

BOOK REVIEWS

Campion, Jean. (1985). *The child in context: Family systems theory in educational psychology*. London and New York: Methuen, 214 pp. \$9.95 U.S. (paper).

This book represents a highly ambitious and rather successful effort to broaden and deepen the perspective taken by educational psychology. Moving far from the traditional view that the domain of educational psychologists is exclusively that of assessing the individual child presenting cognitive and behavioral differences, Campion's theme is that educational psychology would benefit from availing itself of family systems theory and both assessing and treating the child from a family systems perspective. Many children, she maintains, show behavioral disturbances and school failure for reasons closely related to difficulties in the family. This is not to say that family problems are necessarily the *cause* of the child's difficulties (though in some cases they are), but rather that invariably what has gone on and *is* going on in the family has an effect upon the child's difficulties. Looking at the child's problems from a family perspective opens up the possibility, Campion maintains, of treating the child and family in a number of effective and innovative ways. Throughout much of the book the author develops the theme that the child can be more effectively served if the psychologist and parents are working together, and a number of different possible models for this collaboration are put forward. These include: 1) consultation with parents, 2) partnership arrangements where the psychologist teaches the parent how to provide specific interventions (e.g. behavior management, reading rehearsal), and 3) individual child, parent and family counseling and therapy.

To situate the book in the general field of psychology, one can state that there is just the beginning of an awareness in many that we have for too long been working in isolation from family systems theorists. Developmental psychologists (who, as Campion points out, have been an integrating force themselves, bringing together behavioral, dynamic, biological, and systemic theory) have tended until recently to be quite oblivious to development in family systems theory (Minuchin, P., *Child Development*, 52,2, 1985). In the area of educational psychology there have been few indeed who have considered the enormous potential which family systems theory holds for their work. The author does point out that, recently, there has been an increasing awareness in many educational psychologists of the effects of *school* systems themselves on children's learning. She advocates a broadening of this systemic thinking to include the family system.

Campion indicates early in her book that the population she is focusing on is those children seen by school psychologists who demonstrate behavior disturbances, social immaturities, and learning difficulties. Her thesis is that, for far too long, insufficient attention has been paid to the underlying relationships between social, emotional and cognitive development in these children. The focus has been on the academic and cognitive achievements with little effort to relate self concept, social relationships, and the child's thoughts and anxieties to these end-points. Yet, family attitudes, communications, and relationships are intimately related to these social-emotional factors.

While *The Child in Context* presents much material novel to educational psychology in a highly interesting way, it does have several shortcomings. Probably the most serious is the structure of the book. Upon reflection and inspection one can see how Campion has developed her theme of the relationships of family systems theory to the practice of educational psychology. However during the reading, the rationale for the chapter sequence is not very clear and the book seems somewhat choppy.

In summary, the text includes: a) initial chapters which review, through a broad-angle lens, the main issues in child assessment and treatment, b) a series of chapters on collaborative approaches between psychologist and parent, c) several excellent chapters on specific techniques in interviewing families, d) a series of additional topic chapters, including working with children from other cultural traditions, working with other social service and mental health systems, and e) a concluding chapter which is a summary of much of the foregoing information on family systems theory and the educational psychologist.

Campion has written an excellent and highly stimulating book which holds the potential for enlarging considerably the perspective of the practicing educational psychologist. While she writes as an educational psychologist working for the School Psychological Service in the London Borough of Hounslow, and makes frequent reference to the 1981 Education Act in Britain, the book's thesis is applicable to the practice of educational psychology anywhere. It has numerous case examples and is written in a clear and highly readable style. It also makes reference to a rich and varied body of literature which spans clinical, developmental, and family systems thought. Furthermore, Campion provides an excellent list of references. For the educational psychologist, this book is a "must." For any clinician working with school-age children it offers highly rewarding reading.

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