

relationships are not only the "cornerstone of interpersonal behaviour and social contact" but are "necessary for survival".

The series has been mainly compiled for researchers and advanced students with the aim of providing them with an up-to-date overview of the literature. The papers are complex and demanding to read. Volume 2 contains eight papers arranged into three sections.

Part I is concerned with the development of relationships. The first paper by Parks & Eggert shows how family and friends exert a big influence on a person's close relationships. In the second paper, Borden & Levinger examine how two separate individuals come to function as a pair. The three ways in which people adapt they unhappily call "situation-orientated motivational transformations", "relationship-orientated motivational transformations" and "relationship-transcendent dispositional transformations". Holmes' paper examines the development of trust, showing that it influences how a partner is perceived and responded to.

Part II examines what is meant by social support. Winstead & Derlega show that friends are more supportive in stressful situations than strangers. Riggio & Zimmerman demonstrate that the social skill of both the support provider and receiver affects the quality of their interchange.

Part III explores the Attributional and Strategic Aspects of Relationships. Fincham & Bradbury start by reviewing their research programme to conclude that there is a causal link between attributions and marital satisfaction. Bar-Tal *et al* show how cognitive and motivational processes are involved in planning and performing interpersonal interaction. Finally, Miller & Read describe interpersonalism which they say stresses "the importance and complexity of unique persons who create dynamic, unique relationships".

Indeed this quote, which is the last sentence of the book, encapsulates what the eight papers are trying to say. The book requires painstaking study. Its language is difficult to someone unfamiliar with American social psychology terminology. However, there is a sense, perhaps a hope, that a person in relation to others is trying to emerge from between the lines. If so, it is something that we have always known, and something that we always need reminding about.

C. R. WHYTE, *Consultant Psychotherapist, Leicestershire Health Authority, Psychotherapy Department, Humberstone Grange Clinic, Thurmaston Lane, Leicester LE5 0TA*

**Getting Through To You: A Self-Help Course in Communication Skills.** By ALEX HOWARD. Bath: Gateway Books. 1991. 230 pp. £6.95.

Any volume on social skills which opens with a Roger McGough poem on the difficulties of personal com-

munication and the ease with which misconceptions occur, could hardly fail to get off to a good start. Unfortunately, my initial enthusiasm about the book gradually waned. Despite its high standard of writing, liberal and helpful use of examples, a broad coverage of communication difficulties (including adaptive and non-adaptive communication styles), and important warnings about how easily assertiveness can become manipulation, I had a number of misgivings about the way the book developed. To begin with, I personally found that, although well thought out, the questions and exercises concluding each chapter were difficult to consider, and I suspect this would be the response of his typical reader. In relation to this, I wonder just who the typical reader would be or for what audience the book is aimed. Although sub-titled "a self-help course in communication skills", which would attract people seeking practical guidance, there are many long sections that read like an introductory text in sociology. In a similar vein, the final chapters on human ecology, although a very laudable attempt to go beyond the standard text on communication skills and to raise consciousness about our general relationship to the world, would have little relevance for someone seeking help with basic communication skills. Perhaps this highlights the book's main flaw. The author tries to do too much and to reach too wide an audience.

Although the above make this a rather difficult book to recommend, it is redeemed by a number of features. In particular, chapter 3 is very good in conveying the distortions which inattentiveness and preconceptions create in communication, chapter 4 provides an excellent summary of the mechanisms of defence and, though not stated overtly, the entire book highlights the limits of more simplistic, behavioural models of social skills training. In conclusion, it is probably as part of a social skills group that therapists will find this book of most value and in which setting he or she can make use of the exercises, questions and other material it contains.

PETER BUTCHER, *Head of Acute Psychology, The Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel*

**Symbol Story and Ceremony. Using Metaphor in Individual and Family Therapy.** By G. COMBS and J. FREEDMAN. London: W. W. Norton. 1990. 279 pp. £18.95.

There has been a recent upsurge in publications around this subject. Perhaps this reflects in part the coming of age of family work into a time where tensions between various schools can be amalgamated and developed. Perhaps too, we live in times where family life is disintegrating and individual lives are so privatised that they become stripped of meaning.

The ideas of using metaphor in psychotherapy are developed from the work of Milton Erickson, whereby