**Parenting: What Really Counts?**
S. Golombok  

Susan Golombok is Professor of Psychology at City University, London, and an authority on the effects of ‘non-traditional families on children’s development’. Her book was prompted by the numerous inquiries she has received from the media about whether unusual family structures (including surrogate pregnancy) or parental attributes (such as homosexuality) might impact adversely on children. Her intention was to review relevant literature, if available, to help answer these questions. The origins of the project are evident in her style of writing, which is intentionally kept simple so as to be accessible to non-professional audiences. The result is a clear and up-to-date discussion of important, even cutting-edge, issues about family life, illustrated by quotes from parents involved in an allied research project. Some professionals may be bothered that the literature reviews are representative rather than comprehensive, that research results are cited as general statements rather than statistics, and that contextualising information (such as how X and Y chromosomes combine to determine gender, or an introduction to attachment theory) has been included to help a lay audience. This is always a hard balance to hold but the author has managed it commendably.

A consistent message emerges from this review. It is that family structure or individual parental attributes matter far less to children’s development than the quality of relationships within families and with the wider social world. Thus, exposure to continuing parental conflict matters more than the fact of divorce/separation or the nature of custody arrangements and it is the associated financial hardship that renders single parental status problematic. Fathers are just as capable of effective parenting as mothers and their presence in, or absence from, the home makes little difference to children’s gender identity or sex role development. There is good evidence that being cared for by homosexual partners (whether early or late in childhood) makes no difference to the young person’s gender identity or psychological stability. When it comes to the child’s emotional welfare, consanguinity confers no advantage over pregnancy achieved artificially, although there remains an absence of studies on surrogacy. However, step children are more likely to show problems if their family was reconstituted later in their upbringing. The figure whom the child regards as their parent depends much more on their social, rather than their genetic, relationship.

When it comes to family relationships, secure attachment in infancy provides children with a sound foundation from which to grow, but whether they will flourish also depends on later experiences. Conflict between parents is distressing in its own right to the children, but the meaning that it has for the child is also important. Parental depression or schizophrenia raise the risk of the children developing psychological problems, but neither inheritance nor the marital discord that often accompanies such disorders fully explain the association. It is the lifestyle deterioration of substance misusers that particularly impacts on their children.

Day care in itself is not detrimental to children and, again, what matters is the quality of the care received. Poverty interferes with children’s psychological development by virtue of the numerous associated disadvantages, such as perinatal problems, academic failure, parental depression and marital conflict.

Golombok’s overall message is that ‘It is what happens within families, not the way families are composed, that seems to matter most.’ This is an important conclusion, with relevance for those sitting in family courts as well as those advising them, and for clinicians and academics interested in the complexities of family life. This concise and readable book is therefore a welcome addition to the literature.

Peter Reeder  
London

**A Positive Approach to Autism**
S. Waterhouse  

This extensive revised second edition offers a largely alternative view of autism; its aetiology, treatment and prognosis. One must admire the range of theories and ideas that the author has explored from Emotional Deprivation, through Abnormal Perceptions and on to Metabolic Disorders and Allergies, drawing on snippets of a very wide base of scientific expertise. However, her impassioned argument is not always supported by sound evidence. Indeed, the author has re-classified autism into a number of sub-groups such as perceptual autism, reactive autism, autism acquired through abuse and induced autism, all of which adds not only to confusion in diagnosis and treatment, but makes it difficult to disentangle the relevant theories.

Unsurprisingly, the author is impatient of many accepted professional views, arguing largely for a treatment approach based on complementary and alternative approaches such as diet, sensory integration and facilitated communication. Indeed, in Chapter 7 (Implications), she draws on the writings of people with autism such as Gunilla Gerland to make the point that one can come to terms with the condition and that, therefore, attempting to treat autism may be a profoundly arrogant approach, imposing professional judgements on a valid, if alternative way of seeing the world.

As a psychiatrist, I understand myself to be part of the professional group that Waterhouse would see as offering both a limited understanding and restricted therapeutic approach. Reading her book has allowed me a greater understanding of the eclectic base, which offers continuing hope to a wide group of parents who may turn to more alternative therapists for their views and support. However, her unusual approach to handling data and scientific ideas, her wide concept of ‘autisms’ and her interpretation of theories leaves me sceptical.

The very density of her material made the book difficult to read and the layout was not always clear. I would hesitate to recommend this book to anyone and would certainly not offer it to patients, parents or trainees.

Audrey Oppenheim  
Bowdon, Cheshire

This edited book is a reissue of a hardback edition first published in 1994. It has 14 chapters, with some distinguished contributors; the authors include (as well as the editors themselves) Greta Fein, Lorraine McCune, Dante Cicchetti, and many others. The general standard of the chapters is very high, so this reissue in cheaper format is welcome.

For the most part, the authors are writing from a clinical or psychoanalytic perspective, or at least are influenced by it. However, the perspectives are not uncritical, and include a lot of useful material—detailed descriptions of types of symbolic play (including play in Down’s syndrome, autism and in deaf children), or mother-child play, and of interventions to increase play. A strength of many chapters is their attention to the play of individual children, how it can be interpreted in the light of temperament and family circumstances, and how intervention can be tailored to the particular child. One chapter is in fact a longitudinal case study of one child’s play. This attention to detail, and context, can make a refreshing change from the group-based statistics often found in more experimental studies of pretend play.

There are shortcomings too. First, the title implicitly equates ‘play’ with pretend play, thus ignoring other forms such as physical activity and rough-and-tumble play. Second, the tradition of work exemplified here has been rather independent of the more ‘normative’ series of studies on fantasy play, which have documented developmental trends and speculated on the functions and educational significance of such play; for example, Smilansky’s seminal work on the educational relevance of socio-dramatic play gets only one brief mention. Third, the contributors are, without exception, from the USA and reporting studies in that country; there is no hint of any anthropological perspective on pretend play. Fourth, because of the date of the collection, the recent flurry of work on pretend play and theory of mind does not get any coverage.

This should give the potential purchaser an idea of what to expect, and what not to expect. Given the parameters the editors have (implicitly or explicitly) set themselves, this is a fine, readable collection, and it will certainly be of interest to child psychologists and psychiatrists working within a clinical or therapeutic perspective.

Peter K. Smith
Goldsmiths College, London

Counselling Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse
C. B. Draucker

This book, in its second edition, is one in a series ‘counselling in practice’, written for counsellors and students of counselling. The author is Associate Professor in the College of Nursing at Kent State University, USA. The introduction provides an overview of some general issues in relation to child sexual abuse including prevalence data and adult outcome. As in the remainder of the text the literature referred to is predominantly North American, and it is followed by a chapter on the ‘false memory debate’, which presents a balanced overview of the current state of knowledge and controversies surrounding this emotive subject.

The author then takes us systematically through the ‘significant healing processes thought to be necessary for recovery’. These are disclosing an experience of child sexual abuse, focusing on the abuse experience, interpreting the sexual abuse experience from an adult perspective, addressing the context of the sexual abuse, making desired life changes and addressing resolution issues. There is then a chapter on group counselling and the final chapter is a case study. There is extensive use of case material from the author’s own work. I found myself skimming the case reports at the end of chapters. The therapeutic stance is eclectic.

My criticism would include cursory discussion of some topics without highlighting the possible complexities, including issues in the counsellor/client relationship, responsibilities and confidentiality in relation to child protection, the management of clients who have significant problems, for example with substance misuse or self-harm, and counselling ‘survivors as offenders’. The book is readable (in fact in a few hours) and provides an overview of salient issues. I would recommend borrowing it from the library.

Claire Dinond
South West London & St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust

Official Friends and Friendly Officials. Support, Advice and Advocacy for Children and Young People in Public Care. NSPCC Policy Practice Research Series

Official friends and friendly officials reveals how much young people in care value having an Independent Visitor and the significant difference it can make to their lives. However, the research also demonstrates that appointing Independent Visitors is one of the most neglected parts of the Children Act 1989. For this reason alone the book should be read by all who work with children in care. Otherwise, how will these children discover their entitlement? Both visitors and young people interviewed experienced ‘friendship’ as the distinct feature of the relationship; they also mostly believed it was natural for the relationship to persist through all the usual upheavals of the care system, whether it be placement changes, geographical moves or through the process of leaving care; the service can provide an invaluable haven within the instability of care. The book begins the task of unpicking the key issues if this service is to be provided safely on a wide scale. It recognises the need for nationally agreed standards. It acknowledges the difference between advocates and independent visitors. This book will provide professionals with information from research that can inform their understanding about the development of this service, which children are consistently telling us is important.

Judy Templeton
Manager of the Advocacy Service, Voice for the Child in Care

Childhood Experiences of Domestic Violence
C. McGee

This is an important book that should be widely read, particularly by those working...
within the field of child protection and the Family Justice system, that is everybody with responsibilities in social work, law, child mental health and paediatrics.

This reviewer read it from the point of view of a team who have worked for more than a decade with the extremes of family violence: situations where one parent dies at the hand of the other. Therefore, I read it with a sense of deep familiarity and had to remind myself again and again that information that to me now seems at the heart of my day-to-day practice is still not widely known, nor do our Courts, in cases of disputed contact, necessarily take account of what is recorded here.

The format is simple: there is an introduction and overview of literature relevant to the field of violence within family settings and a vividly described and illustrated account of the many ways in which men may control women and children. Control is the bottom line here. The body of the book is based on a sample of 48 mothers who volunteered into a qualitative research project concerning the experience of domestic violence. Between them they had 54 children. The book is liberally illustrated with direct quotes from women and children. The chapter on violence as witnessed by children reminds us, again and again, how little direct work is done, in the context of our daily work, in order to obtain this information.

Also described are agency responses (police, social services and health) as perceived by the women who had been victims and there is a valuable section on legal remedies and their shortcomings. Also based on direct interviews is a useful chapter on recommendations regarding the dissemination of information. Such information sources need, the women say, not just to depict worst-case scenarios such as extreme physical violence. Many women who are psychologically abused or receive a repeated ‘minor’ injury do not identify with these scenes. Children also need direct advice and help. There needs to be a nationwide public education campaign.

Violence within the home is a crime: threats, intimidation, coercion and stalking are profoundly damaging. Women are most at risk at the point when they have separated from abusive partners. Intervention thresholds for children should not depend on physical signs of abuse.

Contact with violent fathers should be decided on the basis of the child’s and the mother’s safety and this includes potential psychological harm from the child being aware of continued harassment of the mother in the context of contact arrangements. Contact centres nationwide should be offering assessment and supervised contact. Children’s needs should be reviewed over time.

In summary, please read this book. All of us need to know more about coercion, abuse and violence between adults within family settings. The voices of these women and children and the debate that results from what they say should be required reading.

Jean Harris Hendriks
Trauma Stress Clinic, London

Providing Residential Services for Children and Young People: A Multidisciplinary Perspective
C. Street

This book deserves to be read by policy makers and practitioners involved in providing residential services for children and young people. It presents the findings from a Ph.D. study and is organised around a detailed exploration of contextual issues followed by the presentation of qualitative research.

The former includes a highly informative and wide ranging account of the development of residential services, specialist services for children and key data on rates of emotional and behavioural disorders, service costs and patterns of services. The strength of these chapters lies in the breadth of coverage and the clarity of description although, perhaps inevitably, this is to some extent at the expense of depth and analysis.

These chapters, although they stand alone, also provide a robust context for the research study. This consists of interviews with key staff from 43 residential establishments—including health units, special schools, children’s homes, and therapeutic communities—offering long-term care and treatment for children and young people deemed to have emotional and behavioural problems.

Overall, the findings reveal the staff’s concerns and frustrations of working within residential care, the consequences for the highly vulnerable young people they work with, and the impact of financial and organisational arrangements upon the provision of services. If this study is considered alongside studies of children’s homes, highlighting poor outcomes and high costs, and the poor life chances of those leaving care, it adds weight to the arguments for a radical re-think of our system of residential child care.

Mike Stein
Department of Social Policy and Social Work, York University

Young People and Mental Health
P. Aggleton, J. Hurry & I. Warwick (Eds.)

This book contains a number of chapters written by experts in their own field concerning issues that impact on young people and their mental health. Such topics include bullying, anti-social behaviour, anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug misuse, youth suicide and self-harm and eating disorders.

The weakness of this book is that the wide range of topics, although written with a standard chapter format, lacks coherence. But its strength is that these topics are covered in a clear and comprehensible way with a good research background. Although I do not think this book is sufficient to introduce a reader to enough basics of adolescent mental health, I think it clearly lays out the domains and issues that affect mental health in young people. On this basis, I would recommend it to those wanting an introduction and who are new to child adolescent mental health.

Stephen Kingsbury
East Hertfordshire NHS Trust, Hoddesdon, Herts

Journal of Pediatric Psychology (Vol. 24, No. 5)
A. E. Karnak (Ed.)

The Journal of Pediatric Psychology frequently presents new and innovative research that is of particular interest to that minority of child mental health workers who are working in the field of paediatric liaison. Although written and reviewed...
primarily by American colleagues, there is often much in the methodology or clinical application of the papers that is very relevant to those of us across ‘the pond’. The special issue on ‘Pediatric Mental Health Services in Primary Care Settings’ (Vol. 24, No. 5) initially looked equally appropriate, but on further reading, the differences between the health care settings in the United States and Great Britain meant that one had to read deeper to discover their true meaning. However, once deciphered (for Pediatrician read GP, likewise for Pediatric Psychologist, read local CAMHS), the papers have plenty to offer a British readership.

The eight papers mainly address the use of assessment tools for screening children for psychological difficulties. Dennis Drotar describes an adapted DSM for primary care to ‘train pediatricians to recognise and manage common behavioural and developmental problems’. Lavigne et al. describe an extensive project examining the stability of the occurrence of psychiatric disorders in a non-psychiatric sample of 500 children attending their pediatrician, using an immense battery of tools.

Two other studies (Rickert et al. and Mccain et al.) examine the use of briefer screening measures to direct mental health resources to the most appropriate families. These papers feel very appropriate to the British setting of a busy GP practice, where referrals to the local child mental health services occur.

In all, once the differences between the health care processes have been grasped, this special issue would be of particular interest to those professionals working in British primary health care settings, particularly those CAMHS professionals thinking about how their services may be most effective in the primary or secondary tier level. Hence in the publication of this special issue The Journal of Pediatric Psychology may be trying to attract a wider readership than its current more focused readership than its current more focused psychology may be trying to attract a wider special issue tier level. Hence in the publication of this thinking about how their services may be interest to those professionals working in this special issue would be of particular health care processes have been grasped, services occur.

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Shelagh Madden
Hospital for Sick Children,
Great Ormond Street, London

M. E. Hertzig & E. A. Farmer (Eds.)
Philadelphia: Bruner/Mazel, 1999, pp. 417. £49.95 (hb).

This is a book that was submitted for review in 2000, published in 1999, titled with ‘1998’ and consisting of reprints of 20 articles from 1997, presumably written some time before this. The articles are chosen as ‘ground-breaking’ by the editor and, with three exceptions (from Canada, Australia and the Netherlands) are from US centres. Ten journals are represented with the largest number (six) from the Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry. They are distributed equally between four sections: development, clinical, treatment, and psychosocial issues. Each section is preceded by a clear introduction that includes a résumé of the papers. Papers range from case history through controlled trials to literature reviews and theoretical treatise. Subjects covered are as diverse as facial imitation in infancy, ego-dystonic anger attacks in mothers, and light therapy for seasonal affective disorder. This is the 31st volume in a series started in 1968.

The great thing about this book is the concentration of excellent, thought-provoking papers in an easily manageable format (in much the same way as the JCPP Annual Research Review brings together papers). This association of different papers allows a degree of cross-fertilisation in understanding from one area to another. Any ‘skew’ in papers chosen is not immediately apparent. It matters little as all the papers are worth reading.

Researchers may find this collection useful to glean information tangential to their work which will enrich their knowledge. Trainees starting out will find this book useful for stimulating research ideas. Clinicians will find much to enhance their experience.

The long period between initial publication and reprinting will have perhaps allowed the relative importance of the papers to become more apparent. However, knowledge gained will inevitably be at least 4 or 5 years behind the cutting edge. One cannot help thinking that the world-wide web should have constantly updated collections such as this – perhaps with some sort of ‘popularity’ poll. On the other hand, computers are more difficult to read in the bath, on the train, etc. An index would have been helpful. Again, computer search facilities in an on-line version would be even better.

Overall, this is an excellent collection of diverse papers useful not just to the trainee, but also to the busy clinical practitioner. It has a good balance of practice and theory. This reviewer will be recommending the series to our library. Individuals will, no doubt, be discouraged by the price.

Paul Laking
Child, Adolescent & Family Consultation Service, Ipswich

A. Pentecost

This is a useful addition to the books for parents of children with ADD. The stages of a traditional programme are clearly and simply described and explained, including the management of difficulties at each stage. The central importance of a good parent-child relationship, parental teamwork, and time together are emphasised. The sections dealing with the parents’ understanding of situations in an alternative way are especially sympathetic and encouraging. The book benefits from not trying also to be a comprehensive guide to ADD, or the more general ways of helping children with the disorder, which can be found in other books.

John Barcroft
London
Occasional Papers No. 17

Child Mental Health in Europe: Common Currency or Tower of Brussels

Edited by William Yule

This Occasional Paper brings together the keynote speeches from the ACPP European Conference. The aim of the conference was to examine similarities and differences in approaches to delivering, developing and evaluation of child and adolescent mental health services in the different European countries. Yule considers the current status of child behaviour therapy, from its beginnings in the 1960s to the present day. Dunn reminds us that families today are more complex and we need to be able to judge any difficulties a child presents against this background. Dyregrov challenges the simplistic view that we should be totally open with children at all times. Steinhausen considers the effects of alcoholism and drug addiction in parents as major risk factors in the development of psychopathology in children. Howlin reviews the many ‘therapies’ that have been used with children presenting with autism. Finally, Galloway gives an overview of educational reforms that greatly influence the mental health of all children. Contents include the following:

William Yule
Child Behaviour Therapy in the New Millennium

Judy Dunn
Children’s Development and Adjustment in Different Family Settings

Atle Dyregrov
Telling the Truth or Hiding the Facts: An Evaluation of Current Strategies for Assisting Children Following Adverse Events

Hans-Christoph Steinhausen
Children of Alcoholic and Drug-Addicted Parents

Patricia Howlin
Evaluating Treatments for Children with Autism: From Aveyron to Swimming with Dolphins

David Galloway
Educational Reform and the Mental Health of Vulnerable Children and Young People

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