

Book Review

Book Title

Sköld, J., & Swain, S. (Eds.), (2015). *Apology and the legacy of abuse of children in 'Care'*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dr Hawthorn reviewed her personal copy of this book.

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I firstly have to acknowledge some interest in this book as I co-authored two chapters. In saying that, I have also found it very helpful in my own work in this field.

While there has been recognition over the years that some children have been unsafe in residential care (Kendrick and Hawthorn, 2012), until the late 1980s, there was little public awareness of the abuse of children in public care. Since then there has been a myriad of inquiry reports, media articles and academic writing on the subject, both within the UK and internationally. This compilation is however a useful addition to the literature in that it locates historical institutional abuse within the field of transitional justice and examines investigation, apology and redress in respect of historical abuse of children in care across Western countries in the last 20 years.

The publication is an edited collection of chapters drawing on a wide range of experience; care leavers advocates, historians, archivists, museum professionals, social workers, academics, lawyers and psychologists who have been involved in practice or research in respect of apology and redress processes in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland and Sweden. The breadth of knowledge, skill and experience among the contributors indicates the importance of inter-professional collaboration in understanding historical abuse of children in 'care'. There are three sections;

Transitional Justice and the Legacy of Child Welfare; National Particularities and Challenges for Professionals. This provides a helpful coherence to a publication that could otherwise become a series of fragmented essays.

The international nature of the publication gives an opportunity to compare and contrast approaches. This also helps in the process of critically reflecting on the cultural context of historical child abuse within the UK as we learn about child care practices historically across Europe and other Western countries. Possibly not surprisingly, this often involves groups of children who were marginalised and ostracised because of national priorities at the time. The Child Migrant Scheme in the UK can then be seen in the context of the removal of groups of children from indigenous families in Norway, Australia and Canada with the aim of assimilating them into the dominant mainstream by eradicating parental and community involvement in their development. Issues of morality also emerge. The children of German occupying soldiers and Norwegian mothers found themselves 'excluded, stigmatized, abused and marginalised in relation to education, health and work opportunities' (Ellingsen, 2004 in Simonsen and Pettersen, 2015, p.118). Many were separated from their families and placed in institutions while others 'judged to be of sufficient biological quality' were placed for adoption (Simonsen and Pettersen, 2015, p.118). This may be surprising to some considering the progressive child protection legislation in Norway since the early 20th century.

This book would be of interest to students, academics and the range of professionals now involved in supporting survivors of historical institutional abuse in the process of completing their personal narrative and accessing justice.

About the author

Moyra has worked for many years as a social worker, residential practitioner and manager, and in therapeutic work with traumatised children and their families. Her research interests include hearing the voices of disabled children and looked after children through creative activities and projects. Since 2005, Moyra has worked along with survivors of institutional abuse and other stakeholders to

develop An Action Plan on Justice for Victims of Historical Abuse of Children in Care.

References

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Simonsen, E., & Pettersen, K. (2015). The politics of apology: The Norwegian case. In J. Sköld & S. Swain (Eds.), *Apology and the legacy of abuse of children in 'Care'*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.