillips
Helping Socially Withdrawn and Isolated Children and Adolescents


Gill Gorell Barnes
Family Therapy in Changing Times

Jonathan Green & Brian Jacobs (Eds.)
In-patient Child Psychiatry: Modern Practice, Research and the Future

Sheila Hollins, Angie Avis & Samantha Cheverton
Going into Hospital
London: Gaskell/St George’s Hospital Medical School, 1998. pp. 80. £10.00 (pb).

Sheila Hollins, Jane Bernal & Matthew Gregory
Going to Out-Patients
London: Gaskell/St George’s Hospital Medical School, 1998. pp. 72. £10.00 (pb).

Geoff D. Kewley
ADHD: A Guide for Parents and Professionals

David Quinton, Alan Rushton, Cherilyn Dance & Deborah Mayes
Joining New Families: A Study of Adoption and Fostering in Middle Childhood

Naomi Richman
In the Midst of the Whirlwind: A Manual for Helping Refugee Children

Michael Rutter, Henri Giller & Ann Hagell
Antisocial Behaviour by Young People

Sonia Sharp & Helen Cowie
Counselling and Supporting Children in Distress

Correction

Figure 1 in the Moukaddem, Fitzgerald, and Barry paper, Evaluation of a Child and Family Centre, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 161-168, was unfortunately reproduced inaccurately. The correct version appears here.