

Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical and Cultural Perspectives

edited by Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, Mark Barad;
New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 548 pages, \$100

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This edited volume emerged from a series of workshops and conferences organized by the Foundation for Psychocultural Research. The intention of the three editors was to bring together a wide-ranging group of experts in neuroscience, behavioral science, and anthropology who could commonly address the subject of traumatic experience in order to undertake a creative exchange and make “significant steps toward the integration of diverse models and levels of explanation.”

To achieve this goal, the book is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on neurobiological perspectives of trauma and is largely concerned with basic science and thus is likely to present the most significant challenge to readers without a biological orientation. Recognizing the tendency of basic science research to rapidly outdate itself, the editors state that “some of the material presented in this section will no longer be cutting edge by the time this book appears in print.” The second section explores some clinical issues surrounding the treatment of traumatized individuals, with contributions from several notable figures in the world of traumatic stress studies. The focus of the third section is on cultural perspectives of trauma and the ways in which any comprehensive understanding of the subject must explore the cultural context and collective meaning—and memory—of any event. The contributors to this section are mainly anthropologists, who view the subject through the lens of their field experiences.

Although the stated goal of the volume is one of integration, a multiauthored book makes this task a challenging one, so the editors attempt to

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compensate by beginning each section with a summary that places the individual contributions within the overall context and intent of the book. Their introduction neatly summarizes the challenges inherent in interdisciplinary integration. As with most edited volumes, there is variation in the readability of the various contributions, with some of the chapters pre-

Textbook of Men’s Mental Health

edited by Jon E. Grant, M.D., M.P.H., and Marc N. Potenza, M.D., Ph.D.; Arlington, Virginia, American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., 2006, 468 pages, \$80

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This textbook is divided into three main sections. The first section is concerned with normal male development and comprises three chapters covering childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The next section deals with assessment and treatment of several psychiatric disorders, including chapters on anxiety, depression, substance abuse, conduct disorder, antisocial personality, impulse control disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, and sexual health. The final section encompasses several sociocultural issues for men. This section has seven chapters that address fathering, marriage, divorce, body image, muscularity, aggression, domestic abuse, culture, ethnicity, race, homosexuality, and the stigma of and barriers to treatment.

This book is well edited with a clear and easy-to-read style that is consistent and uniform throughout all the chapters. Each chapter begins with a believable case vignette, and the chapter content follows. The chapters end with a section of bulleted key points that reduces the chapter’s content down to two to four major important take-away messages. Most of the chapters also end with a

supposing greater knowledge of the subject than others.

Understanding Trauma is a textbook, not a book on trauma for the general reader. This volume is more for the specialist in psychological trauma who wishes to expand his or her knowledge and move into more interdisciplinary studies or for the specialist in transcultural psychiatry who wishes to know more about psychological trauma. Clinicians working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds are likely to find material in this volume to be particularly helpful.

box of highlighted practice guidelines, which have three to five bulleted clinical points for therapists to be particularly mindful of when treating a male client with this particular illness or issue. Valuable tables are contained within many of the chapters. One example is the chapter on adolescence by Craig Erickson and R. Andrew Chambers, which presents a conceptual diagram of the developmental trajectories of gender-associated traits and psychopathologies emerging through this period. It sees males as being prone to cognitive-motor-motivational disorders, such as impulse control, substance abuse, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, tic disorders, antisocial personality, and suicide completion. In contrast, females are more prone to “cognitive-social-emotional disorders,” such as anxiety, depression, borderline personality, and suicide gestures.

The chapter on men, marriage, and divorce by Scott Haltzman, Ned Holstein, and Sherry Moss very sensitively covers male-specific issues in marital

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