



Book Reviews

Reviews Editor: Professor Helen Cowie, University of Surrey, UK

I would like to introduce myself as the new Book Reviews Editor for IJEE, a role that I am looking forward to very much. I have been reviewing books for the journal *Pastoral Care in Education* for a number of years and believe that this experience is highly relevant for readers of IJEE. I am in process of making contact with publishers to hear about their latest books in the field and plan to build up a team of reliable reviewers over time. If you have recently published a book, now is a good opportunity to have it reviewed either by myself or by an expert in your area; please contact me at h.cowie@surrey.ac.uk

**Helen Cowie
Reviews Editor**

1. *A Practitioner's Guide to Treating Female Genital Mutilation*

Author: Farah Nadeem
Publisher: We are human counselling publishing
Year of Publication: 2019
ISBN: 978-03680-226-6-1

This is a very timely book on a topic that concerns millions of women and girls worldwide. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) refers to all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Farah Nadeem's book describes the

experiences of psychotherapists who work with survivors of FGM and documents their feelings of guilt, sadness and anger. She gives moving accounts of the ways in which therapists can gain deeper understanding of the cultural contexts of the practice of FGM and can consider the best ways, including the sensitive use of language, in which to build trust with their clients. Most importantly, this book indicates how effectively therapists can improve their practice through heightened awareness of the trauma aspect of working with FGM clients and their willingness to seek out appropriate supervision and training.

She emphasises that it is essential to take account of the cultural aspects of the practice of FGM and, wherever possible, to train professionals from the community to act as advocates for FGM survivors, not only in order to identify appropriate interventions for those who have experienced the practice but also to empower them to protect their daughters.

As Farah Nadeem informs the reader, there is evidence that around 200 million girls and women in over 30 countries have experienced some form of FGM or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM causes immediate and long-term damage to health and emotional well-being across the lifespan. FGM is also linked to child marriage and forced sexual encounters. The procedure violates girls' and women's human rights, such as gender equality, the right to freedom from torture or cruel treatment and the rights of the child as proclaimed in the UN Convention on the rights of the Child.

As Farah Nadeem indicates, FGM is practised for a variety of social reasons, often because it is viewed as a core part of a community's culture and tradition, and as a rite of passage marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. Whatever the rationale, FGM is deeply embedded in certain cultures and consequently it is very difficult to eradicate. Laws against FGM exist in more than half of the countries where it is practised, as well as in countries with communities of immigrants from places where it is practised. However, as Farah Nadeem argues, it is essential to combine legal sanctions with education and community mobilisation.

Girls and women can achieve this in a range of ways by acquiring economic and extra-familial resources to enhance their voice or their capacity to make strategic life-choices. Investing in education for girls is crucial for enabling them to experience wider social customs, including norms of non-violence. Education also provides the potential for economic independence. Solidarity among peers can help in facilitating social change. Additionally, a community's investment in social infrastructures targeting girls can reduce inequalities in access to resources and opportunities. Preventing violence against girls and women has become a global priority embedded in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.

This pioneering book is essential reading for all those who work therapeutically with survivors of FGM as well as for those who work with children, whether as teachers, social workers, school nurses, doctors or youth and community workers.

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2. *Inventing Ourselves: the Secret Life of the Teenage Brain*

Author: Sarah-Jayne Blakemore
Publisher: Doubleday, New York
Year of Publication: 2018
ISBN: 978-161039-732-2

In this book, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, the eminent neuroscientist, explains in easy-to-understand terms how the adolescent brain changes as it develops into adulthood. She selects the latest findings in her field to demonstrate how the teenage brain differs from that of the child and explores such aspects of adolescence as mental health, risk-taking, vulnerability and creativity during this critical period.

As Blakemore indicates, immature prefrontal activity can hinder teenagers' estimates of future outcomes, especially when they are making decisions within an emotional context. So, the increase in risky behaviour and emotional reactivity in adolescence can result from an imbalance between sensation-seeking and the capacity for emotion regulation. Blakemore, using cutting-edge research findings from neuroscience, explains certain aspects of adolescent behaviour, including the heightened risk for young people of injury, self-harm and suicide, accidents, drug and alcohol misuse and involvement in violence and risky sexual behaviour.

She also indicates wide individual differences. In her words (page 2), "Adolescence isn't an aberration; it's a crucial stage of our becoming individual and social beings. I find teenage behaviour fascinating, but not because it's irrational - quite the opposite: because it gives us an insight into how natural changes in the physiology of our brains are reflected in the things we do, and determine who we will become as adults."

This book is essential reading for all those who are involved with children and young people, whether as parents, practitioners or researchers. Because the author is both knowledgeable and enthusiastic about her field, her writing takes us on a fascinating journey. I thoroughly recommend this book.

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