

# Feminist Family Therapy: A Casebook

BOOK REVIEWS

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Remaining chapters are of less interest to the psychiatrist. Clear and consistent relationships between endorphin activity and illnesses such as schizophrenia and depression have not been found, and opiate antagonists are of little therapeutic value in these conditions.

This book does not answer questions but stimulates thought, and as such it is recommended.

ANDREW JOHNS, *Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry of Addictive Behaviour, St George's Hospital Medical School, London*

*Children of Alcoholics*. Edited by MARGARET BEAN-BAYOG and BARRY STIMMS. New York: Haworth Press, 1987. 130 pp. £17.95.

For every person with an alcohol problem there is often a spouse and children who share that problem. Often the children of a parent with alcohol problems are neglected, and it is therefore timely to have material on this topic. Unfortunately, this book does not meet the need for helpful information about the children of parents with alcohol problems. Four chapters are original and not very interesting reports related to the foetal alcohol syndrome. There is one original report on alcohol expectancy and conditioning in the sons of alcoholics, one chapter on therapeutic considerations when working with the adult children of parents with alcohol problems, and one chapter on public policy issues.

It would have been more helpful if the book had contained review chapters looking at wide aspects of the problems of children of parents with alcohol problems, with practical suggestions on the prevention and management of the problems among the children. Perhaps the most interesting chapter is that related to public policy issues. It is unfortunate, however, that this just addresses policy issues in the United States and does not compare this with the development of public policy issues in other countries. All in all, the book is rather disappointing.

PETER ANDERSON, *General Practitioner and Senior Registrar in Community Medicine, Oxfordshire Health Authority*

*Feminist Family Therapy: A Casebook*. By THELMA JANE GOODRICH, CHERYL RAMPAGE, BARBARA ELLMAN and KRIS HALSTEAD. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988. 220 pp. £17.95, \$32.00.

Of this book's four authors two are psychologists, one is a sociologist, and the fourth is an educationalist, and they practice as dynamic family therapists in Houston, Texas, where they constitute (their own definition) the founders and faculty of The Women's Institute for Life

Studies. The book, which is aimed at family therapists of both sexes, challenges some of the basic assumptions of systems theory in conventional family therapy. In particular, it questions what the authors see as the culturally stereotyped splitting of gender roles within families, which tends to place women, in particular, in a double-bind situation of having ultimate emotional power over their offspring (usually) and their partners (sometimes) but of not having the physical, social, intellectual, or financial authority to back it up. Being, often unconsciously, in this situation driven to fulfil their own needs through oblique and manipulative techniques, women reinforce the existing stereotypes of female subjectivity, irrationality, and ultimate incapacity for equal status with males. In addition, they or other family members become neurotic, and seek help.

Despite its formidable title (which may, particularly on this side of the Atlantic, convey a more extremist ambience than the book's humane and balanced approach justifies), *Feminist Family Therapy* demonstrates an even-handed concern and compassion for adults and children of either sex who are caught up in inappropriate gender stereotyping. It is also extremely well, lucidly and (joint authorship notwithstanding) consistently written.

Approximately one-third of the volume describes the authors' general approach ("the goal is change, not adjustment to faulty roles") and their method of working (individual family therapy plus joint consultation). The remainder consists of six detailed case reports. These in themselves would make this book worthwhile reading for all psychiatrists, psychodynamically oriented or otherwise, for they are outstandingly well described and (rare indeed) they describe the false starts and reverses of therapy, as well as the solutions.

With a good index and full but not excessive bibliography, this book deserves a place in both specialist and general libraries.

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*Recent Advances in Epilepsy (2)*. Edited by THOMAS A. PEDLEY and BRIAN S. MELDRUM. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 266 pp. £45.00.

Everyone with an interest in epilepsy will find something of value in this book. With the earlier numbers in the series it provides an 'advanced' textbook on the subject, particularly as the editors have been careful to make the individual volumes complementary rather than overlapping. Here, as before, there is a mixture of reviews concerning basic mechanisms, with others considering details of various aspects of investigation and management. Noteworthy in the present volume is a long section on the diagnosis and treatment of paroxysms of the central nervous system, important in third world countries particularly, although toxoplasmosis

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