



Pergamon

Child Abuse & Neglect 29 (2005) 292–293

Child Abuse
& Neglect

Book Reviews

Kathleen Malley-Morrison (Ed.), *International Perspectives on Family Violence and Abuse: A Cognitive Ecological Approach*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004, 500 pp.

International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, *World Perspectives on Child Abuse*, 6th ed., 2004, 193 pp.

Child maltreatment is an international problem, and these books provide up-to-date information and valuable insights on the issue. For anyone interested in international efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect, the books are highly recommended.

In *International Perspectives on Family Violence and Abuse*, Kathleen Malley-Morrison presents chapters by authors from around the globe. Each chapter discusses child abuse, domestic violence, and elder maltreatment. Malley-Morrison and her colleagues developed a survey instrument designed to provide insight into the definitions and meaning of maltreatment. Each chapter author administered the survey to a sample in the author's country. The book divides the world into seven regions: Western Europe (Iceland, England, Portugal, Italy, Germany); Central and Southern Europe (Russia, Greece, Turkey); Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Israel, Lebanon); Africa (Somalia, South Africa); Asia and the Pacific (India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Australia); Latin America (Nicaragua, Brazil, Columbia); and North America (Canada, United States).

Each chapter follows a similar format. First, the chapter author describes the response to the survey described above. That is, that author describes how respondents in that country conceptualize interpersonal violence. Next, the chapter author sketches a brief geopolitical history of the country. This macrosystem perspective is followed by a description of the country's efforts to respond to child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse.

The chapters are packed with useful information and insights into varying cultural, psychological, and legal perspectives on child maltreatment. Taken as a whole, the chapters provide valuable information on maltreatment and efforts around the world to respond.

ISPCAN's *World Perspectives on Child Abuse* is in its sixth edition. For the most recent edition (2004), ISPCAN sent surveys to child abuse experts in 98 countries. Sixty-four of the experts responded with their impressions of child abuse in their country. Part I of ISPCAN's book summarizes the responses from the 64 experts. The book provides a wealth of charts and figures summarizing the data.

In the Executive Summary, ISPCAN reports, "Overall, the most commonly cited barriers to prevention were limited resources, decline in family support, and a strong sense of family privacy" (p. 3). In the Summary at the end of Part I, ISPCAN writes, "A first notable finding is that there is some agreement on the major behaviors that constitute child abuse and neglect (e.g., sexual abuse, physical abuse, children

living on the street, child prostitution). Some differences were found by developmental status, suggesting that the social conditions of a country may influence what is considered child abuse and neglect. Regarding surveillance, most countries appear to be attempting some kind of surveillance to understand the magnitude of the problem. Along with increased surveillance, increased public awareness of child abuse and neglect was nearly universally reported” (p. 39).

ISPCAN noted with concern, “The most common policy elements identified in our sample addressed the criminal justice response to child abuse and neglect with service provisions being less frequently included. . . . By defining child abuse as a criminal act, the primary policy interest may become determining guilt and prosecuting offenders as opposed to better understanding the circumstances both within the family and the culture that contribute to abusive and neglectful behaviors” (p. 39).

Part II of ISPCAN’s book consists of brief essays covering three broad topics: multinational assessment efforts (e.g., the United Nations Study on Children and Violence); country specific research (e.g., Defining Child Maltreatment in India); and innovative efforts to build capacity (e.g., Improving Professional Awareness of Child Abuse in Bahrain; Child Abuse Response Efforts in Estonia).

These books are valuable additions to the literature on cross-cultural perspectives on child maltreatment. Both are fairly dry reading, but that is to be expected and should not be taken as a criticism of the excellent work therein.

John E.B. Myers
University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law
3200 5th Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95817, USA