

Therapeutic Practice in Schools. Working with the child within: A clinical workbook for counsellors, psychotherapists and arts therapists, edited by Lyn French and Reva Klein, London: Routledge, 2012, 240pp. £90 (hardback) ISBN 978-0-415-59790-6; £26.99 (paperback) ISBN 978-0-415-59791-3

Lyn French and Reva Klein have done a splendid job in assembling and editing the 20 chapters which make this a comprehensive guide to its subject, not least because they really know their field. They are, respectively, an art therapist, counsellor and psychodynamic psychotherapist, and a former educational journalist (her name will be familiar to past readers of the *Times Educational Supplement*), now practising as a psychodynamic psychotherapist working with children and adolescents. As well as the Introduction and an Afterword, each editor contributes four chapters. There are eight other contributors, all of whom bring to their writing a wealth of experience in counselling and psychotherapy applied to young people in school settings.

As the sub-title says, this is a clinical workbook. It is not a report of empirical research, nor the advancement or critical analysis of an educational theory, but a training manual for therapists and counsellors aiming to work in schools. It does not deal with the full range of services that therapists might deliver in schools, but

'limits itself to a detailed exploration of the therapist's defining role: that of offering one-to-one sessions on a weekly basis to referred children. This reflects the fact that our work with children and adolescents involves not only learning a therapeutic language but also making it accessible to younger clients' (p.3).

It is divided into four Parts: Key psychoanalytic concepts as applied to work with children and adolescents; Working in schools: the context; Practical approaches to the work; and Monitoring and evaluation.

Part I begins with a chapter by Sue Kegerreis which sets out the theoretical framework within which psychodynamic therapists practise. Those who doubt the value of theory in informing educational practice - Michael Gove immediately comes to mind - would do well to read her first section: 'Why do we need theory?'. If they did, they would learn the importance of the *unconscious*, of *early experience*, and of *relationships* (as crucial in the classroom as in the therapy room), and the key concepts of *projection*, *transference* and *projective identification*. This foundation is built upon by David Trevatt in chapter 2, where *counter-transference*, *resistance*, *denial*, *repression* and other defence mechanisms are explained, and the particular challenges of adolescence, trauma and grief are addressed. The crucial role played by transference and counter-transference are the focus of the third chapter by Hilary Ann Salinger who provides some useful vignettes and study questions to bring these concepts to life. In the final chapter, Jenny Dover brings attachment theory to bear on the work of therapists as they observe and interpret the behaviour of the young person in the therapy room. She shows how carefully chosen words can be used gently to probe the child's experience when responding to their story-making, drawing and play. The importance of self-observation in identifying and working with the (counter-) transference is evidenced, and the reader will find this chapter particularly helpful in cementing their understanding of the key terms introduced in earlier chapters.

In Part II, three chapters (by Lyn French, Reva Klein and Stephania Putzu-Williams) focus on schools as the contexts for the practice of therapy. This is a crucial chapter, for the challenges posed for counsellors by school settings have been noted in books on school counselling since at least the

1970s (e.g. Jones, 1977). In Chapter 5, French sets the therapist's role within the wider culture of the school, including the degree to which it has an established pastoral ethos, and its relationship to the pastoral curriculum. The message given out by the school's decision to have a counselling service is powerful. The therapist needs to be prepared for the positive and negative reactions (hope and fear) which this may call forth, and to put them to good use:

'As therapists working in schools, we need to be prepared to challenge idealised notions of what therapy can achieve. We also role-model staying with uncomfortable feelings long enough to think about them. This is central to being able to learn, even if at times it is painful to do so. We convey this by tolerating, rather than reacting to, the negative perceptions and projections which we are the recipients of along with the positive ones. And we do it by thinking about and processing conscious and unconscious communications' (p.58).

The particular opportunities and challenges of primary and secondary schools respectively - including the importance of grasping the child's perspective, teacher expectations, the need for teamwork and collaboration with parents, teachers and other staff, managing self-destructive behaviour (such as self-harm), confidentiality, consent and other ethical issues - are well-covered in the following two chapters.

Part III is the longest section, with eleven chapters dealing more-or-less chronologically with practical approaches to the stages of work within a school. The fact that these chapters are practical in character does not mean they are devoid of theory. Thus, in chapter 8, Camilla Wardburg's excellent advice on preparing the therapy room deals with the symbolic power of the room, both in terms of the messages given off by the arrangement of furniture and the 'baggage' associated with other uses to which the room is put, and as a *container* for the disclosures and emotions which will happen within it. I think the advice given in this chapter, from the practicalities of room bookings being protected and the need for privacy, to the volume and type of materials needed for the therapy, will be invaluable to the practitioner starting work in schools. The following chapter (by the same author) has equally valuable guidance on the establishment of an appropriate referral system, including a specimen referral form.

In a longer-than-average tenth chapter, Putzu-Williams considers the assessment process, whose key aim is 'to clarify the presenting problem, gather information about the child's current situation and history and observe how both present and past situations shape the 'here and now' of each session' (p.102). This can take a number of weeks, and can involve gleaning information from class teachers and their assistants and from parents. Lists of questions for this purpose are provided, and other techniques (such as the drawing of a family tree to explore attachment patterns) are suggested. The issue of confidentiality and its very real limits when dealing with minors in a school setting is wisely discussed, although the problems posed when the child specifically asks that it parents *not* be informed about the therapy are not adequately addressed. This is important, for if the child (rather than the parents or the school) is seen to be the client, their wishes in this matter can not be lightly overruled.

Issues of boundaries and confidentiality feature in chapters 11 and 12, where Reva Klein and Angie Doran provide helpful guidance for meetings with parents, carers and teachers. This includes vignettes of situations in which reassurance and support are needed, and/or in which teachers' expectations and parents' attitudes to therapy threaten progress. Chapters 13 and 14 (by French and Klein respectively) look in detail at informing the young person about the first session and the proceedings of the first session itself. Again, helpful forms of words and study questions based on

interesting vignettes highlight the practicalities, as is the case in the short chapter by Klein which looks at the management of the therapeutic frame (Chapter 16). In chapter 15, Akin Ojumu looks at cultural, racial and gender differences, how these are experienced by the child or young person, and how they may impact upon the therapy. The key concepts of *projection*, *transference* and *counter-transference* are here applied to the challenges for the therapist in understanding and empathizing with a child whose cultural experiences are very different from her own, and within which prejudices and stereotypes must be noticed and explored.

While *all* chapters in this book are important, none is more so than chapter 17, for it is here that the spotlight falls on the perilous business of role-negotiation when faced with the conflicting expectations of teachers and clients within the structure and culture of the school as an institution. Angie Doran argues that the therapist must achieve an appreciation by staff and pupils of her 'out-of-the-ordinary' role as 'working *alongside*' rather than *from within* the system' (p.171), and what this implies for confidentiality, handling disclosures and safeguarding children. There are vignettes, study questions and sample responses. Examples are given of end-of-therapy reports for primary and secondary pupils, and these would impress school staff who read them, justifying the time spent out of class for therapy sessions. However, I have a niggling worry that there are dangers in recording quite this much detail, even if the report is accessible only on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Part III ends, appropriately enough, with a consideration by French of the ending process. Getting the ending of the therapy right is extremely important, resonating as it will with significant attachments and more- or less traumatic endings and losses experienced by the client earlier in their lives. The excellent summary of the theory informing the practice could usefully be read in preparation not just for work in schools, but for work in *any* therapeutic setting.

Part IV is entitled: 'Monitoring and Evaluation', with chapters by Putzu-Williams and French respectively. The first: 'Writing Case-Notes', might just as well have been called 'Making Best Use of Supervision', for there is as much about the latter as the former. Having appropriate case-notes for discussion with one's supervisor is important, as is the distinction between factual records and the 'process notes' in which the therapist records her own feelings, reflections and queries. The final chapter focuses on evaluating the therapy service provided through schools, and in the 'audit culture' of accountability in which we live, it is certainly important that we are able to do so. Measurement of outcomes does not sit easily in some counselling modalities, but an evidence base is necessary if a service is to be able to satisfy its employers (or funding bodies) that it is 'working'. To this end, French includes pre- and post-therapy questionnaires for use with primary and secondary schools students, and there are exemplar extracts from sessions in which they are used. The author shows that these instruments should not be followed slavishly or necessarily completed in a the first session, but can be used to good effect as an integral part of the counselling process over several meetings.

In their brief Afterword, the editors repeat that their aim was not 'to add to the rich collection of theoretical literature that already exists.....[but]...to present a 'tool-kit' combining descriptions of the practice of therapy with study guidelines or questions to support therapists beginning their work in schools ...' (pp.230-231). This they have done, but while the book may not contribute to the discipline of psychotherapy *per se*, it is actually rich in theory. Indeed, its success is in no small measure due to the way that the relevant theory is established in the early chapters and consistently and thoughtfully applied in the more practical sections that follow.

This book will be of immense value to trained therapists preparing to work in schools. It is not, of course, a 'DIY' manual for the untrained, but as a resource for programmes of initial training and

continuing professional development, it is highly commendable. If I have a reservation at all, it is that the complexities of dealing with confidentiality when working with young people, especially those at risk of abuse and self-harm (see, for example, p.226), have not been examined as fully as they might. But that is a minor reservation about what I feel to be in all other respects, an excellent contribution to the field.

References

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