

society, and that we should concern ourselves more with relationships than with individuality.

The solution for postmodern stress, writes Gergen, is not to resist it, but to dive into it fully. We should enjoy the multitude of roles and relationships that postmodern life provides; treat each social role as a game to be played, though nonetheless a serious game. Think of postmodern life as a carnival, he argues: and like any carnival, it will have events and activities that are both scary and exhilarating, happy and sad, nourishing and frustrating.

This is an important message for the 1990s, I think, but only if the metaphor of the carnival does not trivialize life as a whole. Postmodern life may be potentially playful, but some of the play must surely still be serious. Is child sexual abuse "merely" a playful experience? How about grief over the death of a spouse? Gergen is sensible enough to recognize problems like these as serious events, but he does not explain well how the "serious playfulness" of such problems therefore fits into his overall vision of postmodernism. I wish that he had done so; but of course, maybe my desire just shows a merely modernist temperament, one that chronically hopes to tie up every loose, logical end.

Lowman, Rodney. (1993). *Counseling and Psychotherapy of Work Dysfunctions*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. 333 pp., \$24.95 US (soft cover).

Reviewed by: Marilyn Fitzpatrick.

Counseling and Psychotherapy of Work Dysfunctions is a book targeted to all mental health practitioners whose clients experience work concerns and who wish to increase their competence in diagnosing and treating these problems. Lowman defines work dysfunctions as psychological conditions which significantly impair the capacity to work and are caused either by personal characteristics or by an interaction of those characteristics with the environment. The distinguishing feature of this book is its attempt to interest a wide group of clinicians in the domain of work-related counseling, and to give them a basis for working effectively in this area. It provides a conceptual framework for organizing our understanding of these dysfunctions. Within that framework, the author reviews the relevant literature, discusses diagnostic and treatment issues, and provides a number of interesting case illustrations.

The author's ideal world is one in which all mental health professions would have minimal competence in evaluating the psychological state of the client's work role, much as we currently assume qualified therapists be able to address marital or sexual concerns.

Lowman begins by describing the work environment outlining a number of principles of how organizations operate. The chapter is targeted to clinicians who have little personal experience in corporate life and may seem somewhat obvious to anyone who has that experience. Nonetheless,

the principles are sound and the caveats worth noting. For example, the "subrogation principle," that employees experience work difficulties if they do not learn that their needs are not the primary reason for the employment relationship, may be a difficult principle for many clinicians to work with. Counsellors are usually oriented toward the fulfillment of individual client needs but because employees and not organizations often suffer when conflicts between goals occur, a simple orientation toward individual needs fulfillment may not best serve the interests of clients.

Lowman notes that while there are detailed ways to assess lack of person-environment fit, at present, there is no validated taxonomy of work dysfunctions. He believes that clear systems to conceptualize the types of problems experienced by people within their work roles should be highly useful to clinicians who work in this area. He proposes a model, Taxonomy of Psychological Work-Related Dysfunctions, that first addresses the complex question of separating psychopathology and work dysfunction. For some clients, presenting a work problem may be their way of seeking help for another problem such as major depression. For others, depression may be caused or aggravated by work-related issues. Lowman has created a decision tree as an aid in developing formulations that distinguish psychopathology and work dysfunction.

The second part of the taxonomy concerns different types of disturbances in the capacity to work: patterns of undercommitment, patterns of overcommitment, work-related anxiety and depression, personality dysfunctions and work, life-role conflicts, transient situational stress, and other work-related difficulties. Chapter by chapter, Lowman reviews the relevant literature on each of the major types of dysfunction. In particular, his discussion of factors related to the Fear of Success pattern of undercommitment to work, and Type-A personality and Burnout as examples of overcommitment are clearly outlined and amply referenced. However, some areas, such as anxiety and depression, have a less extensive literature relating specifically to work-related depression or career anxiety. In these areas, Lowman attempts to extrapolate what is known from the clinical to the work arena. In general, the organization of the book is straightforward and allows the practising counsellor to easily locate material about a particular work dysfunction of interest.

For each type of work dysfunction, diagnostic issues are reviewed. Some chapters, although unfortunately not all, contain useful tables to summarize key dimensions of assessment. One of the themes of the book is the importance of assessing the relative contributions of personological versus environmental variables in dealing with work dysfunctions. Many of the chapters provide sound practical suggestions for assessment, including examples of specific questions, useful in evaluating the relative contributions of the person or the environment to the problem.

Lowman clearly cares about treatment issues, and he makes many reasonable recommendations for intervention. Some of these are defensible based on the research literature, some are not, presumably because no such literature exists. Generally the author seems to favour brief, focused treatment interventions, typically in a cognitive or paradoxical style, although

many of his case conceptualizations of the dysfunctions are psychodynamic in nature. His clinical vignettes vividly illustrate the problems of interest and have a strong "consulting-room" quality. The weakness of the case studies is ironically on the *treatment* side. The problems themselves are often vividly conveyed but the treatment descriptions are sometimes "thin" for a book directed specifically to clinicians.

Lowman presents *Counseling and Psychotherapy of Work Dysfunctions* as a conceptual framework for a field which is in the process of being defined. While his taxonomy and literature reviews provide an interesting and possibly enticing perspective, the field is not exactly new. Career counsellors, counselling psychologists, organizational, and industrial psychologists have been working with the psychopathology of work throughout the twentieth century. Lowman has made a valuable contribution to this ongoing effort which, if it succeeds in helping mental health professionals become more interested, focused, and professional in dealing with work as a key issue in the lives of their clients, is a worthwhile effort indeed.

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