

BOOK REVIEWS**THE THIRD HAND**
PREBEN WAGNER, MOGENS BAADSGAARD,
& VINS NEESEN
(Australian editor: Maryla Juchnowski)

Swinburne University of Technology: E.I.B.A. Press. 1995
Distributor: SUT 142 High Street, Prahan, Melbourne, 3181
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Price: \$28.00 plus \$2.00 postage and handling

The Third Hand" is a slim, precise, and practical resource book published especially for family day carers by Dane Vibs Neesen and her German and Danish colleagues. The authors aimed to make caregiving more exciting, to improve the parent's role, and to help Family Day Care Schemes. The focus on home based care makes it a resource also for nannies and parents. The attempt to improve opportunity to use time in a more positive way accounts for the reference to having a "third" hand.

The book aims to give ideas on how to manage difficult situations with children and also how to improve communication with parents. The premise on which the book is written is that knowledge of psychological rules and principles governing the relationship between humans will assist carers to become more effective and to ensure positive relationships.

Analysis of child behaviour is balanced by attention to adult behaviour. The philosophy behind the book is similar to that of the "Management of Young Children Program" (MYCP), an individual parenting program developed within Queensland's Education Department. MYCP is a parenting program that teaches psychological rules and principles governing behaviour and assists parents to use this knowledge in their dealings with children and adults

to ensure positive relationships. The success of this program is firmly based on outcomes for parents that greatly enhance and develop their competencies and self-esteem.

The MYC Program ensures parent competence and self-esteem development by incorporating a genuinely empowering parent learning approach to parenting. Behavioural analysis is carried out via parent video observations of their individual parent-child interactions with facilitation by the MYCP worker who teaches psychological rules, principles, and child development facts and who supports parents in applying this information to their own parent-child interaction. The success of the program is firmly based on (1) its practical hands on approach, (2) the learning model adopted, and (3) the MYCP professional's ability to perform in such a way that the MYCP philosophical stance of valuing the parent's contributions and ensuring parental leadership becomes a reality.

The skills and strategies supported by MYCP are based on the theory that "What you do usually counts more than what you say", which is a quote from "The Third Hand." Both "The Third Hand" and the MYCP approaches are based on the expectation that a successful learner needs to be given information,

certain behavioural skills (e.g., behavioural analysis), and good processes to achieve their goals. The MYCP approach also gives parents the opportunity to learn and take risks in a safe and encouraging environment, in which personal and family counselling support is also provided.

"The Third Hand" endeavours to achieve independent and responsible learners by presenting information in a clear and precise manner with many practical examples. Very basic everyday examples are detailed to reinforce and clarify points. In its endeavour to capture the reader and quickly communicate detail, the book moves from "information giving" to "reflection" on to everyday examples and then on to a "day-care exercise." This process occasionally lacks flow and can sometimes become confusing.

It does succeed, however, in being a highly practical resource book. It is definitely not a "cook book" approach to problems but carefully proceeds through a sequence of concepts and skills. The 13 chapter topics are Behavioural Psychology, S-B-C (stimulus-behaviour-consequence), An Example, Another Example, More on Reinforcement, Rules, Instruction Control, Problem Behaviour, Punishment, Behavioural Psychology and Adults, About Communication, and Stuck in the Groove.

The teaching of observational skills is followed by an overview of behavioural development. A number of basic and essential skills (e.g., extinction and reinforcement) are introduced. The concept of "instruction control" is introduced as a prerequisite to positive experiences and communications with children. Concepts of problem solving and planning are introduced in Chapter 8. A 7-point plan is described, modelled, and encouraged. The book endeavours, in what seems to be a successful manner,

to assist the reader to become a knowledgeable and independent problem solver. The book carefully introduces a sequence of understandings and practices that encourages and leads the carer to skill development. It is commented that "If you are good at then punishment is so superfluous, that it deserves very little mention."

Chapters 12 and 13 examine the adult-adult relationships between carer and parent. Adult-to-adult communication skills, necessary when carers are responsible to parents for the development and the behavioural learning of their children, are introduced and practiced through basic examples. Caring for the children of others can sometimes be a difficult situation requiring sensitivity, generosity, and understanding. Although some good strategies and insights are covered, this extremely important aspect of the carer's work receives fairly cursory acknowledgment.

Parenting is a highly challenging activity where one needs to address one's own experience of being parented. One's beliefs about parenting and one's expectations of oneself in this very demanding and responsible role need to be explored. The result of working through these issues in a safe and encouraging environment is a heightened self-confidence and self-esteem. There is acknowledgment in the book of these challenges but no support or activities to assist the reader with this aspect of management skill development.

The content of "The Third Hand" is appropriate and effective. Its simplistic and factual approach could be very confronting and inhibiting to some readers who want to work on new management approaches. For carers who have a very professional approach to their work as well as confidence in their performance, however, this resource will be very valuable. It would also be an

extremely valuable resource for graduated MYCP parents. Yet for many carers and most parents the book would need to be accompanied by practical support and encouragement and the opportunity for discussion and counselling over a period of time. "The Third Hand" is a "find" for those professionals working in the area of supporting parents with parenting and an extremely promising resource for carers. I liked this book!

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LIFE SPAN DEVELOPMENT

**LINDSAY GETHING,
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**SYDNEY: MCGRAW-HILL. 1995
ISBN 0 07 470241 6 PP. XII + 643
RRP \$55.95**

An Australasian reworking of North American texts has to balance a total reworking (economically difficult) and a superficial brush-over (culturally irrelevant). Gething met this challenge with around 400 of the 2,000 references being (20%) identifiably Australasian. More statistical data is taken from our own Australasian base, although, given the lead time necessary, most of this still dates back ten or more years. This second Australasian edition of this chronological infancy-to-end of life text has many contributors associated with the University of Sydney. New Australasian material includes the rise of AIDS, Aboriginal and Maori issues, youth homelessness, and elder abuse. Australian writers like Callan and Poole and New Zealand writers like Clay and Mitchell are represented. In the index,

however, Maori is the only New Zealand subject listing.

The book is worth serious consideration for all who wish to prescribe contemporary and culturally relevant material in courses concerned with life span development. Possibly it is not quite as extensive as Candi Peterson's text. The strong influence of health sciences rather than education in much Australian research in child and adolescent development gives it a biological orientation. Piaget is given more detailed attention than in the earlier edition. Learning checklists and lists of possible activities and projects are a useful addition. The instructor's manual includes overhead transparencies, but the small print, particularly in tables, may be ineffective in large lecture theatres. Figures are relatively clear. A videodisc was not available to this reviewer. Several reference errors were found (e.g., title and year of O'Rourke & Clough, 1978, on p. 617; double referencing of Bennett, 1987, p. 585; no title for Eisele & others, p. 595).

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