Book Reviews

CHILDREN AND FAMILY PROBLEMS: BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN. Compiled by Nadia Wheatley. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 1988. Soft cover; 42 pages; $10.00.
CHILDREN AND FAMILY PROBLEMS: BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. Compiled by Nadia Wheatley. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 1988. Soft cover; 63 pages; $10.00.
OTTO LEARNS ABOUT HIS MEDICINE: A STORY ABOUT MEDICATION FOR HYPERACTIVE CHILDREN. Matthew Galvin. Magination Press (Brunner/Mazel), New York, 1988. Soft cover; 32 pages; $11.95.
ROBBIE REALLY TRANSFORMS: A STORY ABOUT GROWN-UPS HELPING CHILDREN. Matthew Galvin. Magination Press (Brunner/Mazel), New York, 1988. Soft cover; 46 pages; $14.95.
IGNATIUS FINDS HELP: A STORY ABOUT PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR CHILDREN. Matthew Galvin. Magination Press (Brunner/Mazel), New York, 1988. Soft cover; 42 pages; $14.95.
THIS IS ME AND MY TWO FAMILIES: A SELF AWARENESS SCRAPBOOK/JOURNAL FOR CHILDREN LIVING WITH TWO FAMILIES. Marla D. Evans. Magination Press (Brunner/Mazel), New York, 1988. Soft cover; 42 pages; $17.95.

This review covers some material of potential use to therapists who like to recommend books to families or children that might help them with their problems.

1. **Selected reading lists of books**

a. *Children and Family Problems: books for young children*

The reading list was compiled by Nadia Wheatley, herself an author of children's books. Each book is reviewed briefly and a recommendation made as to which children might find the book interesting or at their level. The books deal with separation and divorce, stepfamilies, adoption and fostering, sibling rivalry, disabilities, parental unemployment, sexual abuse, death and other issues.

The reviews are succinct and relevant and make it easy to get a birds eye view of each book.

b. *Adolescents and Family problems*

This reading list follows the same format, is by the same author and covers the same categories.

These two reading lists are great value indeed for anyone interested in an overview of books available for children to read. My eleven year old daughter has read quite a few of the books and agrees with Nadia Wheatley's summaries.

2. **Three books for young children and their families involved in treatment in child psychiatry sittings**

Otto learns about his medicine

Otto is a young red car who had a lot to learn and wanted very much to learn from the teacher at school but he couldn't concentrate, couldn't listen and hence couldn't learn. He was distracted all the time by all the other interesting things he noticed. The teacher called a meeting with his parents and they all went to see a special mechanic who knew all about young cars.

This mechanic worked out that Otto's motor was working too fast and that with the help of some medicine to slow down his motor he would be able to learn to listen and to catch up on the learning he'd been missing out on. He helped his parents and his teacher so that they knew what to do so Otto could learn to listen. The mechanic also explained about the unwanted effects of the medicine so Otto's family knew what to expect.

This is a book suitable for young children and their parents where a diagnosis of hyperactivity is made and drugs are prescribed by a child psychiatrist.

Robbi really transforms

Robbi was almost nine when he went to live in a foster family. He is visited by a woman from the Welfare and he tries to tell her about his collection of robots who transform in amazing ways and fought many battles. She didn't really listen to him and talked about warm clothes instead. The foster mother was worried about Robbi and wondered whether he might turn into a robot one day. She and her husband talked to the woman from Welfare about this and she made some helpful suggestions to them. However, things went from bad to worse until Robbi tried to set another boy in class on fire. Then Robbi was taken to a doctor who listens to children. Dr Rachel asked lots of questions and she was interested in looking at the robots he'd brought along. Robbi felt a bit better and he gradually told her a lot about his robots. The woman from Welfare helped too; she helped him get back to school and helped his foster parents make new rules. It took some time but gradually Robbi learned that the robots could co-operate and stop fighting and his foster parents learned how to help Robbi co-operate at home.

This book is suitable for young children in foster care and for foster parents. It describes clearly the work of a child therapist working with the child, the foster family and the equivalent of a community service worker.

Ignatius finds help

Ignatius is a young bear who keeps getting into fights with other animals. His mother says he's too rough with his new baby sister. His mother took him to the doctor because he'd hurt his nose in his most recent fight. The doctor asked lots of questions and sent Ignatius and his Mother to Dr Pelican who listens to young bears with problems like Ignatius was having. Dr Pelican seemed to be quite nice but he sure got his mother talking and then even Ignatius blurted out that his father wasn't his real father. Dr Pelican suggested that Daddy bear should come too next time but he refused. Ignatius and his mother went to Dr Pelican for a while and things improved. Ignatius still had trouble sharing anything until Dr Pelican helped him to work out how he could trade something he wanted for something someone else wanted. Next Dr Pelican helped Ignatius work out how to solve problems and eventually he helped him work out how to make friends with the other animals.

A book suitable for young kids and their families with aggressive behaviour especially when a new sibling is born. Good explanation of how a psychotherapist helps kids.

3. **An activity book for blended families**

This is me and my two families

This is a book for children who are living in two families. It is intended to be used as an activity book and would work equally for a child to use on their own or as part of an activity with other members of their family. To use the book on their own the child would need to be able to read quite complex sentences (grade 4 and up). This could be overcome if a parent is involved, when the book could be used with younger children too. Unfortunately the

book is Copyright so extra copies could not be made and used in each of the households.

The book enables the child to document their family, who everyone is, what they eat in each of the households, what pets they have, where they go on holiday, about school, the teacher, sport, games, friends, talking, daydreaming, scary things, books, TV, movies, being sick and things to do.

The book could also be used by family therapists who wanted to explore a structured task to give to family members.

B. KNOTHE
Consultant Psychiatrist
Bouverie Family Therapy Centre
and Williams Road
Family Therapy Centre

DON'T FEEL THE WORLD IS CAVING IN. Rosemary Dunlop and Ailsa Burns. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 1988. Soft cover, 158 pages, $10 — pre-payment needed. Charge includes postage.

This book is about how adolescent children are affected by their parents' divorce. It is written by two psychologists from Macquarie University and funded by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The authors extensively reviewed the available literature on this area and built on the research that has gone before. They used a combination of standard measures and semi-structured interviews.

The authors wanted, amongst other things, to see if there were differences in adjustment between adolescents whose parents are in the process of divorce and those whose parents are together.

A broad sample of the divorcing population was selected with the assistance of the Family Court of Australia and the New South Wales Department of Education (37 families). A sample of intact families were selected (41) from eight Sydney high schools. (The children from both groups were aged 13 to 16, with an average age of 15). Both groups were assessed on a range of demographic variables as being very similar.

The interviews were conducted by psychology graduates from Macquarie University and took the form of an interview with parents from both divorcing and intact families (2-3 hours), and another with the adolescent by a different interviewer (1½ hours). A number of standard measures were used: The Offer Self Image Questionnaire, (Offer *et al.*, 1977a, 1982), the Neuroticism Scale Questionnaire, (Scheier and Cattell, 1961), the Langer Psychiatric Symptom Screening Measure (Langer, 1962), the Parent Bonding Inventory, and the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Parker *et al.*, 1979). Two other measures were the 'Eggs in a Basket' (Margaret Topham), and a Family Sculpture (Cromwell *et al.*, 1981), to gain a multi-faceted view of different members' perceptions of the family. The authors saw these standard tests as being reliably validated in studies with normal and disturbed populations of subjects.

The results of this study are very interesting. This is a summary of the main findings:

- There are no differences in psychological adjustment between the two groups of adolescents from divorcing and intact families (not to mean there are no disturbed children in either group or that children are 'untouched' by divorce).
- Adolescent boys are less affected by a father leaving home than they would be if they were younger.

In examining the interaction of family processes with adolescent adjustment, the author's main findings are:

- High conflict during marriage is strongly associated with poor adolescent adjustment.
- High conflict after separation also had adverse effects on adolescent adjustment.
- In non-divorcing families the nett effect of an overprotective father and mother seen as non-caring is associated with poorer adolescent functioning.
- Adolescents in divorcing families are better adjusted if they have reasonable independence and a caring relationship with at least one parent.

In looking at adolescent adjustment in divorcing families it appears that:

- The child who perceives the family as less conflictual following separation is likely to be better off than if they perceive the family to be less content or continuing to have difficulties following separation.
- There is a direct link between unhappiness in the home following separation and an adolescent's worry about school work.

In examining the effect of divorce on adolescent development:

- 71% of the children from divorcing homes believed that the separation had caused them to grow up more quickly.
- In the sample there was evidence that some adolescents experienced some sexual anxiety, but when parents and children shared a caring relationship, adolescents could understand their parents' sexual needs and deal with their own developing sexuality in a relaxed manner.
- There were no differences in the frequency of household tasks undertaken by teenagers in each group.

The case histories make for interesting reading and the main findings coming from these are:

- That family conflict (not just marital conflict) is significantly related to adolescent adjustment.
- That adolescents appreciate knowing what is going on between their parents and many stated that "in some ways the divorce had brought closer understanding between themselves and their parents" (page 95).
- That children feel most distressed when they perceive that there is no escape from a bad situation.
- That adolescents are capable of understanding their parents' needs and being involved in a growing, more companionable relationship with them.

In looking at the adolescent perspectives the authors note:

- That overt conflict between parents is distressing for adolescents, whether or not the parents are separated.
- Long-standing conflict is linked to poor adjustment.
- Adolescents feel sad when their parents separate. Over half were shocked to find the separation occurring.
- Over half said that the best support parents could give was to explain things.
- 80% had at least one person to talk to.
- When asked what was the biggest change in their lives, the adolescents in the study said that the separation had helped them to grow up more quickly.
- Although most were concerned about the future, 80% expected that they would marry.

This book well complements the new and growing body of literature on children and divorce. I believe that the study was well-researched and carefully designed and that it has been written up concisely. I think that the layout of the book is good in that it follows a format of presenting the results of the data with an interpretation of the results and then a summary. Interspersed throughout the book are quite a number of excellent candid photographs of adolescents alone and engaged in relating with others which adds to the book's attraction.

A good attempt has been made to describe the effect on adolescents of 'family processes' in divorcing and intact families. Although ideally I would prefer more input about the systemic processes in these families, this book reflects a useful beginning in research into this area.

I like the emphasis the authors place (from their results) on not assuming that divorce will have a uniformly negative effect on adolescents. I also found their positive view of adolescents' strength and courage very heartening. One had a real sense of the skill, openness and care with which the interviews were conducted. The case histories and their interpretation make for particularly interesting reading.

I believe that this book provides many useful points for parents, adolescents and professionals alike in helping them to understand the problems, and some of the common experiences, of people in separation and divorce. It also provides a useful guide for further research, particularly as the authors say, in the areas of adolescent development and what strengths adolescents possess that enable them to cope with crises in their families. I certainly think that it would be extremely useful to have a brief summary of this study to use as a handout for parents and a separate one for adolescents in divorcing families.

Once again, the Institute of Family Studies has supported a well-researched and well written publication which can only contribute in a positive way to informing public and professionals alike about the effects of divorce on adolescents.

SUE DIXON
Senior Social Worker, Southern CAMHS
Oaklands Park, S.A.

WHEN LIVING HURTS — DIRECTIVES FOR TREATING DEPRESSION. Michael Yapko. Brunner-Mazel, N.Y., 1988. Soft cover, 219 pages, $50.

In part 1, Yapko interweaves a variety of theories with clinical examples — both brief and full — explanations, metaphor and no less than 91 "directives" for treating depression. The theoretical framework is constructed not with just one ladder but with many:— Gestalt, cognitive, strategic, hypnotic. It draws on the contributions of many others:— e.g. Beck, Erickson, Saligman, Satir and also from Araoz, Bandler, Gilligan, Grinder, Haley, the Lanktons and Zeig. The emphasis is on multiplicity of approaches and flexibility of thinking to facilitate the most effective attitude — both are lodged within a rigorously academic structure so that while inventiveness is encouraged, positive thinking and magical expectations are actively dismissed.

Yapko's exposition of diagnosing behavioural patterns rather than pathological labels is particularly useful and provides the basis from which the treatment strategies or 'directives' emerge.

In part 2, a wealth of treatments related to these behavioural patterns is addressed, in the form of ways of interrupting the depressing pattern which was previously experienced by the client [and possibly by the therapist] as unchangeable. These directives are both varied and specific and are certainly not only relevant to depression.

Throughout the book Yapko uses the label "depression" so as to distinguish clearly various aspects of common clinical presentations so the directives can be creatively used, but he doesn't allow this label to reify the circumstances. This may be one of the book's most useful aspects.

Family therapists will find the directives unfamiliar enough to be intrigued; therapists in general will be stimulated by the general direction of this most important book; all readers will have assumptions challenged or at least tickled and so it is recommended to all health professionals who are interested in improving the effectiveness of the treatment of that most depressing of conditions — "depression".

ROBERT B. McNEILLY
The Centre of Effective Therapy
Melbourne

FAMILY RESOURCES: THE HIDDEN PARTNER IN FAMILY THERAPY. Karpel, M.A. (Ed.). New York, Guilford Press, 1986. The Guilford Family Therapy Series. Hardcover and paperback, 479 pages, $56.95.

This comes from the series that gave us such titles as Steve de Shazer's *Patterns of Brief Family Therapy* (1982) and Bradford Keeney's *Aesthetics of Change* (1983). It is suffused with the spirit of Boszormenyi-Nagy (*Invisible Loyalties,* co-authored by Geraldine Spark, 1973), whose name is absent from the list of references in only five chapters out of fifteen, where in at least one instance it is replaced by that of Murray Bowen. Both names are lacking in the chapter by Attneave and Verhulst ("Teaching Mental Health Professionals to see Family Strengths") where the authors contrast the easy comprehension clients have of the network concept, and the effort it takes for professionals to define "network" on the printed page and teach it to other professionals. Attneave's own experience as part Delaware Indian lies behind her adoption of network therapy, which utilises the resources not only of extended family but also of friends and neighbours (Speck and Attneave, *Family Networks,* 1973).

Family Resources is an attractively produced and approachable volume, lucidly written for the most part, despite the influence of the Boszormenyi-Nagy School of Contextual Prose. Barbara Krasner ("Trustworthiness") has published jointly with Boszormenyi-Nagy and shares the master's knack of slowing the reader to a crawl. So does Minuchin's colleague Braulio Montalvo ("Family Strengths: Obstacles and Facilitators"). His hardhitting chapter, however, is likely to stop the reader in his/her tracks with such comments as "Systems thinking is a temporary and incomplete intellectual prop" and is bound to provoke ire in some when he discusses the limitations of "born-again feminist" therapists. A further exception to the general readability is Paul and Miller's chapter ("Death and Dying and the Multi-generational Impact" where the authors tell us that family therapy often excludes consideration of death. The difficulty they want us *not* to have in facing death with our clients seems to be mirrored in their style. Their chapter contains interesting material on the use of videotaping to demonstrate to a client how he/she numbs him/herself rather than experience the loss of a loved one. This chapter also contains an extended reference to Aram Saroyan's *Last Rites* (1982), a true account of a son's yearning for closeness with his pathological father (novelist William Saroyan) who softened only on his deathbed. This story should give new heart to those of us who so often coach adult offspring to approach parents apparently made of granite.

Eric Strauss' ("The Therapist's Personal Impact on Family Resources") also utilises non-clinical material — Anne Tyler's novel *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (1982) — to illustrate the importance of a shared history as an aid to healing in the family. David Ulrich ("Mobilizing Family Resources for a Constructive Divorce") concludes with "A Statement for Children when Parents are Separating", 1½ pages of sample secular ritual to be used with or without a witness. The less than felicitously-phrased ritual calls for mother and father alternately to announce formally to their children what they agree to do about maintaining their ties with them, allowing access to both sets of grandparents, making decisions for the children's welfare, etc. It is also Ulrich (page 393) who is author of this memorable comment:

> In the next few decades it may come to pass that spouses who treat the custody issue as a pitched battle, rather than seeking for a constructive way of handling the issue, will be looked upon with about as much favor as parents who beat their children.

A leit motiv of *Family Resources* is that family therapy or scientific literature in general gives scant attention to certain concepts or issues. The authors set out to redress this lack. So it is that Karpel discusses self-respect, respect and protectiveness, and Kahn devotes his chapter to sibling relationships ("The Sibling System: Bonds

of Intensity, Loyalty and Endurance") as Paul and Miller devote theirs to death and dying. Articles vary in length, with 100 pages of the total being allotted to the editor's two contributions: "Testing, Promoting and Preserving Family Resources: Beyond Pathology and Power" and his overview chapter. Cotroneo's useful paper "Families and Abuse: A Contextual Approach" makes this plea at its conclusion (page 437):

> Now I believe it is time to direct our energies toward interdisciplinary assessment and intervention in family violence so that interveners can begin to use each other as resources.

Denise Gelinas ("Unexpected Resources in Treating Incest Families") spends several pages on the question of multi-agency involvement in incest cases.

One of the most striking contributions in the volume, Edwin H. Friedman's "Resources for Healing and Survival in Families", is written by a Rabbi/Therapist who has lived and worked in the same community for 25 years, and uncompromisingly maintains that above all else it is the ability of a family to produce a leader from amongst its own members that makes the difference between survival and degeneration.

Family Resources is for all therapists who look to the multi-generational context and the social network in which their clients are embedded as potential sources of support. This title will provide welcome supplementary reading.

MAUREEN CRAGO
Private Practice
Wagga Wagga

SUICIDE AND DEPRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS. Edited by Gerald L. Klerman. Washington, American Psychiatric Press, 1986 and distributed by Cambridge U. Press. Hardcover, 383 pages, $90.

This book, with its 23 contributors, is based on the proceedings of the Conference on Suicide and Depression among Adolescents and Young Adults held in Boston, Mass., U.S.A. during December 1982.

It is presented in a succinct, didactic style with extensive references to the literature on aetiology, prediction and prevention of suicide and depression. The end result is a highly readable and eclectic compilation of research and commentary of interest to all the "helping professions", but does not specifically address therapeutic modalities. Demographic data and statistics predominate whereas therapy seems to take a lesser priority.

The nature of adolescence is generally viewed from a developmental perspective, not just of the individual, but also emphasising the social contexts. Throughout there is a focus and development of the findings with regard to future prevention programmes, this being the main theme that Gerald Klerman draws together in the final and editorial chapter.

Although, in general, there is very limited specific case material, the descriptive chapter on "Adolescent Suicide: An Architectural Model" allows us insight into a particular girl's feelings. Through excerpts of "Vivienne: The Life and Suicide of an Adolescent Girl" by Mack and Hickler, it is described how the socio-political context (macrocosm), biological vulnerability, early development, personality structure and the individual's object relationships can interact in creating suicidal vulnerability.

Risk factors for the affective disorders and the medical model are mentioned in two chapters: the genetics of affective disorders and risk factors for major depression in young females. From then on the emphasis is more on the psycho-social factors involved in depression and suicidal behaviour. The discussion centres on several very interesting areas of research. Racial elements are reviewed with reference to the American Blacks and their lower incidence of suicide than the Whites, but a correspondingly higher rate of homicide. A 13 year longitudinal study of substance abuse looking at antecedents and sequelae is related to subsequent suicide and depression, their measures unmistakingly correlating dysphoric mood and suicidal ideation attempts.

The prediction of subsequent depression and suicide in 1st Grade pupils by using a longitudinal research into social, adaptational and psychological factors is well described. The authors argue that there are identifiable, predictive elements including under-achievement, shyness, aggressiveness and readiness for school which, in combination, are predictive of distress, substance abuse and psychiatric symptoms. Suicide completers are differentially drawn from non-fatal suicides and cases of depressive syndrome in another study, as well as a comparison with adult populations.

Loneliness, too, is specifically addressed. Its causes are explored along with the recognition that some may lead to a chronic problem, definite links being drawn between loneliness and suicide.

The chapter on Well-being in adolescence is an historical perspective of the sociology of adolescence. It traces the significant shift in the normative timing patterns across generations. The authors demonstrate how the reformulation of social roles has important implications for adolescent development, especially with the lack of clarity in social boundaries. They argue that today's adolescent's experience is unlike that of earlier generations.

There are several suggestions for future directions to combat suicide and depression in the young. Eva Deykin's chapter on the Boston Suicide and Self Destructive Behaviour Intervention Study indicates the usefulness of an outreach programme for at risk teenagers by identifying suicidal and self-destructive injuries in hospital emergency room logs. Preventive trials are clearly seen as a very important requirement for the future, with a whole chapter on the history of preventive trials and their organisation. Also, college health services are seen as having a major role in the prevention of suicide in students. The chapter describing their function also reviews student suicide and the assessment of risk factors, the author — Robert Arnstein — posing the difficult dilemma as to the best way to react to a suicide or an attempt.

Klerman has drawn together an interesting collection of papers. Despite the fact that the ideas were originally presented in 1982 the more up to date references indicate more recent revision. He does not claim to have the answer to the paradigm of suicide but successfully points the reader into many interesting areas for future research.

DON BATTEN
Consultant in Adolescent Psychiatry
The Parkville Centre

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY. Callan, V.J. and Noller, P. Sydney, Methuen, 1987. 367 pages, $12.95.

This book offers an introduction to social science research into marriages and families (both Australian and overseas). It brings to the reader comprehensive, up-to-date (1985) information on major theoretical, methodological and research issues in the above areas and their findings. The book points to what is known and learnt from research as well as what remains to be further understood.

The fourteen chapters are grouped into six sections. The first of these, apart from the Introduction, is on Theory and Methodology; it is followed by sections on Premarital and other intimate relationships, Communication and roles in marriage, Parenting and family life and Termination and strengthening of relationships. The two authors' contributions overlap the sectional divisions; on the whole Noller writes about theory and methodology, communication and marital interaction, while Callan makes children, mothers, parenting and voluntary childessness his preserve, together

with results derived from various types of therapeutic interventions. A summary at the end of each chapter jots down for the reader the salient points in each; frequent tables provide examples of measures, scale items, factors and typologies as well as comparisons among approaches to the same problem.

The most substantive chapter is Noller's on Methods of studying marriages and families (ch. 3). It covers qualitative and quantitative methods, such as unstructured interviews, oral histories, participant observation, on the one hand, and survey methods, questionnaires, structured interviews and the coding of interactions, on the other. Practising family therapists may feel disappointed at the succint treatment of theories on the family but the research family therapist will be more than rewarded with the comprehensive treatment of the above.

Marriage counsellors and family workers will find in Chapter 7 on Marital and Family Communication an overview of what are the characteristics of effective communication as well as the destructive forms of communication.

Psychologists and educationists will gain from reading Chapter 12 on Socialisation and discipline in the family, which deals with factors determining how parents behave, effects of parenting style on children's behaviour and contextual sources of support/stress for parents.

Chapter 14 offers educators and marital therapists good panoramas about educational programs, like Gordon's P.E.T. and B.P.T. and Drinkmeyer's S.T.E.P., as well as Miller's Minnesota Couples Communication Program and marriage enrichment programs like ACME and Marriage Encounter — together with marriage dissolution programs for separated/divorce.

A good feature of the book is its exploration of both traditional and non-traditional forms of marriage and family, its inclusion of research on physical and sexual abuse of children as well as on children's perception of their families.

Over 700 bibliographical references are included.

EMILIA RENOUF
Psychologist and Family Therapist
Private Practice, Sydney

THE "SISSY BOY SYNDROME" AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOMOSEXUALITY. Richard Green. New Haven, Yale U.P., 1987. Hardcover, 416 pages, $65.

This fascinating book is essentially a 15-year prospective study of two behaviourally different groups of boys. Over 100 boys and their families were studied with a 'study' and 'control' group. The boys in the study group were 'sissy boys' or 'feminine', exhibiting a range of behaviour from cross-dressing to avoidance of rough and tumble play, through to actual gender identity disorder.

The initial premise (in the context of late 1960s, early 1970s) was that this study would clarify the development of transsexualism. However, as the study proceeded only one 'study group' boy became transsexual. In contrast, ¾ of the 'study' group of 'feminine' boys became homosexual whilst only one of the 'control' boys did not become heterosexual in adult life.

Richard Green in the book initially explains study methodology, then examines the emergence of sex differences in children, and proceeds to a 'dissection' of child-parent interactions. Thereafter, the bulk of the book consists of edited transcripts with children and parents over the 15 years of the study.

In the latter part of the book the author explores the question:
— what is the role of the parents in the development of a 'sissy boy'?
— what is the link between being a 'sissy' boy and a 'gay' man?

Green postulates a possible developmental sequence with a father who is less conventionally masculine in boyhood, a mother who has a distant relationship with her own mother, both wanting a girl in this pregnancy, finding the boy to be a beautiful infant and both inadvertently encouraging or not discouraging the 'feminine' behaviours. In the end he agrees with Freud that the development of homosexuality cannot be explained as innate or acquired.

Although many of the conclusions are not new, one can only pay tribute to an author who from a 15-year study collects such meticulous data and produces such an interesting and scholarly work. That no definite 'causes' of 'sissy' boy behaviour and homosexuality were found merely shows the complexity of the area, and the need for further thought.

One criticism of the work could be a lack of recursive perspective, both in original hypotheses and in information gathered. Green explores parents' reactions to some of their children's behaviour but does not quite explore family patterns. Similarly, dyadic relationships are well explored but triadic less well examined. Finally, perhaps like family work in other areas, it may be that linear relationships are impossible to clarify causally, and Dr Green seems to acknowledge this, at least implicitly.

MARK ARBER
Psychiatrist
Parkville Centre

THE SOCIOPATHIC PERSONALITY. Benjamin Wolman. N.Y., Brunner/Mazel, 1987. Hardcover, 202 pages, $55.

As a practising clinical psychiatrist with family therapy training, I found this an intriguing book. It starts with the premise that there is a personally deviant category called either "sociopath" or "psychopath" and proceeds to build an elaborate edifice regarding "etiology", "symptomatology", "treatment" etc. I wish to present a critique of the book from several perspectives: nosological, family therapy theoretical and sociological.

In contemporary terms, a diagnosis can be made by recognising a minimal set of attributes possessed to some extent by all its members and not by other classes. It is a statement about an individual. Unfortunately in the concept "sociopath", the relevant attributes are *not* personal but social. An illegal act or an immoral act are not aspects from the domain of personality but from a different universe of discourse, that of social deviance. This universe is clearly limited by cultural variables. For example, a Spartan who exposed his child on the hillside after birth was testing the child for viability, but in our culture would be seen as neglectful or cruel. As illegal acts are rather differently regarded between cultures, including murder, cannibalism, trickery or fraud, rape, theft, and arson, the "category" of "sociopath" must shift a great deal between, say, traditional Maoris, New Guinea highlanders, Vikings and late 20th century Western bourgeoisie. From the nosological point of view, "psychopathy" is an ill-conceived hybrid category that is more a moral judgement than a clinical diagnosis.

Wolman writes of psychopathy as if it is a "disease". This immediately raises the question of what model of disease he is using. As he quotes DSM3R in a generally approving way, the reviewer turned to this volume to see if it was congruent. DSM3R says a disease is "a clinically significant behavioural or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in a person and that is associated with present distress (a painful symptom) or disability (impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability or an important loss of freedom. Neither deviant behaviour nor conflicts between the individual and society are mental disorders". Thus the text he quotes does not support the entity he is writing of as a disease in any sense.

Flowing logically from the premise that the sociopath is a personal deviance category is the idea that there should be an etiology to be found in genetic or environmental factors. The

genetic evidence is derived in part from noting antisocial behaviours in adopted compared to non-adopted offspring of "psychopaths". As remarked in the paragraph about taxonomy, it is a logical error to study personality traits by a consideration of legal categories alone. In a recent paper in the *British Journal of Psychiatry,* "On Moral Judgements and Personality Disorders" (*BJP* 1988, 153, 505-512). Blackburn speculates that what may be showing up in such studies is "hostility" or perhaps "dominance" in the individuals studied. In modern America, such traits may well be non-adaptive for some people. On the other hand, many successful folk heroes of the Americans, such as John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, all have personality styles that would gain them diagnostic labels from Dr Wolman.

Theories of maternal rejection, maternal dominance or parental violence are propounded and become more than historical statements. Wolman puts the supposed etiology in the framework of a bewailing of a decline of family values. He looks back to an agrarian golden age where parents had children over whom they had unquestioned authority and contrasts it with urban, multiple role models and influences (e.g. television, peers) of today. He then strangely turns from the study of the individual to talk of aggressive behaviour in populations. War, persecution of minorities and social climate all receive mention as if psychopathy was no longer being seen as an individual diagnosis but a way of thinking about human groups in a more global way. An "epidemic" of sociopathy is put forward with a feeling of alarm and despondency. Dr Wolman is clinging to a "clinical" category instead of coming clean that he is talking of values.

Let us move now to examination of his "therapy". The family therapy Wolman describes is not of any one particular style or school. He states clearly that the personality of the therapist is the single most important factor and outweighs any theoretical beliefs. He then assiduously avoids mentioning anything further about this and no results are noted, let alone evaluated.

Although he quotes McCord and McCord, *(Psychopathy and delinquency)* he carefully does not speak of the 30 year follow-up study published in the *American Psychologist* in 1978 by the surviving McCord which suggests that the massive family and personal intervention program delivered to one group of delinquents led to uniformly worse outcomes than no intervention at all.

Group therapy is examined in the same way, but he concludes that compulsory participation in an institutional setting is the only method that promises some degree of "therapeutic" success. This strikes me as counselling in prison under legal sanction rather than therapy in the usual sense of the word.

Turning now to a sociological consideration of the concepts in the book, it is important to realise how rooted in the United States this volume is. The "perfect American" is a shadow which can be reconstructed from the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 3 (Revised) categories of Personality Disorder. Such a construct is trusting, sociable, honest, reliable, phlegmatic, selfless, independent, slightly untidy and a go-getter. Interestingly, her/his sexual relationships, which many would consider an integral part of personality, are relegated to another part of the classification. Why this constellation of traits should be regarded as normative or ideal says at least as much about United States history and culture as any clinical category. The imperfect American, as epitomised by the "psychopath", does not play the game by these rules and has some socially deviant behaviours on an on-going basis that therapists are asked to deal with as part of an apparatus of social control. This may well be a worthy enterprise but it is separate from the domain of psychiatry.

In summary, I believe that this book perpetuates a myth of a clinical rather than a legal category, makes a series of generalisations about family issues in such a situation and offers no assistance to a practising therapist. A family therapist will not find this book to be a welcome addition to the library.

MICHAEL DUKE
Psychiatrist Superintendent
Mont Park Hospital