

Book Reviews

LAW FOR THE PSYCHOTHERAPIST. By RG Meyer, ER Landis, and JR Hays. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988. 366 pp. \$34.95.

Reviewed by Will A. Kouw, PhD

This effort by three clinicians with a strong forensic predilection has much to offer. Written primarily for psychotherapists (in the broadest sense of the word), it may also appeal to lawyers who take an interest in interdisciplinary points of connection. Some of the book's material is in a traditional vein and covers familiar territory, such as professional liability, criminal responsibility, civil commitment, and the prediction of dangerousness. Much, however, is innovative. *Law for the Psychotherapist* offers a reasonably integrated series of 12 chapters in which the psychotherapist remains the central figure and in which the occasions for convergence with the legal system are systematically exposed and explored.

The book is divided into two sections, "The Psychotherapist in the Office and in Court," and "Specific Disorders and the Psychotherapist." The second section in particular offers helpful and informed chapters describing the relevance of legal concepts to clinical disorders. A very comprehensive bibliography rounds out the work.

The book has some shortcomings. It

omits any discussion of the legal issues surrounding the practice of group and family therapy. Also, the widespread practice of *pro forma* supervision (credentialled psychotherapists signing off on essentially uncredentialled practitioners' work and collecting fees from patients' insurance carriers and/or "supervisees") is not discussed. In the reviewer's opinion, this is a legal and ethical time bomb, and its discussion would have added to the book's value. Finally, the review copy of the book was not well-bound; pages came close to separating upon minimal "cracking" of the volume.

CHILD CUSTODY EVALUATIONS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE. By D Skafta. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985. 215 pp. \$12.50.

Reviewed by
Melvin G. Goldzband, MD

There is danger in being seduced by good writing. And this lady can *write!* The author, a family therapist from Colorado, has provided a most readable and interesting recipe book for the tyro in this dreadful field.

As with all seductions, recognition comes later, after reflection. The level of the book is not at all appropriate to mental health professionals who have had good training in child development and therapy. The author avoids sophis-

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ticated descriptions of dynamics and psychopathology. Certainly, plain English is appreciated and valuable, but in this case its use emphasizes her entry-level approach. Hints about what to look for when home visits are made, how to interview children of graded ages, etc., are necessary for beginners, but also illustrate the author's target readership. Perhaps most important, the author focuses on evaluating families for courts and lawyers, then recommends custody and visitation regimens for the courts to hand down. Nothing in the book indicates that getting the combatants to reach a mutual decision is the real aim of child advocacy, so that the battles will cease instead of being refought. Ironically, in the book's comprehensive case study, the couple does not in the end follow the recommendation made by the author but, instead, makes their own plan as a result of their dissatisfaction with hers! There is a lesson there, but it is not highlighted.

For the novice worker in a child protective agency or family court, this is an excellent springboard to more exhaustive and much deeper understanding of the processes of custody and visitation intervention and evaluation. However, the reader must not be seduced into believing that this introductory level is all there is.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT, AND LEGAL ISSUES, Second Edition. By CB Scignar. New Orleans:

Bruno Press, 1988. 344 pp. \$49.95 (Soft cover edition: \$32.95).

Reviewed by Roy B. Lacoursiere, MD

Dr. Scignar has written a comprehensive book on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with a good integration of theoretical and treatment material, and with considerable information for the forensic psychiatrist working with PTSD cases. There is a good presentation of what makes trauma important for PTSD purposes, and a discussion of the usually considered trauma (combat, rape, serious injuries or threats of same, etc.), along with an interesting chapter on "Invisible Trauma and PTSD-Toxic Substances, Radioactivity, and Pathogenic Micro-organisms." There are two solid chapters dealing with diagnosis and differential diagnosis.

The treatment that Dr. Scignar espouses is primarily cognitive-behavioral. That is very important to this reviewer, because PTSD has strong components of somatic reactivity and cognition (e.g., guilt about surviving, not more thoroughly resisting rape). Three chapters consider the forensic evaluation and civil and criminal legal issues, including practical steps in the examination and cross-examination of expert witnesses. The book contains several case illustrations, including some interesting historical ones such as the problems of Winston Churchill after he was struck by a car in 1931 on the streets of New York City. (If the British would only drive on the right like the rest of us, poor Mr. Churchill might have looked in the

proper direction for oncoming traffic before he tried to cross the street!)

Among the recent spate of books on PTSD, this is clearly one of the most comprehensively written, and one of most interest to the forensically-oriented psychiatrist.

A CRIME OF SELF-DEFENSE. By GP Fletcher. New York: The Free Press, 1988. 217 pp. + notes and index. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Weiss, MD

The trial of Bernhardt Goetz, the "subway vigilante," is the manifest material for this book by a Columbia law professor. There is much more here for the forensic psychiatrist: a lucid account of the Model Penal Code's treatment of *mens rea*; incisive commentary on the sociology of urban crime; a lawyer's-eye view of trial tactics; and an opportunity for the reader to feel as well as think through this *cause celebre*.

Was Goetz on "automatic pilot" once he perceived a threat, or was he a cold-blooded killer waiting for an opportunity? Although psychological testimony was not prominent in Goetz's trial and self-defense is based on "reasonable man" standards, courts will occasionally turn to us for testimony bearing on the "elements" of self-defense: imminence, proportionality, necessity, and intention. These are discussed in depth.

The book is concise and compelling. The reader will find neither first-person braggadocio nor smug second guessing. Professor Fletcher's superb teaching is

blended with stirring reportage of real persons struggling with timeless moral issues, producing an admirable work.

PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITY: CLINICAL, LEGAL, AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIMENSIONS. Edited by AT Meyerson and T Fine. Washington, DC: APA Press, 1987. 461 pp. \$32.00.

Reviewed by Roy B. Lacoursiere, MD

In 23 chapters that are generally crowded with information, this 44-author book reviews the material specified in the book's title. An opening section of four chapters covers epidemiology and clinical pathology in an overview that includes definitions, epidemiology, neurobiological basis, and general factors related to work disability. A section of more clinical chapters discusses disability in specific patient populations, namely with schizophrenia, substance use disorders, children and adolescence, aging, chronic physical illness, and the homeless mentally ill. Further, a section of chapters reviews psychiatric rehabilitation, including with a variety of specific methods and with case examples that allow the reader to see skilled rehabilitation training put into practice. This section includes two chapters on training psychiatrists and other mental health workers in the treatment of psychiatrically disabled patients.

There are two sets of chapters dealing with the administrative and legal issues of psychiatric rehabilitation: one from the clinical perspective, and the other

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from the judicial-legal perspective. The clinical perspective includes practical steps in evaluation for Social Security disability, worker's compensation, and for the Veterans Administration. The judicial perspective chapters cover the same contexts and others, but from the legal side, including such matters as how the Social Security disability program works in practice, legal representation for the psychiatrically disabled, and the courts and psychiatric disability.

This book is comprehensive and has much to offer to anyone interested in the subject of psychiatric disability. I have only minor comments to add. There was no mention that Social Security regulations can require those with substance abuse disorders to enter treatment for their substance disorder as a condition of granting them disability, or that worker's compensation cases based on psychiatric disability may, in some jurisdictions, require that the psychiatric disability be initiated by a physical injury, such as posttraumatic stress disorder or depression after physical injury; otherwise the psychiatric disability is not compensable. And to reveal a bias, I missed any mention of our northern neighbor, Canada, in the chapter discussing cross-cultural perspectives on psychiatric disability.

Overall, this book is a wealth of information on psychiatric disability. It is highly recommended.

**OLD LOYALTIES, NEW TIES:
THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES WITH
STEPFAMILIES.** By EB Visher and JS

Visher. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1988. ix + 261 pp. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Marilyn B. Halpern, PhD

In this recent but rapidly growing field, the Vishers' book is as stimulating as it is intellectually distinguished. It is a text of particular interest to any therapist working with stepfamilies and remarriage. The importance of a therapist who will be aware of the strengths and rewards of these families is stressed. The focus of the book is on the "road blocks" to integration of the family members. Various significant problem areas are delineated. Of special interest is the use of genograms, not only to the family and therapist, but also to the reader, because it is useful in clarifying the structures of the many permutations of the nuclear family. Special attention is given to "complex" stepfamilies and the idea that remarriage is born of loss. The Vishers strongly recommend early access to a well-trained and experienced therapist for guidance in gaining the necessary self-esteem to reach support for family identity and accommodation. Since children of stepfamilies provide the most stressful of all problems, the authors give clear evidence of the need for total family involvement wherever indicated.

This is the third book by the Vishers and is an important extension of their previous work. When one considers that the predominant type of American family in the next 15 years will be the stepfamily, the value of the Vishers' research cannot be overemphasized.

If there is a criticism of this book, it

would be of the editing. There is a wordiness in some areas that is distracting. For example, it would have been sufficient to address the problems of scheduling appointments in a few sentences of one chapter rather than having repetition with each case.

This book, which has such keen insight and sensitivity, should be in the library of everyone working in this field. It would also provide some insight to anyone who is a member of a stepfamily.

CLINICAL ASSESSMENT OF MALINGERING AND DECEPTION. Edited by R Rogers. New York: Guilford Press, 1988. 327 pp. \$39.50.

Reviewed by David D. Harwood, MD

This ambitious volume attempts to serve as a comprehensive source for both clinical practice and applied research. Written by an array of recognized experts, the text is divided into four major parts: diagnostic issues, psychometric approaches, specialized methods, and a summary review, as well as an exhaustive list of references. "Threshold" and "clinical decision" models for determining malingering and deception are offered, guided by strictly defined terminology and empirically tested precepts. This insistence on a firm, research-based foundation is the main strength of the book.

The book is uniformly well-written, elegantly presented, and contains a

number of useful summary tables. The chapters on malingered psychosis, malingering of posttraumatic disorders, childhood deception, and the use of structured interviews and dissimulation are particularly strong.

This book sets out to be broad in scope and appeal, and succeeds. I highly recommend it to psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health workers involved in the clinical assessment of dissimulation in any of its forms. For researchers and forensic psychiatrists, the book should become a core reference, and, therefore, is required reading.

THE VIOLENT HOME, Updated Edition. By RJ Gelles. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987. 232 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Dr. Jorge Oscar Folino

This edition of an exploratory study of conjugal violence combines data from 80 family interviews with theoretical approaches and bibliography review. The author provides rich detail concerning the social meaning of violent acts as felt by participants, in addition to statistical information.

In describing intrafamily violence as a multidimensional phenomenon, the author examines the various dynamics implicated, the rate differential across the social structure, the factors that are associated—such as pregnancy and social isolation—the roles of victim and of-

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fender, and the mechanisms by which the family serves as basic training for violence.

The theoretical approach is highlighted by the author's synthesis of a conjugal violence model. This model assumes that family violence is a function or response to structural stress and proceeds from socialization experience.

Gelles integrates the research data with existing theoretical conceptualizations and, moreover, develops the social structural theory of violence to useful propositions that would be applicable to other forms of family violence.

This volume provides the reader with a comprehensive perspective of a complex issue in an easy-to-read format.