

REVIEWS



rearing from the point of view of the child; that is in terms of physical, cognitive and emotional development and needs. The intention is to give useful information rather than sets of rules that will not work for everyone. Child rearing "by the baby" is encouraged rather than "by the book". It is hoped that this approach will guard against unnecessary guilt in parents.

The book is organized in chapters dealing with six age-stages from birth to five. Each chapter is divided under consistent general headings such as feeding and growing, sleeping, crying and comforting, using his or her body. There is also an index which doubles as a sort of encyclopaedia giving information on many subjects (particularly medical and safety related ones) that were not dealt with in the main part of the book.

The material in the chapters for each age-stage is of two kinds. There are detailed practical guidelines for care right down to nappy folding, bathing and wrapping for the newborn — often with diagrams. And there is information about the child's physical, emotional, language and behavioural development which will greatly increase many parents' interest in and understanding and enjoyment of their children's growth.

Following logically from this information, are discussions of how parents can help with each bit of development (for example several simple and reasonable approaches to helping language development at eight to twelve months), suggestions of easily and cheaply making toys appropriate to current learning and ways of organizing the household, work routines, play areas etc. to allow the child what he needs at the age in question with minimum disruption to the rest of the family.

There are many clearly set out criteria and checklists that may help to allay anxieties or alert to problems; e.g. "your child is not spoilt if . . ." followed by six criteria including, he usually accepts "no" with reasonable

grace and you as a parent can face an obnoxious scene when necessary. This refers to the 2½ to 5 year group. Such guides will not be completely acceptable to everyone and there will be some room for disagreement about all of them but they can be very helpful if not too rigidly applied.

Probably one of the most important functions of a book like this is to provide reassurance to parents anxious that they may not be doing things well or that their child is showing problems. If such guidelines as the one described above can do this for some people, then their existence is justified. The risk is that they may have the opposite effect and unfortunately in some parts of the book, this seems likely as the suggestions *sound* too complicated and rigid and do not give sufficient encouragement to parents to trust their own responses.

For example the section of when to start solid foods acknowledges that no hard and fast rules apply — but then goes on to give some rather confusing rules involving weights and mls. of milk taken at each feed which, if applied without thought, could lead to solids being introduced to a two month old baby. These rules undermine the common sense of the parents which is just as likely to lead to foods being introduced at a reasonable time. For a book that is supposed to be encouraging flexible child rearing, there are rather too many complicated rules and tables for calculating things.

Throughout, the text is clearly set out and readable. There are delightful photos with captions that illustrate the main points of the text. Many of the tables provide easy reference (with the rider that some may be daunting). The language is quite straightforward. All of these factors may encourage some people to use this book who otherwise would be put off by such a hefty volume.

There are some limitations in that it is consistently assumed that the reader is one of two parents caring for

the child, that there is a non-working mother, and that the child is normal. Although a paperback, this book is well bound and has a good chance of surviving five years' hard use.

Baby & child is aimed at parents and will be of most use to them. For professionals it probably does not acknowledge sufficiently the limits of our knowledge about children and child rearing (e.g. outcomes of particular child rearing practices). Although the book is thoroughly cross referenced, it does not give references to sources of information. Its concentration on the normal child may also limit its use for professionals. However, many people working with children and families will find it a helpful handbook to be used in conjunction with more specialist literature.

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"THE NOWHERE BOYS"

Cairine Petrie
(163 pages) Saxon House, Teakfield
Limited, England

Readers who like myself, are not fully conversant with the details of the Scottish Juvenile Justice System and the various dispositions available to it, may have some initial difficulties relating to information contained in "The Nowhere Boys" to the Victorian scene.

This difficulty however does not diminish the relevance or the importance of the book for those interested in what happens to kids when they

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become enmeshed in the correctional system.

The author has studied in great depth the backgrounds and offending patterns of one hundred boys held in a secure facility and one hundred who are held in an "open" facility. In both groups the boys were aged between 14½ years and 16 years.

She attempts to answer the questions as to why some need security and some do not. On only three scales are the boys in each group significantly different. One scale related to boys with handicapped fathers who were present in greater numbers in the security unit. Of the other two scales, one related to the number of placements including children's home, foster care, and even prison placements that each boy had been through, and the other to the length of time the boys had been in the "child care" system.

In both cases the boys in the security unit had been through many more placements than the boys in the open unit and they had spent a great deal more of their lives in care.

They are described as "moving restlessly from one placement to another, presenting problems for those charged with their care and eventually running away (absconding) from each successive placement."

The message which is evident in these and the many other findings in the book is one that is well known to operatives and administrators in the Juvenile Justice area in Victoria and elsewhere, but that Governments have not as yet begun to fund adequately. That message is, that if you are born into families which are economically vulnerable, who reside in urban areas where social amenities are few and far between and where the prevailing adolescent culture is predominantly delinquent, you are at high risk for being caught up into the Juvenile Justice System.

The corollary statement that needs to be made is that it is much easier to get caught up into the system than it

is to get out again.

In Cairine Petrie's own words "it is the nature of the child's residential experience that makes him an absconder. Boys run away because of the places they are in". (Page 15)

The child who starts out life "behind the eight ball" learns to live by the rules he sees around him. This often leads to conflict with the system and involvement in the system. In turn the system which is given the responsibility for caring for you makes it, if not inevitable, highly likely that you will continue to "offend" to the point where maximum security is the only answer it has for your problems.

This book is valuable in that it analyses a great range of information about the two groups of boys with a specific focus on the reasons why one group has been defined as needing maximum security and the other open placement.

In the process many myths about the reasons for such divergent placements are laid to rest, in theory if not in practice!

It is also valuable because it will enable interested readers to sift through the issues raised and hopefully begin formulating constructive, residential or community based alternatives for dealing with young people which in turn could remove the system based and to that extent, artificial problems currently affecting too many children in our society.

Overall, a book well worth reading, full of interesting and detailed analysis, but throughout, warmly argued with a great deal of love and concern for the boys themselves and for their plight.

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STEP-PARENTING: HOW TO LIVE WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

by Brenda Maddox
First published U.K. 1975 by Andre
Deutsch as *Half-Parent*
Reprinted by Unwin Paperbacks,
London, 1980 219 pages.

This book on how to live with other people's children is a handy guide to step-parenting — certainly a more valuable wedding gift than a silver coffee urn to those about to take on a marriage mate with children. Written in an entertaining but informative way by one who has been there, Brenda Maddox discusses the myths and facts of step-relationships as well as a gamut of "step-problems" inherently possible in "remade" families. Uniquely, she presents the step-parent's point of view.

The primary message of this slim volume is in fact that most people in English speaking nations who enter into second marriages (for one or both partners) with offspring (from one or both partners) do so with little or no clarification of the duties, rights and expectations of the role of step-parent. As the author says in her foreword, "step-parenthood is so vague and so undefined even in the law that with the best will in the world, step-parents and step-children have to invent their relationship as they go. There are no rules." More often than not, the realities of step-parenthood contrast sharply with the raptures of the new found marital relationship. One of the harshest of these realities is that the myth of the wicked step-mother, portrayed widely in children's literature from Cinderella to Hansel and Gretel, is not only still prevalent but flourishing.

The author defines a stepfamily as a household unit, with a married couple at the head, where a child, of one or both of the spouses, from a previous marriage lives, or is a frequent visitor. With the rate of re-marriage almost