

## BOOK REVIEWS

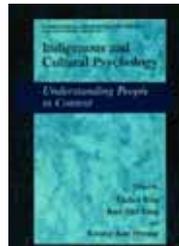
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# Are our theories universal?

**H**OW do parenting styles typically differ in American families, compared with European or Asian families? Is shame valued in Chinese cultures? How does culture influence our view of justice? How valid are Western personality tests in other cultures, and how can we devise culturally appropriate tests? Why do students in Korea perform more highly than students in America, despite the fact that the Koreans have larger class sizes and fewer resources?

These are just a few of the many interesting questions addressed in this book. The major question raised is 'How universal are our psychological theories?'

Indigenous psychology highlights the importance of



### *Indigenous and Cultural Psychology:*

### *Understanding People in Context*

UICHOL KIM, KUO-SHU YANG & KWANG-KUO HWANG

NEW YORK: SPRINGER, 2006; Hb £42.50 (ISBN 0 387 28661 6)

REVIEWED BY **Debbie Hawker**

understanding people in their social and cultural context. This 518-page book contains contributions from 30 international experts. The material covers a wide geographical area, although the majority of it focuses on modern Asian cultures. The choice of topics is also wide, including interesting insights regarding child development, personality and cognitive processes. Anyone considering conducting

indigenous or cross-cultural research would be well advised to read the chapters on research methodology, which include five guiding principles that should be applied in all ethical research.

This volume has helped me gain a better understanding of the cultural contexts which some of my clients come from. In a chapter on 'the Tao of Chinese thought', the authors point out: 'If one-fourth of the world's population is thinking

and reasoning in ways different from what we have learned from current psychology (which is largely based on American samples), then our understanding is at best incomplete and at worst culturally biased'. This is one reason why I hope this book will find its way on to reading lists for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses: we need to be constantly remembering and teaching the importance of considering context.

This book has a very readable style, is well referenced, and has a useful subject index. I recommend it to anyone interested in cultural psychology.

■ *Dr Debbie Hawker is a clinical psychologist at InterHealth, London.*

# Integrating interventions

**T**HIS second edition expands and updates Reneau's 1995 first edition and extensively enhances workable interventions for anyone seeking a self-help programme for anxieties, phobias and panic attacks.

At first, I thought this book might be yet another 'self-help' tome that adorn the shelves of popular book shops; but once I got into the detail of Reneau's writing, it soon became clear that the book is very well-suited to the student and practising counsellor or psychotherapist. In fact, I might go so far as to suggest that health practitioners in general would be well advised to add it to their library, at home or at work.

### *Anxiety, Phobias and Panic: A Step-by-step Programme for Regaining Control of Your Life*

RENEAU Z. PEURIFOY

LONDON: PIATKUS 2006; Pb £10.99 (ISBN 0 7499 2663 5)

REVIEWED BY **Ian Clancy**

Reneau indicates that in the UK 1 per cent of men and 2 per cent of women suffer panic attacks, and that the most common anxiety-related problem is mixed anxiety and depressive disorder, affecting 7 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women: generalised anxiety disorder affects 4 per cent of men and 5 per cent of women. I am of the opinion that these figures are far too conservative, as many sufferers do not admit to suffering an anxiety problem

until it is too late, and only then seek help from a GP or therapist. In my own practice, the prevalence of anxiety disorders is by far the greatest syndrome presented by clients.

The book is steeped in cognitive theory and practice, and essentially leans heavily on rational emotive behavioural therapy; it is split into 15 main chapters referred to as 'lessons'. Each lesson finishes with a section on recommended activities that leads the reader to

simple processes they can accomplish without professional assistance.

As a self-help book, if it has a failing, it is generally quite complex for an anxiety sufferer to work through. There is a tendency to include a considerable amount of detail; though the examples and mini case studies embedded in the text are illuminating.

I think that the book is an excellent reference guide for the experienced practitioner and student, and provides a first-class framework for integrating structured interventions into any therapy practice.

■ *Ian Clancy is a counselling psychologist in private practice in Oxfordshire.*

# Stimulating read

**D**ID you know that John F. Kennedy once conducted a meeting with the Russian leader Khrushchev after taking a shot of amphetamine? Or that the conservative Prime Minister Anthony Eden was dependent on Benzedrine? These are perhaps some of the lesser known celebrity stimulant users, adding to a long list that includes Judy Garland and Elvis Presley, mentioned in Leslie Iversen's new book. This is not merely a book of anecdotes, though, as the text contains a thorough survey of other material which is much

## *Speed, Ecstasy, Ritalin: The Science of Amphetamines*

LESLIE IVERSEN

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2006;  
Hb £24.95 (ISBN 0 19 853 089 7)

REVIEWED BY **Kirstie Soar**

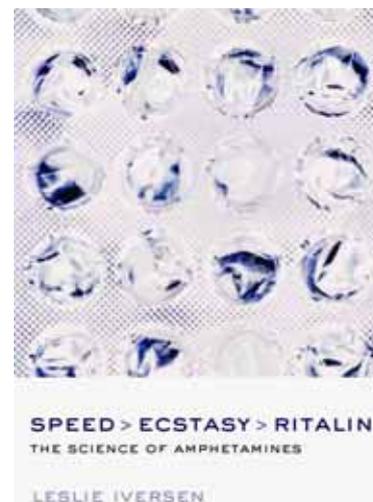
more pertinent to today's culture of drug use. This includes concerns about methamphetamine abuse in the US and the potential massive increase in abuse that appears to be threatening to hit the UK.

Of course, coming from Leslie Iversen, one of our most respected and well-published

psychopharmacologists, not only does the book cover social, political and cultural perspectives on stimulant use but, as the title suggests, the psychopharmacological effects of amphetamines are also discussed, along with issues about addiction and underlying brain mechanisms. Some prior knowledge of the functioning of the brain and behaviour is required for complete understanding of these areas, but it doesn't dominate the book, so these parts could easily be skipped over by those with limited knowledge.

A particularly refreshing aspect of this book is that a balanced view is presented in relation to the varying uses of amphetamines – from recreational use and dependence to the current and potential clinical and therapeutic uses. It acknowledges that toxic effects, such as amphetamine psychosis, can enhance our knowledge, understanding and treatment of schizophrenia, and it refers to the potential medical use of 3, 4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA; better known by its street name 'Ecstasy') in post-traumatic stress disorder.

Inclusion of this latter drug is perhaps one of the book's few weaknesses. The chapter dedicated purely to Ecstasy is an informative and up-to-date chapter, but little is given to highlighting the differences between this amphetamine derivative and other amphetamines. Such detail,

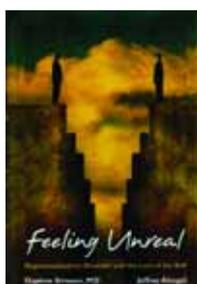


though, may have raised the problem that despite molecular similarities, the pharmacological, behavioural and psychosocial differences between MDMA and the other amphetamines are considerable. As a result this chapter on Ecstasy does stand rather alone, compared with other chapters in the book that integrate better with one another.

There is some inconsistency in writing style with reference to the audience it is aimed at. At times it appears that the book is aimed at readers in the US with, for example, material on ADHD being heavily based on US FDA guidelines and US diagnostic criteria. Additionally US terminology is also used (i.e. norepinephrine and not noradrenaline). However, other material is presented more towards a UK audience; for example, prices of drugs given in pounds sterling, with no US dollar equivalent.

Despite these criticisms, the book lives up to its claims and is definitely a book that can be read by academics, students, drug workers and even those members of the general public who have an interest in stimulant use; provided they don't get 'scared' by the psychopharmacology content.

■ *Dr Kirstie Soar is at the University of East London.*



## *Feeling Unreal: Depersonalization Disorder and the Loss of the Self*

DAPHNE SIMEON & JEFFREY ABUGEL

NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS;  
2006; Hb £16.99  
(ISBN 0 19 517022 1)

REVIEWED BY **Elaine Hunter**

**I**CAN think of few clinical conditions where a basic lack of knowledge is as widespread amongst most mental health professionals as it is with depersonalisation disorder (DPD). Therefore, as the first book that provides a comprehensive summary of the existing empirical knowledge of DPD this is clearly a much needed resource for clinicians.

Moreover, since the book is written by the leading US clinical researcher in collaboration with a journalist who experienced DPD for many years, it is rich in clinical and academic detail, whilst also being extremely accessible. Just a few hours of reading will equip you with a good understanding of the phenomenology of DPD, an overview of theories posited from various perspectives over the last century, the fundamentals of assessment and diagnosis, as well as the latest in pharmacological and psychological approaches to treatment.

The good news is there are not many psychiatric conditions for which the entire clinical literature can be covered in a single book of just over 200 pages! The bad news is that this fascinating disorder has been neglected by psychologists for far too long. The scope for further research to broaden our understanding is clearly obvious. Clinical researchers where are you?

■ *Dr Elaine Hunter is a clinical psychologist working for South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.*

### *The Child as Thinker* (2nd edn)

SARA MEADOWS

HOVE: ROUTLEDGE 2006;  
Pb £19.99 (ISBN 1 84169 512 2)

REVIEWED BY Alison Campbell

**C**HILDREN should be seen and not heard, according to the Victorians. However as 21st-century psychologists we are very much interested in children and in particular in their cognitive development. This is not because children are easy to understand, or easy to work with, or even – as I heard one undergraduate student remark – because ‘they are cute!’ We are interested in studying children’s cognitive development because of what it is able to tell us about cognition in general and to try to explain where cognitive development goes awry.

This book by Sara Meadows is an update to her 1993 edition. Meadows is a researcher and lecturer at the University of Bristol and has particular interest in how different factors come together to bring about happier or unhappier development for children.

In this book Meadows gives a solid sweeping coverage of the current position in research in this area. Understandably with such a wide review, depth is lost. So, for example, in areas of particular interest to me, such as a child’s concept of death or illness, she does little more than signpost the reader to other readings. However, this book will be invaluable to undergraduates trying to get to grips with the wide range of this field and will also be of interest to researchers in areas outside child cognitive development to find links with their own areas of interest.

■ Alison Campbell is a Macmillan Assistant Psychologist at Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board.

# Impact and effects

**T**HE third edition of this helpful book is shaped by current research and the author’s clinical experience, and links current knowledge in child sexual abuse (CSA) with its impact and long-term effects. The aim is to explore how clinicians can best work with presenting symptoms.

The key message is that CSA and its impact will vary enormously between individuals, and that each experience is unique. There is a wide range of CSA acts, and the child’s age and temperament, the relationship of the child to the abuser and the quality of the child’s other interpersonal relationships will contribute to how CSA is experienced and processed and to what meaning is attributed. There are therefore many

### *Counselling Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (3rd edn)

CHRISTIANE SANDERSON

LONDON: JESSICA KINGSLEY; 2006; Pb £25.00 (ISBN 978 1 853 10 335 6)

REVIEWED BY Miriam Landor

different long-term effects of CSA, some of which may contrast sharply with others. The author warns against making premature assumptions which could contaminate the survivor’s material. Counsellors should develop a good understanding of recurring themes whilst retaining the sense of each individual’s experience.

The first four chapters of the book deal with general understanding of CSA and its impact and long-term effects, and of adult survivors and how to work with them. Different

therapeutic models are discussed, with a clear emphasis on the importance of communication and empathic attunement. There follow chapters on key specific issues surrounding CSA – trauma, dissociation, memory, self-harm, the shattered self, shame and sexuality. Finally there is a chapter on professional issues.

There is a great deal to take in, as the book has over 400 pages, but the effort is well worthwhile.

■ Miriam Landor is an educational psychologist.

## Getting the feel and flavour

**T**HE power of human expectation in physiological intervention, as demonstrated by the placebo effect, is widely documented and accepted in the medical world. In this book, Rubin Battino offers a compelling and heartfelt argument for introducing the concept of expectation into a psychotherapeutic context, specifically ‘very brief therapy’, where both the client and therapist embrace high expectations of a successful outcome, from as little as one session.

However, this is far from a one-idea book. Rubin Battino takes the reader on a whistle-stop tour of a diverse and challenging range of techniques and approaches that have been of inspiration to his own practice, including the use of the metaphor and hypnosis,

### *Expectation: The Very Brief Therapy Book*

RUBIN BATTINO

CARMARTHEN: CROWN HOUSE PUBLISHING; 2006; Hb £20.00 (ISBN 1 845900 286)

REVIEWED BY Chrissie Johnson

ordeal therapy, nature-guided therapy and solution-oriented therapy.

Rather than offering a definitive guide to very brief therapy, this book is more usefully viewed as a ‘tapas’ of thought-provoking material, allowing readers to get a feel and flavour for various methods and offering useful direction for those who wish to learn more. Those who are seeking a comprehensive step-by-step guide to very brief therapy may be disappointed. Equally, whilst therapists working across a number of traditions may gather inspiration from the views and tools offered in this

book, Battino’s focus on clinical hypnosis may, at times, limit the transferability of its contents beyond therapists who are in a similar field of practice.

Nevertheless, the book is written in an informal, warm and accessible style. The author’s considerable practical and theoretical expertise and enthusiasm is evident throughout, making this a valuable addition for anyone interested in this field of practice... even those with the highest of expectations!

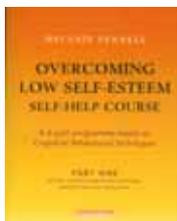
■ Chrissie Johnson is an external research assistant for St Andrew’s Hospital.

# Helpfully without dogma

**T**HIS publication has helped me most in two problem areas of everyday practice – firstly, recommending a decent CBT based self-help book that develops the client's repertoire of resources building on in-session work, and secondly, actually defining and breaking down the self-esteem concept for the client, so that it is both useful and informative.

The three books in this set succeed very well on both counts, coming from the popular and useful 'Overcoming' series of books, and using a helpful workbook format. The workbooks look separately at understanding self-esteem, combating self-criticism and enhancing self-acceptance and changing the rules, creating a new bottom line and looking to the future.

The workbooks are simply designed, with no prior knowledge of CBT appearing necessary for the reader. Each volume is portable and compact, yet large enough to include a set of credible and realistic



## *Overcoming Low Self-Esteem Self Help Course*

MELANIE FENNELL

LONDON: ROBINSON; 2006; Pb £21.00 (set of three books)  
(ISBN 1 84529 237 9)

REVIEWED BY Paul Gaffney

exercises. The format is straightforward, well written and accessible, with room for personal reflections and useful section summaries, charts and tables. The style is based clearly on taking action, but the reader is gently encouraged and affirmed, without the dogmatic and insistent tone of much of the self-help genre. The step-by-step format could make this publication useful for both young people and adults, and it could be useful as a piece of collaborative therapeutic work or as the basis for a group project. As I read this work, I found it really helpful for myself, and expect many people would.

I especially liked the use of everyday descriptions for critical CBT concepts, such as 'the bottom line' for negative core beliefs and 'rules for living' for negative automatic thoughts. Overall, this is an excellent publication by Melanie Fennell, which I highly recommend, and I look forward to more workbooks from the 'Overcoming' series.

■ *Dr Paul Gaffney is Senior Clinical Psychologist with Rath na Nog Regional High Support Service, Health Services Executive, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan, Ireland.*

# What's driving the debate on alcohol?

**B**INGE Britain comes from the prolific husband-and-wife writing team Martin and Moira Plant and applies their knowledge and experience of the alcohol field to an issue which has very much become the topic of the day – binge drinking.

As the authors note, it is a topic on which there is less understanding and consensus than one might be led to believe from the recent extensive media coverage. The authors describe the varying and often cyclical public attitudes towards alcohol and drunkenness, that range from embracing it to condemning it.

By doing so they underline the point that binge drinking is in itself is not a new behaviour, nor is public concern about it. The authors do not trivialise binge drinking or the problems associated with it, but they do



## *Binge Britain:*

### *Alcohol and the National Response*

MARTIN PLANT & MOIRA PLANT

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2006;  
Pb £19.00 (ISBN 0 19 9299412)

REVIEWED BY John McAlaney

present the issue in a more reasoned way than has been used before in media and government publications.

Figures on binge drinking in the UK are then discussed and contrasted with rates of alcohol consumption from around the world. This is followed by information on the consequences of binge drinking and the various alcohol policies that have been implemented to reduce it. These chapters do not though simply summarise previously published reports and policies; they also give the background to them and

discuss the motivations behind them.

It is noticeable at times that the discussion is influenced by the author's own opinions, but these opinions are well informed and supported. This section of the book also makes use of quotes from the media and public figures to illustrate the context these policies were published at the time and the implications they had. In doing so, the text is given a sense of real-life relevancy. This serves as a precursor for the chapter entitled 'Bar wars', which directly addresses the recent

debates over binge drinking and the changes in licensing laws.

The book concludes by discussing possible future routes to cultural change, again reiterating the importance of a historical perspective in doing so.

The key strength of *Binge Britain* is its engaging and concise style. It is not intended as an all-inclusive textbook of binge drinking – it does not, for example, focus extensively on the aetiology on the behaviour. Instead it is more a story of how 'binge drinking' has become a topic of such interest and of the controversy around it. It will be a valuable resource for anyone intending to work in the area.

■ *John McAlaney is a PhD student at the University of Paisley.*