

- and for that matter Florida's - legal system, much of which will probably be irrelevant to British legal practice.

The chapter entitled 'A Multidisciplinary *Hospital* Response Protocol' is useful but emphasises the strengths of Britain's long established child protection teams which America would envy. In the UK, we take for granted that 'the hospital's multi-disciplinary team *must* expand to include agencies external to hospital'.

Of note, Child Protection Case Conferences, so familiar to all of us who work in the UK, are never mentioned. The British framework of such conferences, our established child protection teams and the dilemmas faced by them when it may be impossible to work together with parents and the subject of 'closed' case conferences, are not addressed. This will inevitably disappoint British social workers.

Neither was there any mention of the role of professionals as themselves perpetrating MSP, which is worrying in view of the report of The Allitt Inquiry in Britain (1994). However, as I have said earlier, the chapter on the school perspective is excellent and these nine pages make essential reading for all teachers.

In summary, this is an excellent book with strengths which far outweigh any weaknesses. Although it is not a fully comprehensive text on MSP/MBPS, and has limitations in its relevance for British use, I would view it as an essential addition to all child protection libraries. In their title, Parnell and Day suggest that MBPS is misunderstood child abuse. With this book, they go a long way to readdress the misunderstandings of this very complex problem.

With better education of professionals in the future, hopefully no-one will ever again fail to consider the diagnosis MSP or MBPS. It may not yet be fully accepted as a diagnostic entity by DSM-IV, but it exists and in my opinion, in its full spectrum, is far more prevalent than is currently acknowledged.

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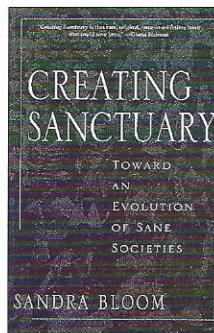
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References:

1 McClure, R.J. et al (1996) *Archives of Disease in Childhood*; 75, 57-61

Sage (1998) ISBN: 0-8039-5812-9 £15.99 (pb) pp311



Creating Sanctuary: Toward an Evolution of Sane Societies

Sandra Bloom

These children present multiple and often overwhelming problems that can only be adequately managed in the most carefully thought-out and supervised systems. Such systems are expensive... there are few facilities any longer for the most severely damaged children.

In recent times, *Young Minds Magazine* has highlighted concerns about in-patient facilities for adolescents, but this quotation is not another salvo in that particular battle. It is taken from *Creating Sanctuary: Toward an Evolution of Sane Societies* by Sandra Bloom, an Adult Psychiatric specialist working in the United States.

Her central thesis is that many of the ills of society and, to a significant extent, mental health problems in adulthood, can be attributed to the impact of violence, particularly in childhood, and to the institutionalisation of this violence.

Bloom eloquently and unselfconsciously describes how her previous ways of formulating her patients' problems, and responding to them, were challenged as a fuller appreciation of the reality and consequences of the traumatic events they had experienced forced itself upon her. 'What it finally boiled down to is that "hurt people hurt people" and that if we wanted to stop people from getting hurt then, as a society, we were going to have to stop hurting children.'

Her conception of 'violence' is more than the obvious physical, sexual or verbal assault. It includes 'all forms of violence - allowing children to go hungry in the midst of plenty, denying them adequate educations, permitting homelessness, withholding medical care, failing to support overwhelmed families, and tolerating corporate and governmental policies that make good parenting virtually impossible. Nothing will change for the better until we take seriously our shared responsibility for

the well-being of our children - all of our children.'

Bloom believes the consequences are seen not simply in individuals, but are manifest also in the shaping of culture and society. 'We live in a culture in which the exploitation of others for one's own gain is acceptable practice. Violence is not unacceptable, it is simply regulated. Only people who have power are [allowed] to hurt other people and have their behaviour condoned by the state.'

The position accorded to those most overtly and detrimentally affected by this has a further defensive component which is best understood as a culturally-embedded and expressed identification with the aggressor: 'Blaming the victims for their problems and thereby allying oneself with the powerful perpetrator is far easier than emotionally containing the raw pain of innocent suffering and helplessness.'

Bloom's context is the American experience of economic restructuring and challenges to the welfare system. There are differences in detail in comparing this with the UK, but the substance resonates very powerfully with our experience of the last two decades and the continuing debate in the political climate of 'New Labour'. A culture exists which confuses autonomy and individualism: there is ambivalence about having needs for, and in, relationships - a pseudo-independence promoted at the cost of mature interdependence and mutuality.

Bloom captures it thus: 'In this view of the world, which characterises such a fundamental aspect of Western philosophy, psychology, and politics, attachment behaviours are always slightly suspect, easily merging into the pathological and called neediness and dependence, regression or manipulation.'

But she does not descend into a simplistic diatribe against others. Instead, she describes how she and colleagues realised that they had to appreciate their part as perpetrators, perhaps even perpetrators, in a system which participates 'routinely in this cycle of victim-perpetrator behaviour until it merges into expectable human behaviour...'

It is also essential that we do not attempt to set ourselves apart in our professional roles as if we are another