

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN: LEGAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES. Edited by James S. Henning, Ph.D. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1982. 285 pages.

Reviewed by Melvin G. Goldzband, MD

This valuable source book is the product of a symposium held during the 1978 Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association. The editor, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at UCLA, comments that this volume is only one step toward a truly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to the problems of children as they interface with the law. It is, however a very significant step.

So often, the bound proceedings of one or another seminar consist of more-or-less related papers that may be of varying value. In this book, however, it is apparent that a conscientious attempt was made to create some continuity and even deepening of thought and recognition of the difficulties children have in establishing rights. Those difficulties are not lessened when adults attempt to establish those rights for them. In recent years, judging by the proliferation of court opinions, it appears to be much easier to define or even further restrict the specific perimeters of childrens' rights than to establish them.

It is high praise to comment that Henry Foster's pioneering, introductory classic, *A "Bill of Rights" for Children* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1974) is beautifully complemented by the present book that deals in detail, chapter by chapter, author by author, with specific areas in which children become involved with the law. One expects coverage of the topics of, for example, family rupture, custody determination (the only genuinely disappointing chapter, lacking any reference to developing trends such as mediation, joint custody, and so on), abuse, incest, and the usual terrible matters we see in our daily rounds. But there is far more here. A good example is provided by the remarkable article by Gary Melton, who writes of teaching children about their rights. Another particularly stimulating chapter, calling forth new ideas in a tired brain, deals with cross-cultural perceptions of childrens' rights. Problems of research with children are also discussed, as are difficulties inherent in neonatal critical care units, and in hospitals and homes housing chronically ill children.

Some omissions come to mind. Most surprisingly, perhaps, no chapter deals with the problems of adoption or foster-home placement. Likewise, one looks in vain for discussions about children caught in the juvenile justice system. A discussion of the ongoing conflicts between childrens' rights and parental or general adult or governmental rights would provide a remarkable historical perspective, even though the general aspects of this might better be found in a work like Foster's. Finally, although the chapters are, by and large, well-written and well-organized, an index would be helpful. □