

'The Child under Stress' has primarily been written for parents and others involved in the upbringing and education of children and should provide compelling reading for anyone having the permanent or temporary care of a child. In this one slim volume there is a wealth of material sensitively brought together which goes right to the heart of understanding the child. No one reading this book can fail to appreciate the use of lucid, simple language completely devoid of a specialist vocabulary. This together with the use of 'random episodes' gives an almost three dimensional quality to the material so telling are these in their simplicity and truth.

The selection of material reflects well the objectives of the book although one may question the omission of some aspects which seem pertinent in the consideration of children 'at risk'. The importance of play and the handling of relative amounts of stress, as necessary elements in the development of the child are strongly featured. It is therefore unexpected to find no mention of stress in infancy.

The chapter on violence and death should be welcomed by many parents concerned about the effects of mass media or how to deal with a child when a death occurs in the family.

The possible effect on the young child of separation from the mother is simply explained, but it is unfortunate that this has not been extended to include the situation on the child's return home. For parents faced with regression in the child some explanation would have been helpful.

A table of symptoms, as indicators of maladjustment, together with full references to the Robertson films are useful material for teaching purposes and could well form part of an inservice training programme for personnel in day care or residential settings. In addition a useful index is given, but no bibliography, although some brief references for further reading are given.

This book would be a useful introductory text for social workers and would be of particular interest to students entering field work in a child care setting.

MARIE D. CAMPBELL
Monash University

REMEMBER MARIA — John G. Howells, Butterworths 1974, pp 117, 55P, U.K.

Maria Colwell was a 7 year old English child killed in January 1974 by her step-father while she was living at home under the supervision of social workers and other professional helpers.

This book, by the Director of the Institute of Family Psychiatry, Ipswich, England, attempts to review what the author calls the "misconceptions and wrong practices" that contributed to this tragedy. A public inquiry has been held and its findings published, but satisfying few, least of all those whose primary concern is to provide substitute care for children from so-called broken homes.

The main thrust of Howells' argument is that many social workers and other professional helpers pay too much attention to the "blood-tie" and the effects of separation from natural parents. Not enough is done to strengthen the role of substitute forms of care, particularly foster-care and adoption. No-one involved in child care will quarrel thus far, but Dr Howells then goes on to misrepresent some aspects of classical deprivation theory and almost succeeds in relegating the family to some residual role. On the other hand it must be admitted that some social workers have proved singularly blinkered about family situations worthy of Edmund Leach's description as "gas chambers".

Remember Maria was written in the heat of public controversy when the "cause Celebre" clouded many people's judgment. The author to some extent feeds this by his slanted use of press reports and photographs. He also contradicts himself by criticising those who seek to generalise from animal studies to human behaviour and then proceeds to use four pages of animal studies to support his assertions. This detracts from his penetrating and sensitive analysis of the nature of the parent-child bond.

Reading this book I was reminded strongly of an earlier death in England in 1945, when Dennis O'Neill was done to death at Banks Farm. In many ways public care of deprived and damaged children has far to go. How many potential Marias are there in Australia?

FAMILY CRISIS — Robert Neuhaus and Ruby Neuhaus Company, Columbus, Ohio, USA.

In all families difficulties arise from time to time, which create anxiety and malfunction. In the majority of cases the family is able to draw from within its own ranks that which is necessary to cope. However there are those dilemmas of existence which threaten the ability of the family to remain together and deal with their difficulties. That is the family has not the resources among its own members to deal with a particular problem and unless there is constructive input from outside there is the real possibility of family and individual breakdown. Often relatives or close friends provide the needed input, but where problems are severe or of a specialised nature, the professional worker is utilized.

All families are different and the crisis in one family is a minor problem to another. Family crisis is therefore defined by a particular family's ability to cope with a particular problem. The worker involved in resolving family crisis needs to be armed with a great deal of sensitivity and a broad knowledge base, in the areas of family processes and crises precipitating situations.

Robert Neuhaus and Ruby Neuhaus have provided the reader with material on some major crisis provoking situations for the American family. Most of the material presented is relevant to the Australian situation.

The subject matter has been placed under broad headings (eg Mental Retardation, Drug Abuse) and for the most part has been dealt with in overview fashion. There is sufficient information to make this a useful reference book. The authors obvious understanding of family crisis is clearly transmitted to the reader and the brief case studies selected (one for each chapter) successfully add a human dimension.

The chapters covering "Common Crises in the Life Cycle" and "Middle-Age and Later Life Adjustment" are of particular value and have been put together in an impressive manner. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the material on "Crime and Delinquency" and "Unplanned Pregnancy". It would appear that the authors haven't