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# Book Reviews

J. Loft and M. Davis

## **HOMELESSNESS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH**

(Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 1988. Length: 165 pages)

Bibliographies are an invaluable way of quickly obtaining a feel for the key concepts, problems and data sources of a substantive issue. Loft and Davis' bibliography of homelessness does not disappoint in this role. This large bibliography uses the Institute of Family Studies' database, FAMILY, to enumerate, categorise and provide a brief annotation of approximately 500 papers, articles and books written on homelessness since the early 1970s. It is sobering to reflect that despite the multiplicity of references produced over the last two decades homelessness has just been rediscovered, at least for the wider public, by the Burdekin report on youth homelessness.

No doubt this rediscovery will generate a new wave of research and publication which will require a second edition of Loft and Davis' *Homelessness* bibliography in another five years' time. What is less likely is that there will be any effective policy response and that in five years' time the dimensions and forms of homelessness will be much as experienced in 1989. Such a conclusion inevitably flows from even a cursory reading of the annotated

references in this publication. Collectively they point to a problem whose nature cannot be tackled by incremental reforms. Homelessness now besets so many household types (youth, the aged, aborigines, the disabled, low income families), and is tied up with so many social and economic processes (family breakdown, de-institutionalisation, unemployment, declining housing affordability, raised social expectations), that small scale incremental changes will resolve very little.

The *Homelessness* bibliography is arranged under a number of headings including aborigines, the aged, youth, crisis accommodation, drug taking and government assistance. Some of the headings, e.g., the Economics of Housing, are not adequate descriptions of the contents. This particular chapter tells us very little about actual housing economics instead appearing more a residual category for publications that could not be located elsewhere. In each category the references are arranged chronologically, beginning with the most recent publications and working back to those of the early seventies.

The annotations appear in most cases to be taken from the publicity blurbs accompanying a publication or from attached abstracts or summaries. The abstracts offer no critical or conceptual commentary. While understandable given the huge range of references encompassed in the bibliography this deficiency means the user cannot identify key works either in comprehensiveness (a three page report receives as much annotation as a 200 page book) or in terms of their significance to the homelessness debate.

These comments aside, Loft and Davis' *Homelessness* bibliography is strongly recommended for housing and welfare researchers, welfare workers and teachers. I only wish there were more such bibliographies available for other substantive areas in housing and human service delivery.

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Judy McFadden

## **THE SIMPLE WAY TO RAISE A GOOD KID**

(Sydney: Martin Educational, 1988. 82pp. \$9.95pb)

Judy McFadden's "no-nonsense guide for parents of children between four and 12 years" sets behaviour management in the context of the parent-child relationship. However, the theme of this slim book focuses on the parents' role in helping children take responsibility for their own behaviour, thus relieving parents of the stereotyped expectation that it is their role and responsibility to make children behave! McFadden acknowledges and emphasises the confusion and difficulties experienced by many adults in the parenting role and begins by asking parents to examine their own expectations about what they want for their children before progressing to proposing strategies for dealing with children's behaviour.

The 20 brief chapters are written in a down to earth, conversational style and include a number of amusing cartoons which will appeal to and entertain many parents. The practical suggestions and strategies, indeed many of the specific incidents which are used as examples, come from McFadden's own experience as an Australian parent and educator and will be useful for other parents who are seeking hints and guidelines for

developing their own parenting style.

This book does not articulate a specific theoretical basis for practice which is inconsistent with the current trend towards acknowledging the basic theoretical derivation of the approach to parenting. Upon reading, the text can be described as eclectic with a stated philosophy concerning teaching children responsibility for their own behaviour. McFadden has pooled information and strategies from a number of sources, for example, *Behaviour Modification*, *Glasser's Reality Therapy*, *Ellis' Rational-Emotive Therapy and Individual Psychology* (as developed by Dreikurs, Dinkmeyer and McKay and Balson). The basic principles of these approaches have been applied where relevant to specific everyday problems typically encountered by parents.

The book contains a number of chapters which offer excellent practical suggestions and guidance. Chapter Four on Teaching Responsibility provides a meaningful explanation of the use of and parents' role in the application of consequences. Specific communication techniques for enhancing relationships while dealing with inappropriate

behaviour are formed in Chapters Five, Fourteen and Sixteen. The information on assertion, negotiation and compromise will be useful for many parents. Chapters Six and Eight contain strategies for helping parents view their own parenting in rational terms which will help diffuse the tendency of many parents towards taking responsibility for everything in their relationship with their children! The final chapters (9-20) deal with helping children meet problems outside the parent-child relationship, providing suggestions for overcoming difficulties with schoolwork, teachers, friendships, fighting and the like.

The book is written using clear, accessible language and is entertaining while providing a rich source of ideas and strategies for parents. However, it would be improved by some discussion and acknowledgement of major theoretical sources which would allow interested parents to follow up particular areas in more depth.

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