The most striking thing to emerge out of Touch papers is the disparity between what is done in sessions and what might be acknowledged openly: apparently many esteemed practitioners allow or initiate contact with patients, but would never discuss this with colleagues, students, or supervisors.

In the end, this book does what it sets out to do: it provides the range of insights needed to start questioning a century-old taboo. Touch papers: Dialogues on touch in the psychoanalytic space may not contain debates between its contributors, but this volume stimulates an internal dialogue in the psychodynamic reader who wants to open up an internal space recognizing the importance of and the difficulties inherent in touch within the consulting room.

Reference

Art therapy with children: From infancy to adolescence, edited by Caroline Case & Tessa Dalley, London, Routledge, 2007, 266 pp., £60 (hardback), £20.00 (paperback)

This book provides an engaging overview of the innovative practice of art therapists currently working with children, young people and their families in the UK. This selection of frank, pragmatic accounts, describe examples of clinical practice which address both the benefits and the challenges of working therapeutically in organizations with other professionals who may have very different tasks and approaches. In the process, the therapeutic work with children and young people is situated in the wider socio-political context of Every child matters (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003), which outlines aims and outcomes and the requirement that professionals work together to support children and young people to meet these.

The book is edited by Case and Dalley, who have both written extensively on work with children and young people – Working with children in art therapy (1990) was a core text in the field and has provided much inspiration, both for trainee and qualified art therapists.
Art therapy with children: From infancy to adolescence provides a much-needed update, outlining changes and developments in how art therapists are working and thinking about their practice. The Introduction provides an overview of current research and theories of child development, looking in turn at each stage of development (pregnancy, infancy and through to adolescence). The chapters that follow present case studies which illustrate ways of working with these successive stages – Chapters 1–3 look at attachment relationships and how research in neuroscience has impacted upon our understanding of early infancy; Chapters 4–5 look at work in primary schools addressing issues arising from the experience of latency; Chapters 6–7 explore the transition from primary to secondary school and Chapters 8–13 address work with young people. The writers follow a similar structure – introduction to the work which is being presented and the occupational setting in which it takes place; a brief background of this kind of work; a literature review and theoretical background that provides evidence to support the approach used; clinical case studies, interspersed with the relevant literature and research that the therapist is using to make sense of what has happened in the room and then some conclusions that can be drawn from the material presented. A useful list of resources for further reading on specific clinical areas and settings is included at the end of the book.

Hall describes her work in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), in ‘Painting together, an art therapy approach to mother-infant relationships’. She describes running groups with depressed mothers and their young children, in order to attend to and develop the mother-child relationship through primarily non-verbal means. She reports the impact of the groups, which reveal how ‘interest is awakened and relationships strengthened when parents and other family members, or carers join with children to work creatively together’ (p. 21). Hall has used many models to think about and understand her work over the years, but has found a strong theoretical basis for her approach in research into child development (Stern, 1985) and neurobiology (Schore, 1994).

O’Brien reports how early relational trauma can be transmitted through the generations in a family, in ‘Attachment patterns through the generations: Internal and external homes’. O’Brien presents an innovative use of simultaneous individual work in a CAMHS setting with a grandmother and her grandson, thinking about the challenges and benefits of working in this way. She looks at the importance of being in a relationship for the infant’s developing brain. She also discusses the implication of developments in neuroscience; an understanding of the impact that psychotherapy interventions can have on a child’s development.

Boronska outlines her work in social services with a group of siblings in ‘I’m the king of the castle: The sibling bond – art therapy groups with siblings in care’. She discusses the bond between siblings and the
support that working with a group of siblings, with shared experiences, can bring to each child. She notes the importance for the professional of working with the wider team to stay abreast of changes in the children’s lives.

Dalley writes about her work in CAMHS with two young boys, who used clay in very different ways to express pre-verbal feelings of grief and loss, in ‘The use of clay as a medium for working through loss and separation in the case of two latency boys’. She explores the impact of bereavement on a mother’s ability to respond to subsequent children and the effect that this can have on each child.

Reddick outlines his work with groups in ‘Working with the whole class in primary schools’. His model of whole-class working allows the group dynamics to be brought into awareness, which can lead to a shift in the way a class functions as well as providing teachers with more understanding of psychodynamic processes.

Case shares her work using play in a CAMHS setting to reach a dyspraxic child in ‘Playing ball – oscillations within the potential space’. Her creative interventions allow the dynamic process of being in a relationship to be explored, while providing enough support for the child to begin to develop a sense of playfulness.

Patterson describes her work as part of a service for autism, in ‘From beanie to boy’. She looks at ways in which the therapist can enter the world of an autistic child and thinks about the challenges for the therapist of working with concomitant feelings of paralysis and frustration.

Damarell and Paisley discuss the difficulties that children with learning difficulties can have growing up, in ‘Growing up can be so hard to do: The role of art therapy during crucial life transitions and change in the lives of children with learning disabilities’. They describe partnership work between a school and a CAMHS/learning disability service from the perspective of supervisor and therapist.

Retford-Muir thinks about her work in a therapeutic community for looked-after children, describing a young man’s exploration of his sexuality, in ‘Gender disorder in the treatment of a young person in care’.

Tipple reports on brief art therapy from his work in a paediatric disability service, in ‘Paranoia and paracosms – brief art therapy with a youngster with Asperger’s syndrome’. He acknowledges the need to address the ‘medical, neurological and cognitive discourses that relate to autism’ (p. 176), while also holding in mind the psychodynamic approach to understanding the processes in the room. Tipple describes the difficulty of exploring the transference and counter-transference when there are few clear expressions of feeling from the client. He suggests close observation and a need for the therapist to be active, both to bring the child back into transference contact and to mobilize the therapist’s own suspended attention. Tipple provides an engagingly honest account of the difficulties
for a therapist of working within the rigid structures that clients’ with Asperger’s Syndrome may bring to therapy.

Welsby vividly describes the history of the development of the art therapy service in which she works, in ‘Seen and unseen: Art therapy in a girls’ comprehensive school’. She reflects on case work with adolescent girls, busy with ‘the search for, and the formation of, identity’ (p. 196). She believes that for some school can provide a ‘good-enough, facilitating environment’ that can go ‘some way in compensating for deficiencies in other areas of the girls’ lives’ (p. 197).

Dalley considers her work with anorexic patients and their families in ‘I wonder if I exist?’. A multi-family approach to the treatment of anorexia in adolescence. She works in a multi-disciplinary CAMHS team. She notes that ‘enmeshment between mother and daughter is a common dynamic in the aetiology and persistence of this pervasive disorder’ (p. 215), which can be seen as an attempt to defend against or reject maternal projections. She describes the use of clay work, exploring its capacity to clarify the precarious sense of self of the anorexic and relationships within the family. She notes the efficacy of art therapy in relation to this client group, as forming a relationship with the artwork can be a step toward developing a relationship ‘first with the self and then with another’ (p. 219).

Meyerowitz-Katz looks at the experience of working with young people in private practice in ‘Other people have a secret that I do not know’: Art psychotherapy in private practice with an adolescent girl with Asperger’s syndrome. She views art-making as a shared experience between art therapist and client, which can foster the child’s development of an internal space in which emotional experience can be processed. The impact on the family is discussed, as well as the need to address the family’s feelings of exhaustion, despair and loss. She discusses the advantages of the more personal environment that is possible in private practice, which offers an ordinary context and the benefits that can be had from twice-weekly sessions.

This collection of work will give a useful overview to both students and therapists who are interested in developing their work with children. It will also provide a rich resource for experienced art therapists, who find themselves addressing a new range of social and cultural issues in Britain. The different writers provide much evidence of creativity in their way of working and conceiving of their work with children and young people – those moments when, in response to the client, the therapist surprises himself or herself with an intervention that pushes the boundaries of psychodynamic art psychotherapy. Many areas are explored which have not been addressed in art therapy literature previously: work with mothers and babies, working with siblings, work with members of the same family to address attachment disorders, gender disorder and multi-family work.
The mix of theory and clinical case work allowed the writers to show how the developments in developmental psychology and neuroscience can inform clinical choices and elucidate behaviour seen in clinical practice.

As an art therapist working in inner city primary and secondary schools, I found that this book provided an inspiring and authentic portrayal of contemporary art therapy with children and young people. A minor irritation for the reader is the presence of several spelling mistakes in the text (e.g. ‘health’ on p.146). These can at times detract from the professionalism and complexity of the practice that is being described. I believe that Art therapy with children: From infancy to adolescence could provide a useful resource for all psychodynamic therapists working with children and young people, who face a growing need to present evidence for the efficacy of their work.

References

Claire-Louise Leyland
Young Forrest Therapeutic Service
Email: claire@whcm.org.uk
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Are we ashamed to talk about shame both socially and in our analytic work? In Western society it appears that to be shameless, with excessive displays of wealth and in the exposure of the body, has become the social norm. Television programmes such as ‘Big Brother’ exhibit shamelessness with glee. The latter is a perverse take on George Orwell’s novel 1984 in which Big Brother was ever-present, watching, shaming and thereby controlling his subjects.

This book, Shame and sexuality, suggests that the exploration of sexual shame as a psychological phenomenon has somehow slipped off the agenda. Phil Mollon, one of the contributors, states (p. 24) that ‘ironically, psychoanalysts today do not talk about sex very much – preferring instead to focus on issues of attachment, dependence, fears of abandonment, aggression and