

Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

International Handbook of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities

Edited by Eric Emerson, Chris Hatton, Travis Thompson & Trevor R. Parmenter.
Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2004. 656 pp.
£100.00 (hb). ISBN 0471497096

This book was edited by four eminent international researchers and covers a range of topics related to research with people with learning disabilities, concentrating on concepts and methods used in research. The four areas covered are the historical and social context of research; issues related to measurement; the application of research methods (nature, characteristics and social context); and the impact of support systems and services. The first part of the book deals with some of the concepts and theoretical models relating to research with people with learning disabilities, including a discussion of the ethics of applied research. The second part is taken up by a discussion of the methods and techniques of research. This is followed by a description of some of the practical applications of these research methods, including educational, social, family, health (genetic, mental health, ageing) and employment aspects of care and provision for those with learning disabilities. Many of the 30 chapters are likely to form the basis for future research in their particular topics and contain a wealth of useful information on research methods, tricks of the trade and useful quotations.

The book is well written, although a number of chapters are difficult to read for non-psychologists (what is 'the parallelness of these multidimensional adaptive behavior factors?'). One of the most interesting topics in the book for me was the discussion of how to enable people with learning disabilities to take part in research, but as the title of one of these chapters is 'Emancipatory and participatory research: how far have we come', it struck me that if a psychiatrist has difficulty reading the

chapter, what chance do those with learning disabilities have?

All the contributors are from English-speaking nations (approximately half are American), and I would have welcomed more contributions from the rest of the world in an 'international handbook'.

The result is a densely written reference book, many chapters of which form useful reading for those involved in research with people with learning disability. For me, reading this book has been a learning experience, not in the least in reminding me that there are many areas of research involving people with learning disabilities of which I know little and would like to find out more.

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In the Line of Fire: Trauma in the Emergency Services

Cheryl Regehr & Ted Bober. New York:
Oxford University Press. 2005. 304pp.
£19.95 (hb). ISBN 0195165020

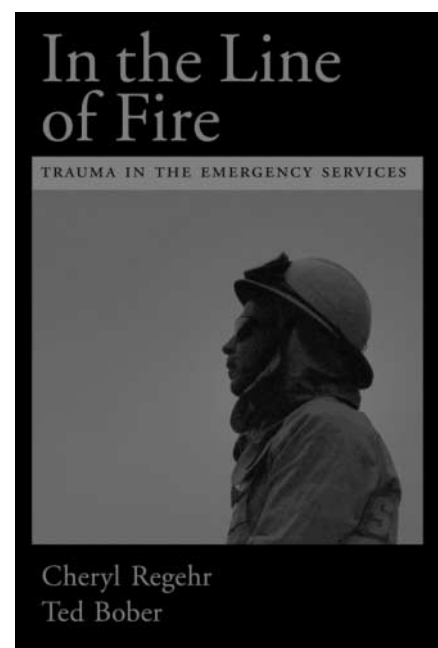
To my mind, there is at present quite an explosion of writing on the subject of trauma, from a range of perspectives. The events of 11 September 2001, so graphically played out (and replayed in an almost psychopathological manner) in the world's media, have served to focus our minds on the emergency services and the trauma they suffer in lessening traumatic effects on others. In this book we learn that the United Nations records some 500 disasters per annum.

In the Line of Fire is written by two professionals who have an impressive amount of experience of working with front-line emergency services in Canada. They have been co-directors of the Critical Incident Stress Team at Pearson International Airport in Toronto for over 15

years. They use this book to draw together evidence that is based on local and international events. They use case histories to bring to life the stressful events that emergency staff experience and refer to research evidence that convincingly builds a model that they refer to as a 'trajectory towards health or illness'. This gives us encouragement that many parts of a range of interventions may nudge those exposed to traumatic events towards healthy coping.

Thus, although emergency service workers are exposed repeatedly to traumatic events and a quarter show severe symptoms of stress, they may cope far better if their organisation is a 'healthy' one that does not focus excessively on blame. It is pointed out that employers suffer high costs if their staff do develop severe symptoms – in terms of both lost working days and compensation claims. If these workers have a good and supportive home life, they will cope better.

I was particularly interested in the chapter on the effect of inquiries to which emergency workers (in the same way as mental health workers) may be exposed. The impact of inquiries on individuals depends to a notable extent upon the reaction of the organisation that employs them. Is there management support or not? The authors note (albeit in a different chapter) that child protection staff have higher levels of stress-related symptoms than do emergency workers such as fire-fighters. The implication is that the fire-fighters have a healthier workplace.



The book concludes that teams such as the authors' own Critical Incident Stress Team, which can support traumatised front-line emergency staff, their families and locally affected communities, have a valuable role to play – either directly or by ensuring referral of staff for mental health specialist input. The authors openly acknowledge the need for careful evaluation of the impact of trauma response teams.

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Group-Analytic Psychotherapy: A Meeting of Minds

By Harold Behr & Liesel Hearst.
London: Whurr. 2005. 299pp. £19.99 (pb).
ISBN 1861564759

Harold Behr and Liesel Hearst are widely known in the field of group analysis for their long collaboration as therapists, supervisors and educators. The fruits of this collaboration are generously shared in this excellent text, which, grounded in the Foulkesian group model, offers an accessible and comprehensive exploration of group-analytic psychotherapy.

The book starts with two chapters outlining the history of group analysis, with particular attention paid to social and cultural influences. It then opens up into chapters that discuss planning a group, dynamic administration, assessing potential group members, and conducting the first few sessions. The chapters progress to explore established groups in action, paying

particular attention to events such as introducing new members, life events of members, and bringing therapy to an end. Practical consideration and advice is given regarding a variety of challenging scenarios, such as those involving scapegoat phenomena, monopolising behaviour and malignant mirroring. There is a helpful chapter offering guidance for therapists if they develop difficulties, including personal illness, which may affect the therapy.

The next section uses the basic Foulkesian group model to consider a variety of specific applications of group therapy, including the large group, homogeneous groups, groups for children and adolescents, family therapy and organisational group analysis. The book closes with discussion on the supervision of trainees,

professional development and future directions.

The authors' enthusiasm and respect for group-analytic psychotherapy radiate from the pages of this book. Their use of a clear, friendly and humorous style makes the book an easy and pleasurable read. The text is kept varied with well-chosen clinical vignettes, transcripts from sessions and Behr's own cartoons. Several chapters present a dialogue between the two authors about a topic, such as assessment. This creative format, demonstrating similarities and differences in approach, encourages the reader to develop and value their own individual style, rather than to seek a single prescribed technique.

The material covered in this book will engage a wide audience. The accessible coverage of assessment, starting a new group and potential pitfalls will be invaluable to the inexperienced therapist or trainee. The discussion of challenging scenarios in established groups, supervision and professional development will stimulate the experienced practitioner. One criticism of this book is that, in its desire to be comprehensive, it may overstretch itself by including associated disciplines, such as family therapy, without the space to fully explore their complexities and subtleties.

I found this book very helpful both in enriching my theoretical understanding and in helping me develop and gain confidence in my practical skills. I expect it will become a key reference text in group therapy, and I heartily recommend it to trainees and experienced therapists alike.

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