

Book Review

Albert E. Trieschman, James K. Whittaker and Larry K. Brendtro Piscataway, (1962). The Other 23 Hours. New Jersey, Aldine Transaction, 240pp. ISBN 0202260860 £19.99

K. Brendtro, attempts to provide a framework for understanding and using the milieu as a therapeutic tool that helps to support, nourish and assist with vulnerable and traumatised children's development. Within the book the milieu is described as the surroundings or environment in which the children and young people live. The authors work from the premise that 'the action of adults with children and the adults' control of the environment can be co-ordinated to improve children's lives' (p.1). The majority of the observations came from the Walker Home for Children in Massachusetts. The authors described this home as a residential centre for 'severely disturbed, acting-out boys' (p.xii).

The book is broken down into nine chapters, each focusing on a different aspect or period within the residential childcare setting. There are, however, two very dominant themes throughout the book. The first theme focuses on how the residential worker, the environment and the daily routines can be used to create a therapeutic milieu. The second theme of the book attempts to explore and explain the children's behaviour and the therapeutic relationship between child and worker.

Being a complete novice in the residential child care field, I found the first chapter very enlightening, particularly as it provides an explanation as to what is meant by a therapeutic milieu. It also provides theories on how children learn and the promotion of alternative behaviours. As such, this chapter does set the scene for the rest of the book. Chapter Two focuses on relationships, the importance they have within this setting and how the worker's relationship with them can facilitate learning for the child. The following chapters concentrate on how the day-to-day living within a residential unit can promote a therapeutic milieu by focusing on specific periods. These cover programmed activities, and dealing with, managing and supporting children with a number of routines throughout their day (specifically the mornings, mealtimes and bedtime).

Another important chapter was the final one, as it focuses on residential workers and how they contribute to the milieu. Some of the highlighted factors which influence the residential worker's role include the institution's policies and procedures, how they satisfy their superiors, gaining the acceptance of co-workers and the young people they support, being consistent and true to their values and beliefs and having a much more thorough input from the institute's hierarchy.

A positive aspect of the book was the practice examples offered. After the introduction of a new concept or theory the authors followed with an example or illustration of how it could be applied using real life scenarios. Firstly, they provided instances of how the child reacted, engaged or behaved in a challenging manner. They then followed with solutions offered by the residential worker to promote alternative behaviour. This allowed me to

fully understand how and when it was appropriate to apply the theories. Being a pragmatist learner, I like to have the opportunity to practise and apply theories in real-life situations. Being given these examples really helped my understanding and knowledge to grow.

My concern with the book is that it takes a psychodynamic approach to the child's development and this could frighten a number of residential workers as this can be a very complex theory to grasp without further exploration. The book continually discusses the development and repairing of the child's ego, without really providing an explanation of what this means. This may leave the residential worker with more questions than answers. Also the language at times felt crude and inappropriate. However, the book was published over forty years ago and I assume this language reflects the time and place.

Having said that, practitioners new to the residential field would find this a worthwhile read as it illustrates and provides solutions for day-to-day occurrences within the child care setting. For the more experienced practitioners it could be used as a refresher. Not only does it provide lots of examples of good practice, it is also very accessible reading.

Kirsty Hamilton, Student,

BA (Hons) in Social Work,

Residential Child Care Pathway Glasgow School of Social Work