

medical staff, and helpfully comments on the applicable law which is always a welcome bit of revision. The authors also helpfully discuss the prevention and management of violence with reference to the community, adults and older adults and those with intellectual disability, but opted not to discuss the management of violence in children which would have been useful. Each chapter contains a helpful summary, and as such makes this book practical as a quick reference guide.

In summary, this is a very useful guide for all professionals having to deal with violence. It is clear and accessible, and written in a very understandable way, avoiding being focused towards solely medical staff. There are places for this to go though should a second edition be published, for example further information on the management of violence in children, and an entirely pedantic point is the use of 'service user' which ought to now be replaced with the much more sensible 'patient'. Overall, one can learn a lot from this book and easily apply it to everyday practice.

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Play: Experimental Methodologies in Developmental and Therapeutic Settings

Edited by Shubada Maitra & Shekhar Seshadri
Orient Blackswan Private Ltd, 2012, \$29.95 (pb), 264 pp.
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Play matters. Not just to beleaguered parents who are glad of a break while their offspring are self-entertaining, but to children, to those who work with them and to those who study them.

Because play matters, I have been putting off writing this review until I found something positive to say. I have found something favourable, but rather like the book itself, you have to read a lot else to discover it.

My first gripe with this book is the subtitle: 'Experimental Methodologies in Developmental and Therapeutic Settings'.

Readers of this journal know an experiment is a study of cause and effect. It differs from non-experimental methods in that it involves the deliberate manipulation of one variable, while trying to keep all other variables constant. There are no experimental methodologies described in this book. These are many anecdotes, case studies and reports of interventions that, by their nature, do not include standardised interventions or measures which would allow them to be easily repeated. A more accurate subtitle would be 'Global clinical experience and qualitative participative methods'.

My second quibble is with this book's use of the term 'play'. Throughout the text, play means so many disparate things, which are sometimes used as synonyms when they ought not to be. 'Play' encompasses working with creative arts, using child-friendly assessment tools, exploring displacement using puppets, observing children with dolls, engaging them with games and using drama as an educational tool in a school campaign to combat sexism. To add confusion, some definitions of play are offered at the beginning of the book and then not referred to again.

This book could have been a rich, intercultural discourse from places as diverse as Kolkata, Mumbai, Egypt, Barbados, Tanzania and Montenegro. If this multi-author text had been skillfully edited, it probably would have been. Instead, lengthy, meandering paragraphs and sudden lurches between conceptual models, history and accounts of projects are hard to read. Imagine arriving at an art gallery where paintings are strewn haphazard over the floor, rather than hung.

The gem? Chapter 5 on story stems as assessment tools. Narrative story stems are an evidence-based assessment of attachment of children, using storytelling assisted by doll play. It has been validated by a number of research studies and can be used with preschool children and those in their early school years.

The rest of the book often reads more like a set of assembly instructions: 'it is critical to enter [children's] inner world and identify the key connect points'. Play might be a lot of things, but it shouldn't be such hard work.

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