

Working With Traumatized Youth in Child Welfare

Edited by Nancy Boyd Webb. New York: Guilford Press, 2006. 316 pp. \$37.00.

Reviewed by Eraka Bath, MD

Working With Traumatized Youth in Child Welfare is a significant addition to the limited literature on the interface among trauma, child welfare, and psychopathology. Child welfare and mental health agencies have established systemic barriers to identifying and providing care to extremely vulnerable youth. The book seeks to bridge that gap, between the worlds of child welfare and mental health, by presenting a multidisciplinary approach to caring for traumatized children and adolescents.

The book was edited by Nancy Boyd Webb, an expert in child welfare studies and play therapy, who has organized the contributions of a multidisciplinary group of clinician-scholars into a useful text. Dr. Webb divided the book into three sections. The first section, "Theoretical Framework and Practice Context," contains five chapters that review the scope of trauma in children and adolescents remanded to child welfare systems. The authors examine different theoretical constructs of development, attachment, and neurodevelopmental theories, in an effort to establish a framework for understanding the needs and vulnerabilities of traumatized children. The framework is also used by authors later in the book to describe how to work with these children.

"Helping Interventions and Issues" is the title of the second section of the book. Eight chapters describe matters salient to professionals working with specific populations of traumatized youth, including cultural sensitivity, empowering disabled youth, trauma, adolescent motherhood, and managing aggression in youth remanded to out-of-home placements. The authors acknowledge obstacles to working with traumatized youths, including how resource limitations hinder efforts to develop novel interventions for this population. Scholars suggest that, at times, child welfare agency agendas that focus on permanency and a need to substantiate maltreatment

have diminished the mental health care needs of traumatized youth.

The book describes critical situations and offers reasonable solutions. For example, one author states that one of the critical needs in foster care systems is better triage and mental health needs assessment of youth. The author also opines that increased training for child welfare workers in assessment and triage of psychiatric illness is critical to improving access to care.

The third section, entitled "Issues and Proposals for Collaboration Between Child Welfare and Mental Health," contains two chapters. Pediatricians Vincent J. Fontana (deceased) and Mayu P. B. Gonzales coauthored "The View from the Child Welfare System," and child and adolescent psychiatrist Marilyn Benoit contributed "The View from the Mental Health System." These chapters provide a useful approach to initiating discussions with non-physician clinicians and childcare professionals regarding how medical and mental health providers perceive matters involving traumatized children and adolescents.

One of the main strengths of this book is its multidisciplinary approach. A significant portion of the child welfare and child trauma literature heretofore has been compartmentalized by discipline. Yet multidisciplinary collaboration is an essential component for professionals seeking to make a positive impact in this field. The book also includes sound analysis of the multivariate factors at play in producing negative outcomes for child victims of maltreatment.

Other strengths of the book are the special sections, including chapters on cultural competency and intergenerational transmission of family violence. Also, the authors acknowledge the relationships between race and class as factors contributing to overrepresentation of certain groups of youths in the foster care system. One chapter examines different ethnic groups and describes specific vulnerabilities that create disparities in health care. The authors of that chapter state that cultural competency should be a mission and a goal of child welfare agencies nationwide, and they give concrete examples of how that mission can be actuated. The book includes useful references, including a large appendix of professional organizations, national child welfare centers, training programs, and certification groups and journals. A

useful list of assessment tools and standardized measures is also included.

Although this book was written for social workers, I recommend it for clinical professionals who work with youth in foster care and correctional settings. It may also be useful to forensic psychiatrists who work with traumatized children and adolescents, as it provides a frame of reference for productive dialogue with other disciplines.

Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System: Policy Issues and Practice Strategies

Edited by Russ Immarigeon. Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute, 2006. 564 pp. \$135.95.

Reviewed by Susan Hatters Friedman, MD

Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System: Policy Issues and Practice Strategies is a reference text composed of 52 chapters, all of which have been published in the journal *Women, Girls, and Criminal Justice*. Reviews of empirical data, quantitative and qualitative studies, and innovative program descriptions contribute to this excellent overview of the plight of females in the correctional system. Articles are arranged in six sections that address criminal justice policy, girls and juvenile justice, mothers and their children, gender-specific risk assessments and programing, drug treatment and mental health care, and programs and practices. The fact that female offenders are often overlooked in studies and policy development makes this compilation an important text for forensic professionals. The wide range of topics includes, but is not limited to, approaches to women who harm themselves, the benefits of offering a college education to women during incarceration, and innovative services offered in disparate areas such as Minnesota and Scotland. The recent influx of women into the criminal justice system makes this book particularly timely.

Female offenders have elevated rates of mental illness, substance abuse, and victimization. This may seem inconsequential to those of us performing individual evaluations. However, on a systemic level, pol-

icy changes that promote offender rehabilitation in sentencing and programing are needed. This book contains data that will help correctional psychiatrists seeking to challenge currently practiced models of care that are not gender-sensitive.

Women and girls have been increasingly arrested and prosecuted in recent decades, largely due to drug offenses and status offenses, respectively (Chapters 1 and 9). Similar to incarcerated men, these women are disproportionately of minority ethnicity.

Readers of the first chapter glean that female offenders are more likely than their male counterparts to have personal histories of sexual abuse, often in childhood, and to have a trajectory that leads to substance abuse.

The book contains insightful discussions of gender differences in pathways toward criminality, and the impact on the children of mothers charged with crimes. The authors posit that in addition to holding women accountable, we must give them the skills necessary to become productive members of the community. Interviews with women who had been incarcerated indicated that upon release, they valued the "importance of developing new internal attitudes for behavioral decision-making" (p 43-3).

The relationship between criminal justice and maternal caretaking is reviewed in a section entitled "Mothers and Children." Readers of this section will appreciate that more than two-thirds of incarcerated women are mothers who were often the primary caretakers of their children. Incarcerating these women, even during the pretrial phase, has implications for their children, who "become unwitting victims of their mother's debt to society" (p 23-1). The consequent collateral effects of the mother's confinement depend on the child's developmental stage.

The authors discuss the consequences of recent legislation, such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997: "When one considers the number of months, or even years, spent in pretrial detention in large metropolitan criminal court systems, it is quite possible that even a mother found not guilty of a criminal charge could lose her children permanently while awaiting trial on a case" (p 15-3). Also, a relatively new lifetime ban on cash assistance and food stamps for women convicted of drug offenses (and their children), enacted in many states, has affected an estimated 135,000 children (p 16-7). One author found a consensus among treatment staff that this ban was counterproductive: "Denying women cash