

## Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

### Clinical Topics in Psychotherapy

Edited by Digby Tantam. London: Gaskell. 1998. 288 pp. £30 (pb). ISBN 1-901242-22-6

The editor has drawn together an excellent team of authors to summarise the clinical evidence for psychotherapy in a wide range of conditions. Despite some omissions, such as psychological treatment of substance misuse, the ground covered in a medium-sized volume is remarkable. Most of the authors are not only acknowledged as experts in the field, but also have contributed extensively to the research literature while keeping a base in clinical practice.

There are some contributions which transcend diagnostic categories and provide outstanding clinical advice. Tom Burns' chapter on psychiatric emergencies should be obligatory reading for all trainees starting psychotherapy as it integrates sound practical advice from psychiatry with an understanding of the different role of the therapist. There is good coverage of the growth areas in psychological treatments such as cognitive-behavioural interventions in psychosis, and the development of integrative treatments for personality disorder.

The editor has let the authors develop their own style, and in general this works well. It does lead to some inconsistencies, however. Some chapters are comprehensively referenced whereas others select a few key texts; some authors have attempted to be as even-handed and impartial as possible, whereas others have focused on their own favoured approach. Either approach can work, but for non-specialists the result could be confusing. As an example, the opening chapter gives a very general overview of the nature of anxiety disorders, whereas the second on depression (one of several chapters reprinted from the *British Journal of Psychiatry*) deals almost exclusively with efficacy studies without discussing what is covered by the umbrella term 'depression'.

I regretted the lack of an overview chapter, which could have covered some themes that could not be covered in any

particular chapter. There is little or nothing on such key clinical issues as formulation, forming and maintaining a therapeutic alliance, ending therapy, or measuring change. This book takes a broad view of the nature of evidence, which is welcome, but some of the chapters may take this liberty too far, and so a *caveat* in the Preface warns the unwary that these are not systematic reviews by the conventions of modern evidence-based medicine.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is accessible and readable and will be a good reference for either individual or departmental libraries.

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**Frank Margison** Consultant Psychotherapist,  
Gaskell Psychotherapy Centre, Manchester Royal  
Infirmary, Swinton Grove, Manchester M13 0EU

### Interpersonal Psychotherapy

By John C. Markovitz. 1998. Washington, DC:  
American Psychiatric Press. 162 pp.  
£22.50 (pb). ISBN 0-88048-836-0

The practitioners of interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) have made a significant contribution to establish the efficacy and respectability of brief psychological treatments. It is a shame, therefore, that IPT is somewhat the poor relation of the much more widely available cognitive-behavioural therapies. In the UK at least there are few practitioners of IPT and few opportunities for training in the technique. This volume sets out the stall for IPT in a clear and readable way. Although the book does not provide a manual as to the exact treatment techniques, the chapters are full of clinical material and detailed case histories which are not only of interest but also provide practical pointers to using IPT in the clinical setting.

IPT has been most carefully studied as a treatment for mood disorders. The suggestion that low mood is a response to psychosocial difficulties of an interpersonal nature has a face validity. It is unsurprising,

therefore, that much of the book focuses on IPT in the treatment of depression. There are specific chapters looking at adolescent depression, depression in HIV-positive patients and preventive treatments. There is also a particularly helpful chapter looking at IPT for the treatment of bulimia nervosa, together with indications as to the more experimental use of IPT in other conditions, including anxiety disorders, somatisation, borderline personality disorder and bipolar disorder.

The book would have been improved by more critical discussion of the research presented. There is also little discussion as to the merits, and place, of IPT compared with other psychological treatments or medication. Overall, however, this is an excellent introduction to IPT for those with little or no knowledge of the field. For those already with an interest in psychological treatments, the book provides a welcome update of the potential range of conditions for treatment. I would recommend it for individual clinicians as a counter to the many pharmacological text books that are available, and I think it would be a useful addition to departmental libraries.

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**L Mynors-Wallis** Consultant Psychiatrist,  
Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust, Senior Lecturer  
University of Southampton, Department of  
Psychiatry, St Ann's Hospital, 69 Haven Road, Poole  
BH13 7LN

### Emotions in Social Life: Critical Themes and Contemporary Issues

Edited by Gillian Bendelow & Simon J.  
Williams. 1998. London & New York:  
Routledge. 336 pp. £17.99 (pb).  
ISBN 0-415-13799-3

Since the early 1980s sociologists have developed a more systematic interest in the sociology of emotion, and their major professional associations now have lively sub-groups devoted to this area of enquiry. Bendelow and Williams, contributors themselves to this field from the University of Warwick, have edited a collection of 17 substantial papers intended both to delineate its scope and variety and also to represent the current work of (mainly) British and American authors.

In a brief review it is not possible to refer to all the themes considered in this

book. Emotion is seen to be culturally determined in that the individual is born into, and socialised within, a culture which makes available a discrete repertoire of experience and expression; the history of the development of that repertoire may be traced, at least for some societies. Living within the constraints of a particular culture requires of the individual a continuous programme of 'emotional work', specific organisations – here, in particular, specific work places – make their own demands for the 'management of emotions'; and so forth. All the authors would agree on the sociocultural importance of emotion and on the ineluctable links with physiological function and physical expression (which the sociological terminology would characteristically conflate in the concept of 'the body'). On the other hand, it is clear that sociologists share with the rest of us some persistent difficulties: the reification of emotion, as in the use of the language of 'the emotions', versus the view that there is no such thing as an emotion, only various

ways of acting, feeling and displaying one's judgements, attitudes and opinions in an appropriate way; or the enormous problems involved in coming to a settled view of the relationship between social, psychological and somatic aspects of the discourse about emotional life.

The book is in five sections. 'Critical perspectives on emotions' provides four theoretical papers which are, I think, fairly tough reading for non-social scientists but well worth persevering with; 'The mediation of emotional experience' mainly considers the influence of the mass media; 'Emotions through the life-course' includes two papers on childhood and one on old age, which would be of interest to specialists in these fields; 'Sexuality, intimacy and personal relations' deals with these matters in Western cultures and demonstrates the extent to which feminist sociology has moved on to a broader consideration of gender-related issues, particularly men's experience in contemporary culture; and 'Emotions and health' comprises papers on managing the experience of pain and on the

influence of social status on bodily function including illness, and a couple on the problems of nurses and other professionals in respect of the emotional work they are expected to do by the health care organisations within which they work.

There is little in this book which could be directly read off into the daily practice of psychiatrists. That said, however, there is very much here which is of great interest and profound importance in the background to our work. All psychiatrists whose 'hovering attention' includes an awareness of the sociocultural aspects of their patients' experience would find their sensitivities in this direction enhanced. And we should all be aware of the sociological work to which these papers call our attention, and be alert to future developments in what is evidently a vigorous and growing field of study.

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**D. W. Millard** Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry, Oxfordshire Mental Healthcare Trust, The Fulbrook Centre, Churchill Hospital, Old Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7JU