

***Introduction to Child, Adolescent, and Adult Development:  
A Psychoanalytic Perspective for Students and Professionals*  
by Ivan Sherick; IPBooks (2012; 183 pages)**

**Reviewed by Denia Barrett, LCSW**

Generations of Girl Scouts and Brownies have learned a song with the words, “Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver, and the other gold.” Ivan Sherick’s *Introduction to Child, Adolescent, and Adult Development: A Psychoanalytic Perspective for Students and Professionals* may read like an old friend to some, or like a new one to others less familiar with the Anna Freud tradition in which the author’s ideas are rooted. Sherick trained as a child and adolescent psychoanalyst at the Hampstead Child Therapy Course in London, where he learned firsthand from Miss Freud about her comprehensive “meta-psychological” approach to understanding child development. Her 1965 work *Normality and Pathology in Childhood* eschews symptom-based diagnostic categories and instead outlines a model for considering how a child is progressing along multiple developmental lines (or “strands,” as some prefer) and how his or her inner world is becoming structured and organized around object relationships; affects; phase-specific needs, urges, and desires; and developmental anxieties and conflicts, alongside resources and defenses available to deal with all of these. Sherick describes his own perspective as one that does “not lose sight of the continuity of a person, pulled forward by an inherent developmental force, from childhood through adulthood and into old age, as well as the timelessness of experience in the human mind” (introduction). He states that he is interested in “the interaction of the environment with the individual’s maturing inherited potentialities, and the psychological and learned aspects of the mind, resulting in personal experience [out of which] the mind develops.” Here you see the “gold” of ego psychology, and he goes on to add some “silver” when he speaks of factors that introduce “non-linear discontinuities that can be transformative in their consequences.” Similarly, he refers to contemporary contributions from those exploring neuropsychology (mirror neurons), attachment theory, and mentalization as these add to our accumulating understanding, rather than replacing the valuable insights of observers from the past.

Part 1 of this introductory text begins with a chapter titled “The Decision to Have a Child” and goes on to cover infancy, early and middle childhood, preadolescence, and early, middle, and late adolescence. Along the way Sherick takes up such topics as infertility, multiple births, adoption, day care, and same-sex parents, and he discusses some of the interferences that can become evident in early years through problems in feeding, sleeping, toilet mastery, and learning. Readers, especially students, will find that the author’s descriptions and explanations of complicated developmental occurrences are provided in easy-to-follow prose. His presentation of the classic psychoanalytic theory of oedipal development in chapter 7 is a prime example of how he shares what he has digested in a way that is easily digestible. Sherick is very much present in this book as he speaks to the reader, offering his own opinions on matters and the rationales behind them

in a straightforward, neutral style. “Others, or you your-self, may disagree but here’s what I think and why” is the consistent tone. A strength of this book is that Sherick conveys the power of his convictions with-out pushing his point of view or moralizing. Students who are new to working with parents may find many examples of how one can speak with them with re-spect and clarity about complex matters.

Part 2 of the book is substantially shorter than the sixteen chapters of the first part. There are chap-ters on early adulthood, middle age, grandparenthood, and old age. In this section there is also a chapter on sexual orientation and object choice in adults. Here and elsewhere, Sherick acknowledges shifts in psychoanalytic thinking about gender and human sexuality. In the chapter on old age, he reflects on technological advances, commenting, “What many old people can do that a computer cannot is to engage in self-reflection about their knowledge and frame the experience in a perspective that is uniquely human with feelings. It is this that earli-er generations can profit from” (164).

I would conclude this review by applying this same assessment to the book. Earlier generations of analysts who have treated patients across the lifespan (by this I mean their own lifespan and their work with patients of different ages) are in a privileged position to engage in self-reflection about their knowledge and frame their experience in a perspective that is uniquely human with feelings. They are able to see both the silver and the gold of older and newer views on development. In my view, this is an important contribution Sherick’s book can make to a new generation seeking to understand the complexities of human development.

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