

with children and young people, which would be effective prompts to think about whether you are working at a child's pace, allowing a child to take the lead, able to emphasise positives and help the child explore for themselves. Some examples of how these might work in practice would be helpful.

Beesley balances the issues of recognising how culture and family history will influence what is seen as 'normal' and acceptable with standards about what she calls adequate care. However, she also confronts directly the challenge of

identifying when children are not being adequately cared for and the need to take action to ensure that they are.

The final tip, headed 'know when enough is enough' makes helpful suggestions about the complexity of assessment over time needed to decide when children need long-term alternative care. Beesley acknowledges the weight of such a decision while asserting the need for this to be faced in the interests of children. Her powerful quotes from children throughout the book reinforce the necessity of grappling with such dilemmas.

Child Protection Practice

Harry Ferguson. (2011). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 978 0 230 24283 8 (paperback), 237 pp.

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This book advocates for client-focused social work intervention (referred to here as *intimate child protection practice*) by engaging with children and parents in their 'significant places' (i.e., bedroom, kitchen, living room, back yard, car) to discover the actual reality of children and their families. The author argues that given the complexity of child protection work, social workers need to go the extra mile to access the relevant spaces and visualise the risks through bodily experiences of sight, smell, touch and hearing. Ferguson particularly emphasises the necessity of appropriately touching children, not just to help them understand the reality of relatedness, but to uncover any undisclosed physical injury. He cited an example from the United Kingdom (UK) child safety investigation, which discovered how, because of a lack of physical exploration, the professionals failed to identify the injury marks covered with chocolate on the face of toddler who later died of multiple injuries. The author emphasises the need for practitioners to develop appropriate courage, knowledge and skills as essential qualities. I believe professional values are also a prerequisite for practice. While the author emphasised a holistic and bold practice approach, he criticises the child protection system for not acknowledging creative approaches such as therapeutic engagement with children and parents. Further, Ferguson claims there is an increasing lack of acknowledgement for the value of the home visit. This book emphasises support and empowerment of parents as the best long-term options of child protection management. The author uses most of the 15 chapters to stress the necessity of exploring the social environment of the clients. The real value of this book, in my view, is the challenge posed by the author to the practice outcomes of risk management. He challenges the separation and growing chasm between families and

workers and suggests quite radical strategies for rebuilding relationships and re-connecting with the people we work with and for.

I examine each of the chapters here to further illuminate this key area.

Chapter 1 discusses the nature of the intimate spaces and acknowledges the uncertainty, the risk factors and the taboos associated with touching children. Ferguson encourages workers to reflect judiciously on their use of power and control irrespective of social class differences (Reich, 2005).

Chapter 2 explains the historical shift in the British policy in child safety management, from 'inspection' strategies to a 'welfare' oriented approach based on 'partnership'. The author suggests that until the 1980s child abuse was treated as a psychological phenomenon. Interestingly, it still seems to be the case at least here in northern rural Australia where there is an apparent belief in the community, and among social workers, that redressing child abuse is the job of the psychologist rather than acknowledging the wider socioeconomic factors, and the necessity of multidisciplinary input including relevant and empowering social work intervention.

Chapters 3 to 5 explore the 'liminality' of the families' world and the nature of a social workers entry to that space. Ferguson describes how workers may be de-motivated to engage with families and children in this space for a range of reasons that must be acknowledged and explored in the context of anti-oppressive practice. He contends that the workers involved in Victoria Climbié's life admitted that a sense of disgust at her scabies inhibited their connection with her and as a result vital signs of trauma were missed. How, asks Ferguson, can such oversights be avoided, and what skills and qualities can social workers develop that enable them to inhabit the child's real world in meaningful

and sensitive ways? One of the real strengths of this book is having raised these specific questions. Ferguson devotes the next four chapters to explicit and specific discussions about real and concrete examples of what social workers might do to develop and maintain therapeutic relationships with children. He discusses the use of car rides and certainly challenged my thinking about the therapeutic use of touch in developing meaningful relationships with children. Ferguson does not hesitate to explore issues that are often left unspoken in other social work practice discussions, but are part of the everyday decision making of professionals in child protection services.

Professional practices with mothers, with fathers, and with the level of emotional distress present in families is explored in chapters 9 to 11. Ferguson finds a way to balance the reality of families' situations with the social and political reality of child protection organisations. He acknowledges the dilemmas created and offers ways and strategies for action to deal with such dilemmas. Authority, multi-agency coordination and supervision are topics of discussion in the concluding chapters, and draw to a close a most challeng-

ing and thought provoking volume. The courage required to undertake child protection work is highlighted and the author's innate respect for such workers exemplified. Unlike many texts, workers such as myself can feel supported and understood in these discussions while simultaneously developing new knowledge and highlighting necessary skill development. Ferguson is very passionate about exploring the home and other key settings as a significant tool for effective child protection assessment and intervention. This idea is not new, but Ferguson has acknowledged some of the practical ramifications of these strategies and highlighted skills and qualities for entering such intimate spaces. As such, he makes a meaningful contribution to the debate about protecting children, and provides a book of real benefit to a range of professionals in child safety, mental health, child health and child and family social work.

Reference

Reich, J. (2005). *Fixing families: Parents, power and the child welfare system*. New York: NY: Routledge.

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