

the entire book is an extended answer to the question of what constructivism is, and what is its relevance to psychotherapy is. Indeed, the text ambitiously tries to cover every aspect of the topic, but this comprehensiveness can be overwhelming and confusing to the novice. However, a wide scope may be the nature of the beast when it comes to defining constructivism, as constructivist therapists tend to be creative and independent in their approaches.

Chapter 2 attempts to define constructivism in therapy by contrasting it with objectivism. The tables here are particularly helpful. The chapter goes on to explicate the constructivist vision of therapy as helping the client develop meaning for his self-narrative rather than as making it a corrective emotional experience.

The body of the book explores various modes of constructivist practice. Each contributor shares his or her personal growth and development as a therapist from distinct perspectives. For example, Mahoney is a pioneering contributor to the cognitive-behavioral therapies, and his chapter helps explain constructivism in this context. William Lyddon emphasizes the philosophical origins of constructivism and uses the editors' definition that "constructivism is an epistemological perspective based on the assertion that humans actively create the realities to which they respond."

The book concludes with a well-written description by Mahoney of the psychological demands of being a constructivist psychotherapist. He emphasizes the necessity for openness and tolerance of ambiguity in the service of redefining a life narrative.

Neimeyer and Mahoney are particularly well qualified to take on the challenge of editing such a complex text. They have both written and published extensively on the topic and bring their individual points of view to this important psychotherapeutic approach. Practitioners of psychotherapy will find *Constructivism in Psychotherapy* a highly informative book that may challenge them and stimulate new ideas for use with more traditional psychotherapeutic approaches.

Varieties of Psychotherapy

On the Client's Path: A Manual for the Practice of Solution-Focused Therapy by A. J. Chevalier, Ph.D., Oakland, California, New Harbinger Publications, 1995, 157 pages, \$39.95

Flash of Insight: Metaphor and Narrative in Therapy by Stephen S. Pearce, Ph.D.; Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1996, 196 pages, \$42.95

A Population of Selves: A Therapeutic Exploration of Personal Diversity by Erving Polster, Ph.D., San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995, 251 pages, \$28.95

The Monkey-Rope: A Psychotherapist's Reflections on Relationships by Jerry M. Lewis, M.D.; Larchmont, New York, Bernal Books, 1996, 169 pages, \$17.95 paperbound

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Reviewing these four books about psychotherapy is difficult because the four authors have such different approaches. Fortunately, the authors have much in common; all of them have decades of clinical experience, are involved in research, and teach either graduate students or psychiatric residents. Also, they all write well and have produced books full of clinical examples but with a minimum of jargon. I will summarize each book and suggest which readers of *Psychiatric Services* will find them useful.

In *On the Client's Path*, A. J. Chevalier, Ph.D., a marital and family therapist who practices and teaches in Buffalo, Wyoming, presents an approach to short-term therapy that emphasizes patients' strengths. Her approach is based on a blend of ideas developed from Milton H. Erickson, Carl Jung, Native American healing practices, and her own experiences. In the book she gives specific instructions about the structure of 45-minute interviews, evaluation of patients, note-taking in a specific format, assignment of "homework," and termination after eight sessions. Most of the clinical examples she presents are from a school setting, not psychiatric clinics, and she doesn't use *DSM-IV* to diagnose patients. In the last chapter, she gives another format for using a 20-minute interview and suggests

ways of handling crises, including suicidal threats.

This book will be extremely helpful to beginning students in social work and counseling because the approach is so concrete and clear that beginners will be much less anxious than if they had to apply more complex models of therapy. Also, more experienced clinicians from all the mental health disciplines will find this format useful in a crisis clinic or in a setting that limits the number of visits. Clinicians seeing patients insured by managed care plans will find this brief approach acceptable by case reviewers because it has concrete, measurable goals.

Flash of Insight is by Stephen S. Pearce, Ph.D., senior rabbi of a congregation in San Francisco who holds a degree in counseling psychology and is a faculty member at the University of San Francisco. Dr. Pearce also gives credit to Milton Erickson for helping him formulate a unique approach to therapy. After making a thoughtful evaluation of his patients, Dr. Pearce tells them a story that he believes will illustrate their dilemma, will register with their unconscious, and will lead them to a solution. He describes the narrative as a "metaphor," but it is more than that; it captures the essence of the problem and "explodes" into the unconscious.

In the first half of the book he presents an impressive literature review that includes communication theory, neurolinguistic programming, classical religious texts, and many modern mental health practitioners. He also

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uses Erickson's ideas about unconscious communication, encoding, use of different senses, trance induction, indirect communication, and paradox. Dr. Pearce illustrates his method with many clinical vignettes, most of them drawn from his rabbinical counseling experience.

His purpose in the second half of the book is to present an encyclopedic selection of stories for use as "metaphors" for a vast array of problems. His selection comes from the Bible, Sufi folk tales, Mark Twain, Will Rogers, Erica Jong, Borneo tales, and many other sources. He also lists stories by theme and includes an extensive bibliography as well as indexes by author and title.

Fascinated as I am by his originality and enthusiasm, I believe that Dr. Pearce is a brilliant autodidact and that his techniques in less skilled hands could be harmful. Experienced clinicians who have had training in Erickson's techniques from workshops and supervision could offer this material to patients in selected cases.

The most challenging book is *A Population of Selves* by Erving Polster, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist who is director of the Gestalt Training Center in San Diego, California. The difficulty I have with this book is Dr. Polster's use of common words as specific concepts; some of the words also have particular meaning in other psychotherapeutic approaches. He argues that all of us have many characteristics, or selves, which are submerged or out of awareness. (These selves are not to be confused with "alters" or "split personalities" described in the literature about dissociative disorders.) In his approach to therapy he attempts to have patients name these selves, "to make them nouns, not adjectives."

Dr. Polster weaves together a style of therapy combining psychoanalytic self psychology and gestalt therapy with the goal of helping patients "reconfigure" and "tailor" their selves, or characteristics, into a sense of self. He feels that therapists must have "curiosity," must be "fascinated" by their patients, and must stay in contact with them empathically.

In his middle chapters Dr. Polster concentrates on therapeutic listening and suggests that we listen for gaps, for "arrows," for sequences, for connections, and for disjunctions. One goal in therapy is to help patients rewrite their autobiographies and to acknowledge all of their selves, no matter how odious or contradictory they are. Through clinical vignettes in the middle chapters and in the last two chapters, Dr. Polster gives much background material on gestalt therapy and illustrates his clinical style to be direct, confrontative, and in the here and now.

As with *Flash of Insight*, it would be hard to acquire the skills needed to do this approach just by reading this book. Course work and supervision through a center for gestalt therapy would be helpful. The chapters on therapeutic listening provide clinical pearls valuable for any clinician. I recently discussed with a patient my plan to help him rewrite his autobiography.

The Monkey-Rope by Jerry M. Lewis, M.D., is not a description of a particular psychotherapeutic approach; it is a group of 40 essays about the power of human relationships. Dr. Lewis is a research psychiatrist, clinician, and supervisor in Dallas. His goal in writing this book is to reawaken interest in the power of relationships. He feels that in current mental health practice, dominated by biological models and overemphasizing medications, the psychosocial factors of our patients are ignored. Compounding this trend are the demands of managed care companies, which want therapy to be effective—but brief.

The 40 essays are grouped into five sections, but each essay is complete in itself so they can be read in any order. The subjects are wide ranging and include pieces about the status of women, "normalcy" in both men and women, obesity and its causes, separation and loss, solitude, the healing power of marriage, self and self-worth, self-determination and heredity, twin studies, the motivations of health care workers, psychological factors affecting the immune system,

and the power of family values. Although emphasizing interpersonal factors, Dr. Lewis alludes in the essays to current research findings in genetics, twin studies, new antidepressive medications, and neuropsychiatric theories. These are informal essays, so there are no footnotes, but the references section in the back of the book lists his major sources.

These essays show so much wisdom and have such clarity that I recommend them to all readers of *Psychiatric Services*. The book is so well written that it could be a popular success, much like *Love's Executioner* by Irvin Yalom (1), which it resembles in style and tone. I have already loaned my copy of *The Monkey-Rope* to students and colleagues with certain chapters highlighted and passages underlined. I am having a hard time getting the book returned.

Reference

1. Yalom I: *Love's Executioner*. New York, Basic Books, 1989

Forbidden Narratives: Critical Autobiography as Social Science

by Kathryn Church; Langhorne, Pennsylvania, Gordon & Breach Publishers, 1995, 160 pages, \$45 hardcover, \$22 paperback

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Kathryn Church's book gives voice to three "forbidden narratives" of relevance to mental health policy makers, professionals, researchers, and consumers-survivors-expatriates. The first forbidden narrative, and the primary narrative of the book, is the justification of critical autobiography as a method of inquiry. Church, a sociologist who is active in Canadian mental health

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