

that besiege the African family, and the enormous and growing threat that African children are currently confronted with. Most important, the authors give a welcome and unequivocal emphasis to a child-centred perspective that encompasses all aspects of what we normally think of as "development work".

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**Faces in the Revolution: The Psychological Effects of Violence on Township Youth in South Africa**, Gillian Straker with Fathima Moosa, Rise Becker, and Madiyoyo Nkwale, Cape Town: David Philip and Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992 (156 pp). ISBN: 0-86486-203-2 (David Phillip); ISBN: 0-8214-1040-7 (Ohio Univ) No price listed.

Through the use of composite vignettes based on extensive interviews with 60 girls and boys, ages 12-22, Gillian Straker brings into clear telephoto view some of the psychological struggles of youth engaged in the fight against apartheid during the mid-1980s in Leandra, South Africa.

Straker's analysis seeks to shed light on the diversity of trauma experienced by youth, to explore the self-perception of youth, and to examine the psychological resilience and vulnerabilities of the youth within a war context. In addition, she addresses the important question of whether violence begets violence.

The book represents scholarly, clinical research done in the real world. The method is a qualitative case-study approach involving over 300 hours of audio tapes. The vignettes themselves are masterful compilations of individual experiences. An initial reading of the appendix serves to orient readers concerned with methodological issues. The experiences of the youth, which form the basis of Straker's analysis, are presented in six well-organised chapters. The theoretical underpinnings are wide-ranging, from the political analysis of Fanon (1963), to the mythological focus of Campbell (1956), to more psychological theories of behaviour and group process (Slater, 1966; Anthony, 1987; Bion, 1961).

Following violent confrontations with authorities in the Leandra Township, a group of youth fled to the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre seeking shelter. The author was part of a counselling team called on to provide services to the youth. The data were collected during the initial stay of the youth at the Centre and during follow-up interviews conducted with 40% of the youth three years later. Straker's focus is on the individual and psychological, the boys and girls; nonetheless, she is careful to stress the powerful impact of war and poverty on the psychological development of these youth.

Through her eyes we come to see the force exerted by the context on their lives and behaviour (Chapter 1), their own unique individual resilience (Chapter 2), and vulnerabilities - vulnerabilities which some seem unlikely to escape (Chapter 3). We see Ricky, Isaac, Pretty, Silas, and others like them, as individuals, members of both functional and dysfunctional families, leaders, followers, freedom fighters, opportunists, casualties, victims and survivors of trauma and poverty. We come to understand the youth, some of the issues faced by the staff of the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre and group process as it unfolds within the Centre.

As other researchers have pointed out, children, regardless of the roles thrust upon them by war, are still children and need nurturance, protection and guidance from the family, community and state. We are reminded that as adolescents, these youth must face developmental issues of identity formation, individuation and belonging, but they must do so in a context that simultaneously demands of them the integration of opposing peacetime and wartime identities.

Straker articulates several groupings of the youth based on multi-modal reference points: observations of the youth by staff, counsellors and other youth; self-perceptions by the youth concerning their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour; and their reflections on these at follow-up three years later. Her analysis is compelling. She has integrated relevant psychological literature without losing sight of the experiences of the youth under study. This makes the book solidly-grounded and, importantly, highly readable and accessible to a wide audience.

The groupings distilled from the data highlight the range of meaning that may be given to objectively similar acts of violence in the context of war and the complexity of understanding the psychological effects of violence on youth. While the topologies of groupings are a point of departure and will help to guide future research, it is clear that they are fluid categories; Straker rightly avoids the tendency to simplify rich experience into tightly-bound categories or topologies.

In Chapter 6 Straker focuses on the future and the need for healing. There is a tone of guarded optimism and an informed awareness of the need for multi-modal interventions that build and support the family, community as well as the youth as individuals. Deep changes will need to occur on social and political levels if the root causes of conflict and racial hatred are to be truly addressed. South Africa must educate itself in tolerance and peace.

An urgent question, and one which Straker herself briefly addresses in the final chapter, is the need to systematically examine the effects of violence and racial hatred on South Africa's white youth. These are issues that necessarily verge on the political. However, as researchers, practitioners and professionals we must be careful as we investigate the victim's responses, not to perpetuate unwittingly the acceptance of a violent system, by not being equally attentive to the destructive consequences of violence for all members of a society.

In summary, true to its purpose, the book provides a striking view of the faces in the revolution. Through the particulars, Straker provides insight into the general, which both enriches the field at a theoretical level and guides it at the level of clinical and community intervention. Her analysis inspires us to action and conveys the reality that there is plenty of work to be done as mental health workers, researchers, social service workers, policy makers, and community activists.

## References

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**Refugee Women**, Susan Forbes Martin, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1991, 140 pp. (ISBN: 1-85649-001-7). Price £10.95.

This book introduces the reader to the situation of refugee women from various parts of the world and the problems that they face and on a day-to-day basis. She 'sets the scene' by introducing the reader to the whole question of the refugee problem and also gives statistics on refugees. The second chapter addresses the crucial issue that faces any refugee: the changing of roles that occurs when people move from their own countries or homes. The third chapter focuses on what can be done to provide safety to refugee women, including obtaining refugee status.

The fourth and fifth chapters focus on the provision of basic services such as food, water and education and the involvement of refugee women in economic activities. Chapter six looks at what the author calls "durable solutions" for those who have been forced to leave their homes, and the options that are available to them. While some refugees are lucky to be resettled in other countries within their regions, some find themselves in developed countries where they have to cope with new ways of living. The author successfully draws attention to the problems that these refugees may face. Finally she outlines what the United Nations bodies have