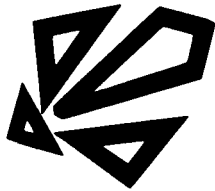
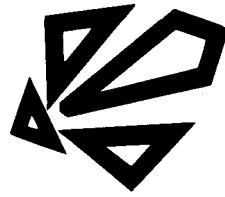


BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews should be forwarded

C/- BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
AUST. CHILD AND FAMILY
WELFARE
313 KINGSWAY,
SOUTH MELBOURNE. 3205.



Marriage and the Family Under Challenge: an outline of issues, trends and alternatives. Dorothy Fahs BECK. Family Service Association, N.Y., 1976. pp. 101. Recommended price: not given.

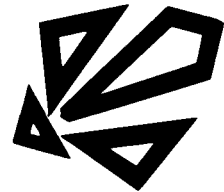
This brief publication which also includes an annotated bibliography by Emily Bradshaw fills an important need in the area of marriage and the family. It is often difficult to locate the type of information contained in this volume for the simple reason that the area of marriage and the family is the accepted province of a wide range of disciplines and hence recent research and theory is scattered throughout an equally wide range of publications.

The first section of this booklet provides a comprehensive, descriptive and well organized index arranged in sub-headings of the major issues, trends and alternatives in the area of marriage and family living. In this reviewer's opinion, the listing would provide an excellent source of topics for Seminar discussion groups and/or research projects. A further distinct advantage of this listing is that the author has cross indexed it with the annotated bibliography that forms the second part of the booklet. The bibliography is also comprehensive, highly informative and up to date.

The final section of the book provides a listing of all the major publishing sources quoted in the text. Such a listing which gives detailed addresses could be of considerable practical help to individuals wishing to correspond with publishing houses. Overall, this

is a valuable publication which could prove very useful to those involved in the area of marriage and the family, but particularly those involved in research or teaching.

Peter A. O'Connor (Dr.),
Dept. Social Studies,
University of Melbourne.



Mentally Ill Mothers and Their Children, Henry Grunebaum, Justin Weiss, Bertram Cohler, Carol Hartman, David Gallant. pp. 345. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975.

This book is an interdisciplinary study of the joint admission of mothers and their young children to psychiatric care. Today this is a fairly common practice and is the preferred mode of treatment when the mother's adjustment to the baby is seen as central, as in the case of post-partum or puerperal psychosis.

The authors were among the first to introduce the practice of joint admission in a psychiatric setting in Massachusetts in the early sixties. The research is relevant to social research generally for several reasons.

— it was designed from its inception to be part of an ongoing evaluation of the program.

— it is explicit about the use of the research for political ends, that is, to justify and enable the change in policy.

— it is interdisciplinary research, drawing on the professions of psychiatry, psychiatric nursing, psychology and social work.

— the research occurred in the practice setting, not in the

laboratory, and is a good example of how 'intangibles' can be studied, and how the 'practice wisdom' of our casework approach can be the real essence of the research process. The book is divided into 5 autonomous but integrated parts.

1. The background to the program and the implementation of joint admission.
2. Treatment of the mother during and after hospitalisation.
3. The effects of admission on the child.
4. The personality factors of the mother.
5. A model of etiology of maternal maladjustment based on psychodynamic and life crisis concepts.

The first section describes the actual process of implementing the program, the sources of resistance in the organisation and how these were overcome. Carol Hartman's section on the treatment of the mother is from a psychiatric nursing perspective and tends to make claims not justified by her small samples. Her classification of two 'mothering styles' on the basis of a sample of 11 mothers is a case in point. On the other hand her casework insights are very valuable, especially relating to post-discharge counselling in the home, and have a lot to offer the social worker who occupies this role in the Australian setting. She makes no mention of group work with such mothers which I have found very useful in facilitating reintegration into the family and community.

In the third part David Gallant assesses the development of a group of children of psychotic mothers, comparing those admitted with their mother and those in surrogate care, with a 'normal' sample. He finds, as have other researchers that children of psychotic mothers manifest early deficiencies in cognitive and interpersonal development.

Also working from small samples he finds that those children admitted with their mothers are advanced

in their cognitive development and he attributes this to the cognitively enriched environment in the psychiatric ward. The social work survey shows a very poor standard of surrogate care arranged by the other families.

One of the major research shortcomings of the book is its failure to compare the outcome of joint admission mothers with those admitted alone. This is central to the evaluation of the joint admission program but appears to have been taken for granted. The reactions of the mothers and those working with them suggest that joint admission was very beneficial, an opinion I would share, but this should have been verified by the research.

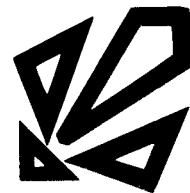
The fourth part of the book concerns the psychosocial development of the mother and is a poor part of the research. It uses as its main tool the Interpersonal Apperception Technique which is a projective test based on the very neo-Freudian theory it sets out to prove. Not surprisingly it yields data which is self confirming, having found that the patients have unresolved conflicts in their early psychosocial stages. Perhaps it is a function of the time at which this research was done that there is no attempt to understand the psychotic experiences of these women in terms of the meaningfulness of their often extreme delusions. My experience with puerperal psychosis patients is that the delusional content (having been born again, the baby being dead, fusion of identity, being the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus) is very meaningful to their adjustment to the mother role.

Some of the content also supports Cohler's ideas. The final section is also limited by its narrow psychodynamic focus, and ignores some of the recent research on critical periods in interpersonal development (while relying heavily on earlier work) as well as giving only scant attention to biological and social factors. Some social perspec-

tive is provided by their concept of parenthood as a developmental life crisis but their treatment of role concepts is superficial. Our understanding of the whole area of adjustment to the parental role would be enhanced by some cross-cultural studies and by exploring the dichotomy in our society between sex role conditioning and maternal role expectations, and the inadequacy of social support systems and role preparation which inhibit successful role performance.

Given its research and theoretical limitations this book nevertheless contains many useful insights, not only into the extreme dysfunctional end of the spectrum often present in the psychiatric system but into the process of adjusting to parenthood generally. It should prove useful to those involved in direct and indirect services to the young parent.

**Dorothy Scott, B.A. (Hons),
Dip.Soc.Stud.(Melb)
Department of Family Psychiatry,
Queen Victoria Hospital.**



Yarrow L.J., Rubenstein J. L. and Pedersen F. A. (1975) "Infant and Environment: early cognitive and motivational development". Halsted Press (John Wiley & Sons), N.Y.

Most of us know, thanks to Freud's emphasis of patterning following early experience, that depriving environments inhibit the healthy growth and development of children, whereas warm and loving environments facilitate these entities. Not only do we know this but the upsurge of interest, research and writing over the past decade has vindicated our faith in that adage of