

BOOK REVIEWS/REVUE DE LIVRES

THE ADOLESCENT PREDICAMENT

By John J. Mitchell, Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975. Pp. 246 plus bibliography and index. Reviewed by J. W. Vargo, Department of Psychology, John Abbott College, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec.

The adolescent predicament is defined as "a disorder which comes about when a person who considers himself important is expected to *comply* without having the right to *contribute* (p. 1, original italics)". The focal theme of this book is that our society fosters and prolongs adolescent predicaments largely because we will not entertain the notion that adolescents are adults. It is Mitchell's view that traditional theories of adolescence are mere shells of what is needed to comprehend the adolescent experience. In his words, "To properly understand adolescent predicaments we must hold a general *philosophy* of youth . . . (p. 6, original italics)". That is precisely what the book attempts to offer.

Four major adolescent predicaments are postulated: the moral predicament, the biological predicament, the peer predicament, and the worth predicament. The moral predicament centers around what is right and what is wrong from the standpoint of the individual (existential moral predicament) and the culture in which he lives (societal moral predicament). The biology predicament stems from the interaction between physiological stresses of growing up and psychological pressures imposed by society. The peer predicament refers to the following: "*Adolescents cannot grow and relate without peers, neither can they avoid the rejection and evaluation inherent within peer gatherings* (p. 147, original italics)". The worth predicament develops when adolescents, who have a strong need to feel worthwhile, are afforded little opportunity to engage in activities which foster a sense of worth.

What happens if a predicament is not resolved? Given certain conditions, predicaments degenerate into "the involvement crisis" which may take one or more of three forms: belief crisis, relatedness crisis, meaning crisis. The belief crisis exists when adolescents have a need to believe that life is worth living but have little to believe in. If accompanied by overwhelming anxiety, the belief crisis may deteriorate into

"psychogenic nihilism", an all encompassing lack of belief that renders the individual incapable of coping with reality. The relatedness crisis occurs when people are unable to relate to others in ways which satisfy the needs for belonging, esteem, and love, and, if prolonged, can lead to anomie. The meaning crisis prevails when the need for relevance is frustrated; the ensuing sense of purposelessness can regress into apathy and neurosis.

The "general philosophy of youth" proposed here is a need theory. The predicaments and crises are outgrowths of unfulfilled needs — deficiency needs in Maslow's terms. In other words, if the needs remain unmet, the result is some form of predicament, crisis, or psychopathology. Mitchell literally catalogues a number of such needs. Among the list: need for self-importance, need to make significant contributions, need for introspection, need to sample identities, need to make a difference, need to assert oneself, need to give and receive intimacy, need for recognition, need to belong, need for esteem, and need for affiliation.

To summarize: Adolescents have various deficiency needs. Due to a number of circumstances, particularly the fact that our society keeps adolescents dependent, many (most?) of these needs are not fulfilled. Result: adolescent predicaments (can be serious psychologically) and/or crises (extremely serious psychologically), the latter often leading to, or manifesting themselves in, psychopathology.

At its best the book is lucid and insightful; at its worst conjectural and pedantic. First the good news. The book meets the challenge of developing a philosophy of youth. Many of the arguments are logical and persuasive, and Mitchell is particularly adept at reasoning by analogy. In epistemological terms, the epistemologies most often utilized are rationalism (logic) and metaphoricism (intuition and insight).

The weakness of the book is its nondisciplined application of another epistemology crucial to any sound scientific endeavor: empiricism. Much of the book sounds definitive largely because hypotheses and speculations are stated as given. For example, no supporting evidence is given for such proclamations as:

1. ". . . the *primary* reason adolescents are not given the opportunity to do important work: adults unconsciously *fear* ascribing adult status to teen-agers (p. 46, original italics)".

2. "If one causes a person *not* to make a difference, one contributes to the victim's psychological death (p. 55, original italics)".

3. "The search for the 'peak experience' is the motivating force behind more youth behavior than psychologists, educators, and government officials are able to recognize (p. 84)".

Of course, just because evidence for such statements is lacking does not mean that the statements are false. They may in fact be true; for example, there is evidence in support of statement number 2 in the research conducted

on learned helplessness by Martin Seligman. The point is that research reported in professional journals is an important resource that Mitchell has not utilized. Consider: the bibliography cites 93 references; of these five are articles published since 1970; and of these five articles, four appeared in books. Only one periodical reference was published since 1970 (an article on alienation which appeared in the August 1974 issue of *Scientific American*).

Do not be misled by this criticism. Although the book may be better philosophy than science, a thread of excitement links its pages, particularly the last chapter on "some suggested solutions . . . for 'The Adolescent Predicament'". Here is a theory of adolescence that may be worth a rigorous empirical test.

THE "JOB FINDER" IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

By S. Norman Feingold and Fae E. Hoffman. Arlington, Mass.: Bellman Publishing Company, 1975. Pp. 40. Reviewed by George W. Fitzsimmons, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta.

How do you help your clients find a job? Do you role play the job interviews, interpret vocational interest test results or lead groups in vocational decision making? Whatever your system, I am sure you will welcome another approach to this developmental problem?

Feingold and Hoffman have published an interesting "How To Do It" manual for job seekers who have had little formal preparation for the task at hand. After admitting the majority of peoples first jobs are obtained through friends or relatives they move directly into helping the readers establish an understanding of the want ad system and how to search widely for opportunities in their areas of interest. Beside the daily newspaper they have listed over 500 magazines, journals and other periodicals in which employment opportunities are advertised. These titles are then subdivided into 60 major occupational groups ranging from *accounting* to *veterinary medicine*. As the reader may expect the majority of these periodicals and trade journals are written for well educated professionals in each occupational group with little assistance available for the unskilled and the semi-skilled. The authors conducted their search publications in the Washington D.C. area, consequently many of the resources have local addresses.

The remainder of the book appears to operate with the assumption that once the reader has found ads which he wishes to answer, he will need the guide offered in the *Job Finder*. Helpful

hints on how to answer help wanted ads are followed by a discussion of the preparation of the resume. While there is no one best method of teaching clients to prepare a resumé, *Job Finder* does outline essential contents including objectives, education experiences, employment records, special skills and references. The chapter could provide a good outline for a few group guidance classes.

The authors assume that accompanying the resume will be mailed a job letter. The chapter on the job letter discusses some writing etiquette and common sense statements like type the letter, be neat, do not have erasures and type on 8½ x 11 paper.

Many of the objectives of the foregoing have been presented by the authors in the hopes that the reader will obtain an interview. Assuming that they are seen by a personnel worker, they offer two pages of advice on filling out the application blank and then if that does not work a final chapter is provided on helping people write the "situation wanted" ad.

This little book does provide a helpful service in organizing one job hunting approach into a complete package. It will provide helpful ideas for teachers of group guidance in using a newspaper and other periodicals when searching for employment. The main inconsistency within the book is that the periodicals listed are for professional occupations and yet the authors claim that there are as many opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled job seekers using this system. If Canada Manpower is operating Job Search training programs in your school, you may wish to have a second series of lessons based on topics such as those covered in the *Job Finder, It Pays To Advertise*.