

## Book Reviews

TREATING PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE. By SL Ingersoll and SO Patton. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990. 180 pp.

Fred S. Berlin, MD, PhD

There are many kinds of sexual abuse. This book is primarily about the treatment of incestuous fathers. The authors, Sandra L. Ingersoll, MSC, and Susan O. Patton, LCSW, are compassionate and caring in arguing for "relearning, healing, and forgiveness . . . as opposed to punishment, humiliation, compounded shame, and reoffense." This contrasts to the vindictiveness sometimes encountered even among therapists working in this field. The authors talk about the need to deal professionally with negative countertransference feelings, observing that most incestuous behavior is an inappropriate means of satisfying a need for love and affection rather than the result of malicious intent. They point out that many offenders are former victims.

The authors advocate a "tough" confrontational approach to denial and rationalization, but a "tender" empathic approach to the offender himself. The book is intended as a "how to" guide for therapists confronted with incest. One could argue that an approved practicum should be the vehicle through which mental health professionals ought to acquire clinical skills in an area as important as assessing and caring for incest

offenders and their families. Parts of this book might be useful in conjunction with such a practicum.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Advice is given about how to get started, how to evaluate and treat, and how to deal with the personal stresses associated with being a therapist. The assessment section does not deal with the concept of differential diagnosis. It makes little use of DSM-III-R criteria. There is considerable discussion of Groth's distinctions between regressed and fixated pedophilia.<sup>1</sup> The authors argue for increased program funding and development, and for political advocacy in support of treatment. They also support exploration of changes in mandatory child abuse reporting statutes that may deter incest offenders and their families from coming forward. There is discussion of both in-prison treatment programs and community based programs.

The chapter entitled, "A Group Treatment Model for Incarcerated Offenders" proposes a future program not yet in existence. The authors speak of their own personal experiences in treating incarcerated offenders, but there is little discussion of other prison based programs such as the one operated at Atascadero, in California. The chapter on community based programs is also rather narrow, focusing on just two: (1) The Santa Clara County Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program (CSATP) as well as its offspring (e.g., Parents United), and (2) Alpha Human Services Incorporated in Minneapolis.

The authors of this text have put a lot of work into it, and are clearly well intentioned. I suspect they have helped many offenders and their families. However, as they themselves acknowledge, much of the book is a summary of ideas derived from attending workshops put on by others, their own opinions based upon somewhat limited clinical experiences, or is a synopsis from secondhand sources. Their summary of the Alpha Human Services program is derived entirely from a previous survey (rather than from peer reviewed publications) done by Faye Honey Knopp.<sup>2</sup>

Furby *et al.* have summarized a number of studies that demonstrated low recidivism rates for incest offenders even *without* treatment.<sup>3</sup> Some studies regarding proposed treatments for sex offenders have failed to demonstrate therapeutic efficacy.<sup>3</sup> The recidivism data (not their own) quoted by the authors of this book lacked matched control group data—making conclusions about the therapeutic effectiveness of proposed methods difficult to assess.

The book stresses the recommendations of those considered authorities in the field. Conclusions presented often are not based upon a body of scientifically scrutinized data and are often not critically analyzed. For example, the authors advocate encouraging an incest offender to seek legal counsel only *after* the therapist has obtained a confession. There is no critical thinking about informed consent or about the ethics of a possible conflict of interest. The *Handbook of Sexual Assault*, recently published by Marshall *et al.*, presents a broader, much more scholarly and sci-

entific approach to the problem of sexual abuse.<sup>4</sup>

This book is of limited utility in the forensic arena where empirical evidence, critical assessment, and an ability to withstand vigorous cross-examination is often so vital. The book's strengths lie in its description of a compassionate, concerned yet therapeutic approach towards patients, and upon its insistence that incest offenders need and deserve humane mental health scrutiny and care.

#### References

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3. Furby L, Weinrott MR and Blackshaw L: Sex offender recidivism: A review. Psychological Bulletin, 105:3-30, 1989
4. Marshall WL, Laws DR, Barbaree HE (eds.): Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theory, and Treatment. New York, Plenum Press, 1990

SIBLING ABUSE: HIDDEN PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SEXUAL TRAUMA. By VR White. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990. 181 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Diane H. Schetky, MD

This book is written by a social worker interested in the area of domestic violence. Data for this book are drawn from a questionnaire administered by mail to 150 adults. The sample is a mixed one

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drawn from persons responding to newspaper ads and outpatients being seen by mental health therapists. Thus it is in no way representative of the general population. The population is further skewed by the fact that 89 percent of respondents were female. The author notes that no controls were used.

The findings are not surprising. Respondents reported a high frequency of abuse with physical, sexual, and emotional abuse that often overlapped. Many lamented the failure of parents to respond appropriately to the abuse. Long-term sequelae of sibling abuse are reported that are quite similar to those reported for childhood sexual abuse, i.e., low self-esteem, depression, problems with interpersonal relationships, substance abuse, anger with the perpetrator, and depression and suicide attempts.

There is a useful chapter on "Differentiating Abusive Behavior from Normal Behavior" and another on "Preventing Sibling Abuse." The dynamics of sibling abuse are discussed in terms of abuse as a means of dominating and having power and control. Various reasons for the failure of parents to respond are explored, although rather superficially. The author's message is that sibling abuse is harmful and should not be ignored.

The value of this book to the forensic psychiatrist is that it serves as a reminder to inquire about sibling abuse (either as victim or perpetrator) and not to minimize its effects. However, \$29.95 seems like a lot of money to pay for this message. The book would probably be more useful to family therapists and therapists who work with victims.

EVALUATING CHILDREN FOR THE COURTS USING PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS. By S Kissel and NW Freeling. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas 1990. 92 pp.

Reviewed by Harriet Siegel Miller, PhD

"*Evaluating Children*" strives to be a "practical guide" to child psychological testing. Unfortunately, it is sometimes too technical for beginners and sometimes too simple for sophisticated practitioners. For example, it provides a simplistic description of the Wechsler Scales (although omitting the supplemental subtests), apparently geared to undergraduate psychology students or mental health workers. In addition, one-quarter of the book explains the rationale for elementary tests well known to any experienced psychologist. The authors make deductions from psychological testing in the case illustrations without fully explaining how these conclusions were derived—an omission perhaps acceptable were the book aimed solely at experienced clinicians.

Further, the text is poorly edited. Many texts cited aren't in the index or in the references. Some that are in the index cite the wrong page. The bibliography is inadequate and some of the information presented is confusing. For example, the authors describe both an 11-year-old (p. 39) and a 7-year-old (p. 47) who each made three errors on the Bender-Gestalt as at age level in visual motor functioning.

More egregiously the authors make unsubstantiated statements; for example, "The largest number of requests for

forensic evaluations involve divorce and custody" (p. 51). This statement might be true in some jurisdictions, although this reviewer has not seen statistics regarding this.

The authors omit sexual and child abuse illustrations because they say they believe that psychological testing is not as useful as "clinical and play interviews in the legalistic aspects of the problem" (p. 64). Having worked in the Baltimore City Juvenile Court for the past 20 years, this psychologist has found psychological testing quite useful for these cases.

The authors have organized the book into three sections: the first chapter is an orientation in psychological evaluations, and the second places psychological testing in perspective to the overall interview. However, the summaries are inadequate in their overview of the juvenile court. They do not refer to the recent nationwide trends towards deinstitutionalization, decriminalization, diversion and due process. With the increase in juvenile crime and drug abuse, and increased attention to the reporting of child physical and sexual abuse and neglect, there has also been a further shift in the type of cases appearing before the juvenile court.

The authors neglect to point out that it is always the child in juvenile court who is charged and not the adult. Chapter 2 does conclude with useful recommendations that the report "document the purposes of the testing and justify conclusions and recommendations" (p. 33). The authors correctly warn that the

evaluation "must be reported in a timely, non-jargonesque fashion, paying particular attention to answering the referral questions and making recommendations which are relevant, practical and as specific as possible" (p. 34).

The next two chapters provide case "illustrations of how psychological testing can contribute effectively and efficiently to decision-making in such problem areas as child placement, juvenile delinquency, adoption, and child custody" (p. vi). However, the chapter titled "Disability, Adoption, and Delinquency" contains no delinquency, but rather two status offenses: truancy and runaway.

This book concludes with advice on court testimony, addressing the clinician's anxiety and giving advice on how to arrive at a fee for testimony. There is a list of the multitude of clinical terms the psychologist might be requested to explain, without noting that one could refer to a dictionary of psychological terms and/or DSM III-R in the courtroom.

This book left me feeling unsatisfied and disappointed that the authors were not more specific in their provision of information on testing and references and that they did not reach their stated goals. Although this book offered "on target" suggestions about the orientation of the forensic psychologist ("amicus curiae") and the presentation of information to the court, it is not precise enough to be useful to either the student or the experienced clinician.