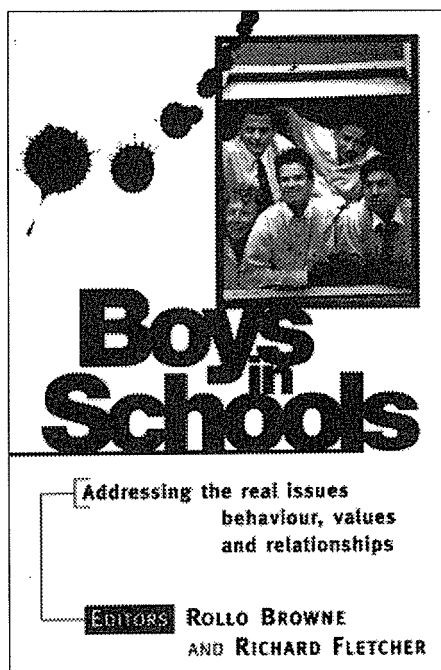


# Book Reviews

by Natalie Park



**Boys in Schools:  
Addressing the real  
issues – behaviour,  
values and relationships**  
*Editors: Rollo Browne and  
Richard Fletcher*

Sydney: Finch Publishing (1995)

*Boys in Schools: Addressing the real issues – behaviour, values and relationships* lives up to its title. It is a simply-written, easy-to-read, powerful little book with a punch. Editors Rollo Browne and Richard

Fletcher declare at the beginning of the Introduction:

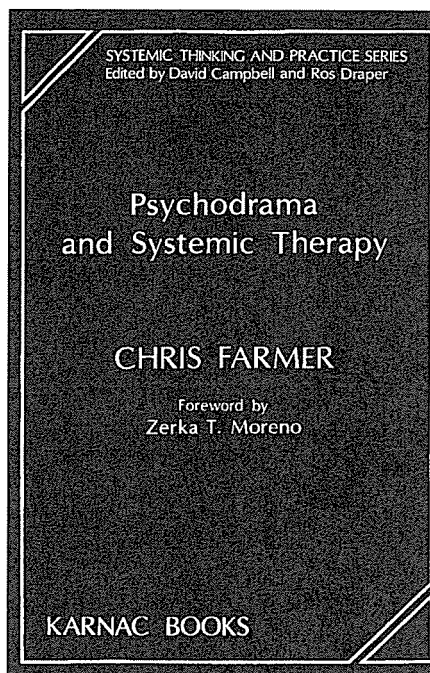
*We started on this book because it was obvious to us that, as a group, boys are in trouble. Not every boy, not the same kind of trouble and not all of the time – but enough of them across all ethnic and socio-economic groups to know there is a pattern.*

The contributing authors present their own work with boys and it quickly becomes clear to the reader that there is a breath of fresh air making a real impact in these schools. These educationalists are putting into practice, in varying ways, a new and innovative approach that involves taking up and working with the reality of life which emerges right in front of them in the classroom and in the here and now. The issues addressed include masculinity and gender stereotypes, boys' underachievement and non-involvement in school, bullying and school violence, sexism and homophobia, relationships and peer culture, identity and self esteem.

I suspect almost every reader would have first hand knowledge of the widespread undermining phenomena in school whereby boys police each other and keep each other down on a rigid, narrow track of masculinity: "Only poofs read novels". The desperate need to be

“cool” and the fear of being seen as a “wuss” are typical issues faced head on by these agents of change who are successfully building positive relationships between themselves and their students and within the boys own peer groups. As Rollo Browne says: “ Boys reassess their options for behaviour when they have experienced alternative ways of getting their needs met... What has been missing is a coherent approach to understanding how the school as a system reinforces gendered behaviour and therefore how to deliver positive change.” The effectiveness of a systemic approach is emphasised, and demonstrated, when a whole-school program is adopted. Group work, coaching, modelling and role play are some of the methods used to develop a healthy school culture. Valuing the individual is a principle determinedly practised by these leaders as they gently shift boys towards building one another up, valuing themselves, stretching rigid confines of gender stereotyping and expanding the boys’ notions of what’s okay in being a boy.

*Boys in Schools* will be of benefit to teachers, parents and all who are working with boys. Listed in the back of the book, the authors make themselves available for contact by the reader. One is left with the sense that there is a force for good gathering momentum and making itself felt in the education of our young.



## **Psychodrama and Systemic Therapy**

*by Chris Farmer*

London: Karnac Books (1995)

This book is written for the mental health professional who is well versed in family systems theory and who may be a newcomer to the psychodrama method. Chris Farmer, a psychiatrist practising in Guernsey, undertakes to describe psychodrama in systemic language as he presents clinical examples of his psychodramatic work with patients. He presents narratives of psychodramas he has directed, along with useful pictorial illustrations, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the method. He follows up these narratives with analysis and explanation from a systems perspective and highlights the common underlying theoretical principles as he describes, for example, the psychodrama director