

BOOK REVIEWS / REVUE DE LIVRES

List of Reviewers

BLAKE G. FORD
Pupil Personnel Services
Burnaby, B.C.

LARRY EBERLEIN
University of Alberta

J. W. VARGO
University of Alberta

BOOK REVIEW

Transactional Analysis with Children, Norman E. Amundson, University of British Columbia: Faculty of Education, 1976, 97 pp., \$5.00.

Reviewed by:

Blake G. Ford
Supervisor — Pupil Personnel Services
School District No. 41
Burnaby, B.C.

Human relations training programs have been appearing in elementary schools with increasing frequency. Their development represents a comparatively recent addition to traditional counselling services provided by school guidance personnel. *Transactional Analysis with Children* reflects this shift in emphasis from service to program in what may be described as an unpretentious but serious contribution to the gradually increasing number of programs that fall within the area of psychological or affective education. The T.A.C. program is designed to help children between the ages of 8 and 12 "improve their self-concept, enhance interpersonal relationships, and increase understanding of self and others" (p. 1). Content divides into four major sections: transactional analysis concepts; intervention strategies; program description and evaluative research; and lesson plans with follow-up activities.

The book opens with a straightforward explanation of basic transactional analysis concepts. Human behavior is described in terms of ego states. Our need to obtain strokes, structure time, and affirm our concepts of self and others influence our interpersonal relationships. Problems occur when we seek to meet needs in devious ways (games).

Amundson moves from basic concepts to intervention strategies. This section is essentially an integration of psychological principles and teaching methods which need to be considered in the process of using the program.

In anticipation of the inevitable question regarding the efficacy of the program, the author reports findings of a research study designed to evaluate outcomes of a four week program in which 30 teachers used the T.A.C. procedures and materials. One aspect of the study hypothesized increases in children's internal locus of control, self-esteem, and peer acceptance. The results indicate a statistically significant positive change in self-esteem and peer acceptance. Although internality/externality scores were in the predicted direction, they did not reach significance.

In the reviewer's opinion, the strength of the T.A.C. program derives from the lessons that appear in the final section of the book. The objectives, materials, posters, role play experiences, stories, charts and exercises combine to form an integrated, directional sequence of activities aimed at better self-understanding and improved interpersonal relations. The emphasis throughout is on student activity and involvement. As the author states, "we cannot teach children about acting and interacting if we do not allow them the freedom to do just that" (p. 37).

At its best, the book is succinct and cohesive; at its worst, superficial and limited. First some warm fuzzies. Amundson presents a thoroughly concise and lucid description of ego states and has successfully translated these concepts into terms that are understandable to pre-adolescent children. The program is recommended on the basis of empirical data, and the lessons are sufficiently flexible to allow for a variety of teaching styles and learning contexts.

As for cold pricklies, the book lacks breadth and is likely at times to leave the uninitiated transactional analysis reader searching for behavioral illustrations that exemplify the concepts being discussed. The author's discussion on intervention techniques is the weakest part of the book. Although he effectively synthesizes teaching method with transactional analysis concepts, behavioral principles and com-

munication skills, the section is vulnerable in that some techniques are dealt with in an excessively cursory manner which could result in their inappropriate use by inexperienced group leaders. Finally, and at the risk of closing on a pedantic point, the printing and format could be improved significantly.

The criticism does not by any means outweigh the value of the book. The author has developed a delightfully positive program that is effective, inexpensive, and enjoyable.

Legal Challenges to Behavior Modification Trends in Schools, Corrections and Mental Health, Reed Martin, Champaign, Illinois: Research Press, 1975, 179 pp., \$5.95.

Reviewed by:

Larry Eberlein
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta

One of the most rapidly developing areas in American law is the relationship of the law to psychological and counselling services and the rights of consumers to the protection of the law when staff of public institutions tinker with human behavior. Whenever people are confined or required to attend an institution (schools, correctional facilities, hospitals or other mental health units) all the programs are designed in some way to modify behavior. This book then speaks to all participants in these programs and not only to those involved in a so-called "behavior modification" program.

The citation of legal authority in the book reflects mostly lower court decisions which are probably in keeping with the tenor of our times and the spirit of the recent Supreme Court decisions. The author speaks of *trends* in the law and encourages consumers to "raise many questions about a proposed program — not to defeat efforts at treatment, but rather to make it the very best possible."

The key to reading the book for a person concerned but without special background in law and ethics lies in the questions asked at the end of each chapter. The book follows the logic of a treatment program and discusses in turn the decision to intervene; the client consent required; the strategy and goals set by the institution and therapist; the problem of motivation and the requirements of accountability, including supervision, control and records. The following represents a small sampling of questions that the author raises about each aspect of a treatment program. It is recommended that every practitioner apply the majority of these questions and the 100 others in the book to their own personal and institutional programs:

Are the rules under which you operate written down in objective terms? (p. 16)

If you use psychotherapy, can you show positive progress after a period of, for example, six months, in case a court inquires? (p. 56)

Does the goal involve changing a behavior that is actually constitutionally permissible? (p. 70)

Could you explain to a court, in terms of effectiveness, the difference between your aversive strategy and punishment? (p. 87)

Is information obtained without violating the privacy of the potential client? (p. 124)

The answer of the practitioner, whether yes or no, should lead that individual to inquire about *why* the answer is important — thus, the value for every "helper" working in the public sector.

The Structure of Magic I: A Book About Language and Therapy, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1975, 225 pp., \$7.95.

Reviewed by:

J. W. Vargo
Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine
University of Alberta

If you have ever had the good fortune to watch master therapists such as Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers, or Virginia Satir work with clients, you probably marvelled at their artistic wizardry in fostering productive change. In *Magic I*, Bandler and Grinder attempt to make explicit, the verbal tools and techniques that are implicit in the methods of successful therapists. Although nonverbal behavior is very important in psychotherapy, the authors stress that this book deals with verbal communication only. (They are presently working on a companion volume which will deal with nonverbal techniques).

The model presented (called a Meta-model) is based on the principles of language documented by linguists, particularly those in the field of linguistics known as transformational grammar. Briefly stated, this approach states that language provides us with a shorthand for describing experience and, further, that the shorthand we use *necessarily* distorts the experience. However, the distortion is not a problem in itself: the problem arises when we come to believe that the shorthand expression of the experience *is* the experience. More specifically, the major postulates of the Meta-model, as applied to psychotherapy, are as follows:

1. Each of us creates a representation or model of the world in which we live.
2. The model is based on our experiences.
3. The model is expressed in language.