Boundaries of friendship
Graham Allan

in Families in society: Boundaries and relationships

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the boundaries of friendships. It starts by showing how patterns of partnership, family and household constitution have changed, making kin relationships more contestable. However, it also argues that for most people the boundaries between family and friendship remain relatively well defined and continue to be important, although perhaps different emphases will emerge. It suggests that friendships are different from family relationships especially since the solidarities are different. Friendships, it contends, have boundaries that are fluid and more easily broken. So rather than conceptualising the boundary between family and friends as becoming intrinsically blurred, the discussion suggests instead that the forms of solidarity associated with ‘blood’ ties may now be found in other relationships.

School admissions and accountability
Mike Feintuck and Roz Stephens

The processes for allocating places at secondary schools in England are perennially controversial. Providing integrated coverage of the policy, practice and outcomes from 1944 to 2012, this book addresses the issues relevant to school admissions arising from three different approaches adopted in this period: planning via local authorities; parental choice of school via quasi-market mechanisms; and random allocation. Each approach is assessed on its own terms, but constitutional and legal analysis is also utilised to reflect on the extent to which each meets expectations and values associated with schooling,
especially democratic expectations associated with citizenship and with accountability in decision-making. Repeated failure to identify and pursue specific values for schooling, and hence admissions, can be found to underlie questions regarding the 'fairness' of the process, while also limiting the potential utility of judicial responses to legal actions relating to school admissions. The book concludes that the democratic expectations at stake in education, especially for vulnerable children such as those with Special Educational Needs, are too important to be left to either quasi-markets or randomness, and identifies the limited ability of the legal system to act autonomously so as to provide safeguards adequate to ensure integrity and accountability, with a consequential need being reasserted for clarity over fundamental values. The interdisciplinary approach adopted renders the book relevant and accessible to a wide readership in education, social policy and socio-legal studies.

The admissions question
Mike Feintuck and Roz Stevens

in School admissions and accountability: Planning, choice or chance?

The book’s context, parameters, structure and analytical framework, are established. Brief introductions are offered to the three paradigms for allocating school places to be considered later: state planning, choice in the quasi-market, and random allocation. The values which might underlie admissions policies and practices are also considered. The constitutional and legal perspective, and an emphasis on an expectation of accountability, which will inform the rest of the book are established, and the key lines of argument set out.