Laungani presents a view of our world, our ‘global village’ (p. 2), as one embo-
died by multiculturalism, political cor-
rectness, and racism. This type of
foundation creates the need for indigen-
ous therapies, as counselling and psy-
chotherapy are no longer strictly Western
in their nature and usage. Laungani first
focuses on defining culture. He reviews
varied interpretations of the word used in
everyday language ending at a bottom
line which characterises culture as an
umbrella term to be examined through
three perspectives: subjective, academic,
and post-modern. Laungani travels
through these perspectives in an attempt
to encapsulate a concept of culture. Readers may find themselves wanting
more definite guidelines to classify and
categorise what culture is exactly, which
reveals the exact ambiguous nature that
Laungani goes to such great length to
explain.

When speaking of Asian/Eastern and Western perspectives, Laungani is
referring mainly to Indian and British
outlooks, respectively. Migratory pat-
terns and the lifestyles and adjustments
of the first, second, and third generation
Asians in Britain are discussed at length.
Laungani brings in personal experiences
of culture shock to highlight a common
theme found throughout the book, this
being that human beings are ‘divided
more by our differences than united by
our similarities’ (p. 51). Case studies are
skilfully used to exemplify the content
matter.

Laungani takes on the gargantuan
task of comparing two cultures and does
so with an air of almost casual conversa-
tion. There seems to be a curiosity
behind his words within the comparative
study of the English and Indian cultures,
as if he too is searching for the answers
alongside the reader. Laungani attempts
not to provide the answers to the pro-
blems that arise in cross-cultural coun-
selling, but aims to present a framework
to better understand the *whys* that rest
behind the differences, and how the
culture can impact an individual’s be-
liefs, values, behaviours, and attitudes. A
brief examination of the shortcomings of
current lenses through which we exam-
ine and compare other cultures (stereo-
types and rationalism) is examined
which succeeds at building a case for
Laungani’s theory of cross-cultural com-
parisons. A very thorough discussion of
four distinct factors that differentiate
East from West is presented: individual-
ism vs. communalism, cognitivism vs.
emotionalism, freewill vs. determinism, and materialism vs. spiritualism. The ground rules are now laid for the remainder of the book, which draws cross-cultural comparison into the realm of counselling.

Laungani finally shares his strong opinions when diagnostic considerations are discussed from the viewpoint of both therapist and client. A fine overview of the history of counselling in Western societies is presented. Though there is some support presented for various therapies, the discussion ends at a crucial bottom line:

‘Very little attention is paid to the counseling needs of the member of ethnic minorities who may or may not share or subscribe to the dominant values systems of western society. This shows an unwillingness on the part of counselors to concern themselves with the needs of ethnic minorities from the Indian sub-continent, from the Afro-Caribbean counties, from the Middle East, from South-East Asia, China and elsewhere’ (p. 118).

Laungani presents Western and Eastern client approaches to therapy. Great insight is lent to revealing the social stigma attached to mental health services in Indian cultures, which further lends to a foundational understanding of an Indian client seeking therapy in Britain. Laungani paints a very clear picture that the standards in Western therapy settings, namely, neutrality, objectivity, cognitive control, and empathy, are of little or no concern in Indian therapy settings. These discussions lead to the core issue that emerges as the most prevalent in the book, this being the cultural and ethnic matching of clients and therapists.

Laungani does an excellent job of examining the varied perspectives within the issue of matching. The uneasy currents between the minority client and minority therapist, the white Western client and therapist, and all combinations therein are explored. Ultimately, however, the argument over matching ends in an overarching lack of support for its promotion:

‘The problem of matching extends into a more general one, which is concerned with “getting on” with peoples of other cultures, with trust, integrity and in peace and harmony. The problem of living in a multicultural society is not an isolated one affecting any one or two individuals. It affects us all’ (p. 174).

There is a continual balancing act between objectivity and subjectivity traced throughout the book. In an artful way, two of Laungani’s personal case studies act as humanising tools to wrap things up, wherein the difficulties of cross-cultural and multicultural therapy, objectivity and subjectivity, East and West differences, come together in realistic cases-in-point. One of his final points is best presented in his own words:

‘If we assume that a large number of problems which our clients bring to us are problems that for want of a better phrase are fundamental human pro-
problems, we need to develop an antenna which would sensitize us to those problems. The onus is upon therapists to find ways to crawl into the skin (psyche) of their clients and see the world from their perspective, without imposing their own rigid categories of explanations, which may or may not turn out to be relevant’ (p. 228).

Considering the huge wealth of information, historical facts and summaries, large-scale definitions, and controversial nature of the core issues at hand, Laungani does a respectful and admirable job, while remaining true to his own values, morals, attitudes, and beliefs, and rarely skirting around the tough questions. The book provides guidance for any therapist or counsellor, especially those working with clients of varied cultures and ethnicities, toward uncovering and revealing potentially unknown tendencies that could be inhibiting successful therapy. Awareness seems to be the greatest tool Laungani provides in his exploration, leaving the reader with new thoughts, challenges, worries, and hopes, but no real path of action. Laungani admittedly acknowledges as such. Though answers may not be provided, the reader is left with a strong focus towards questioning, searching, and challenging the state of affairs today within our multicultural world, for ignorance no longer remains an option.

**Nurturing Queer Youth: Family Therapy Transformed**

FISH, L. S. & HARVEY, R.G., 2005
New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
ISBN 0-393-70455-6

Reviewed by Vicky Gunn, Teaching and Learning Service, University of Glasgow

*Nurturing Queer Youth* is an easy to read, practical text which sets out a framework for approaching therapeutic family mediation when one of the main focuses is on minority sexuality. That it is an American production is unsurprising. In July this year the Reverend Jerry Falwell made it quite clear to a gathering of like-minded Christians in North Carolina that allowing children to live as gay is tantamount to letting them play in the middle of a motorway. He then went on to endorse the forcing of adolescents who identify themselves as gay into ‘turn about’ camps. This seems extreme and perhaps unrepresentative until one reads in the body of this book of a case with which they dealt that was referred by the school administration because the adolescent in question, a 15-year-old girl, was overweight, dressed in counter-culture clothes, had piercings, and hung out with ‘other kids on the margins’. I found myself admiring her instantly and certainly could not imagine referring her to a therapist for such an approach to life. Yet such, it seems, is one aspect of modern American experience, a sense of the normative rule of ‘good boy, good girl’ existence. The USA is a nation living with a paradox where adolescence is concerned, as the authors make clear. They recognise the tensions created in the face of an increasingly tolerant society on the one hand, at the same time as the rise in fundamentalism and enshrinement of a notion of family that is intrinsically exclusive on the other. Negotiating difference is difficult in such a situation and sexuality/gender difference is no exception to this rule. For
Fish and Harvey this environment makes family therapy mediated through queer theory imperative.

The book establishes the grounding of these two family therapists within systems and development theories. Fish and Harvey recognise also their debt to feminism and multiculturalism. The authors explain that they operate from the basic assumption that relationships are crucibles for individual growth and development and that family therapy, in their eyes, allows family members to make conceptions and assumptions explicit with one another.

Chapter 2 goes on to outline their interpretation of queer theory, drawing on the work of writers such as Judith Butler and Eva Sedgewick. Fish and Harvey accept that destabalising ideas about gender can be liberational and that sexualities are constructed within social contexts. None of the theories they espouse are without their detractors but I am inclined to accept that their book, with its practice focus, is not the place for a seminal examination of the problems with the theories. Having said this it is a shame that they avoided any reflection on the post-modern analytical approaches provided by authors such as William Simon (who explores adolescence and sexuality) and Teresa de Lauritis (who, unlike Butler and Sedgewick, deals exclusively with lesbian sexuality) (de Lauritis, 1994; Simon, 1996). Perhaps another book on nurturing the ‘adolescent psycho-sexual’, taking the issues of practice raised in this text and revisiting the post-Freudian analysts’ positions on adolescent sexuality in general, would be a useful follow up.

I also wonder whether it would have been worth having a chapter on re-thinking ‘homophobia’ and its expression in families. One thing that struck me about this book was the underlying implication that the societal norm in the USA is homophobia. This is surely simplistic. Homophobia is a pathological condition and as such can perhaps be understood with compassion. However, the heteronormativity of American society is less pathological than ignorant. Society in this context may well be homobigoted, but this is a prejudice, an excuse to oppress, not a pathological condition. I raise this question because I fear that family therapy actually colludes with something unacceptable by remaining a safe container for the parents. Actually, on occasion, it would be quite nice to hold my empathy and positive regard in abeyance, focusing purely on a child-like congruence to tell parents ‘struggling’ with queer adolescents that they are bigots.

The chapters that follow the underpinning theoretical assumptions behind Fish and Harvey’s practice provide a model for engaging in family therapy. Chapter 3 explores ‘creating refuge’ and centres on developing an environment for honesty and intimacy. In the later stages of this chapter the writers concede that they do not advocate honesty at any cost but try instead to work within a non-toxic environment. Here surely is the crux of this approach. These therapists wish to create honest, open and intimate inter-family relations—is intimacy really compatible with avoidance of judgement? To illustrate the point they comment on the case of the 15-year-old girl I mentioned earlier. Her father does not attend the sessions and believes that homosexuals are mentally ill. The choice in this case is not to challenge him, but to allow the girl the freedom to choose to stay in the closet at
home. On a superficial level this will keep the girl fed, housed and near her mother, but how psychologically safe is such a situation? Chapter 4 explores the notion of difficult dialogues and strikes me as one of the most important chapters as it deals directly with the need to confront and challenge misconceptions. In short, it is the tough bit and any clients continuing to participate are showing, in my mind, a real commitment to a positive expression of familial love. Chapter 5 concerns itself with nurturing queerness and leading families into realising the gifts queer folk have to offer. For me this should be society’s norm. The final chapter looks at encouraging transformation and in essence is the most political as it takes practice experience and understanding and requests it is discussed widely at family, therapy practice, and community levels.

Throughout this review I have noted that this is an American text. Does it have relevance to the British and European societies as they are currently constructed? Though I cannot talk of mainland Europe, as a counsellor of queer Christians in the UK during the 1990s, I think we would be fools to allow ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security about our open-mindedness. The extremes exist in the UK too. I have certainly counselled individuals who have been excluded from their families, churches, and careers because of their sexuality. We still live predominantly in a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ environment much of the time and for adolescents surely nothing can seem more hypocritical. If adolescent experience can be eased by counsellors and family therapists encouraging discussion of people’s truths in a safe environment, great. So, despite any misgivings I might have raised about such a book I think it is worth reading.

References
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SIMON, W. (1996). Postmodern Sexualities. London: Routledge.

The Couple is Telling You What You Need to Know: Couple-Directed Therapy in a Multicultural Context
BOBES, T. & BOBES, N. S., 2005
Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books
ISBN 0-393-70427-0
163 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Manthei, School of Education, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

When I first read the title of this book I was intrigued and immediately thought that it would present an extensive account of therapy from the client’s point-of-view, somewhat along the lines of Bohart and Tallman’s thesis that ‘the active efforts of clients are responsible for making psychotherapy work’ (1999, p. xi). Not so. Nevertheless, what I discovered was a very practical, sensible account of how one couple does couples therapy. The title refers more to the central thesis of the book, which is ‘privileging the client’s voice’. Throughout the book the authors repeat the theme of therapists trying to understand the client’s voice, ‘seeing it as he (sic) sees it, and “walking in his shoes”. The client always tells you what you need to know’ (p. 32).

I found the book useful, easy to read and interpret, and the contents easily translatable into practical interventions
for use in therapy. It was organised into three sections. The first was a brief introductory chapter setting out the authors’ eclectic philosophical/theoretical orientation, which included elements of systems theory, feminist principles, developmental theory, narrative therapy, collaborative language systems therapy and post-modern thinking. Their aim in writing the book was melding of systems theory and a multicultural perspective is explained, although rather too briefly, I thought. The second section (Chapters 1–3) was a description of the principles and key techniques for doing couples therapy. While very useful and full of practical lists of ideas, this section, too, was rather brief and tended to read like a series of hints on what to try in therapy. The third part began with a chapter outlining the authors’ ‘conceptual map’ of therapy, or how multiculturally-infused systems theory actually works. Although it was brief as a conceptual map, it would be useful to practising therapists in the way it presented a series of 10 questions to guide one’s thinking through the process of therapy. The remaining nine chapters in the third part consisted of a series of case studies illustrating the assumptions and practices of the authors’ multicultural orientation. The detail provided in these chapters and the depth of analysis varied considerably, but, overall, reading them provides valuable insights and suggestions to think about. Curiously, the book finished rather abruptly and unsatisfactorily with a short discussion of ‘self-supervision’ that was tacked on to the end of the final chapter on stepfamilies and re-parenting. This topic deserves to have been expanded and presented as a final, unifying discussion on dealing with the myth of the therapists’ neutrality in therapy (p. 228).

One of the most interesting and useful aspects of the book was its constant focus on the therapist’s cultural background. This was nicely achieved by including material from the supervision sessions associated with each case history. This supervisory focus enhanced the ‘multicultural’ theme of the book and clearly illustrated how the therapist’s own cultural background can influence/intrude on therapy. Interestingly, almost all of the supervision sessions associated with these cases were in a group supervision format. Conveniently, the resulting multiple cultural perspectives available to the therapist in such settings provided them with a depth of support and a host of alternative perspectives that would seldom be available in the more common one-to-one form of supervision. I suspect the supervision sessions described in the book were group sessions being conducted with advanced psychotherapy students. The utility of such supervision when taking a multicultural approach was evident.

At times the descriptions of the cases in the third section of the book seemed too brief. Although the topics raised (e.g. domestic violence; therapy with gay and lesbian couples; inter-racial couples) were treated sensibly and informatively, the lack of detail and depth on these complex issues could possibly lead readers to over-generalise the principles and suggestions offered. Nevertheless, each chapter gave pause for thought and illustrated the eight assumptions that underpinned the authors’ integrated systems theory and multicultural perspective.
So, what is my final verdict? I liked the book and recommend it as a useful and thought-provoking resource for therapists, therapists in training, and supervisors working with couples and families. The strength of the book, its multicultural theme, is consistently addressed and illustrated throughout.

Reference

BOHART, A.C. & TALLMAN, K. (1999). *How Clients Make Therapy Work*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

The Purpose of Counselling and Psychotherapy

BENNETT, M., 2005

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

ISBN 1-4039-3596-3

Reviewed by Judi H. Miller, Senior Lecturer and Co-ordinator of Counsellor Education, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

As a counsellor-educator, I was intrigued by the title of this book, hoping it would offer some much needed clarification about the purposes of, and the jurisdictional connections between, counselling and psychotherapy. I was both disappointed and encouraged by the content.

From his position as manager of a large, charity-funded counselling organisation, Michael Bennett makes a very appealing case that: ‘practitioners are overly concerned with detailed and small-scale ethical issues [e.g. confidentiality] such that the broader and deeper concerns with justice, truth and autonomy, which are of genuine interest to them, are often overlooked not just by the practitioners but also by the organisations they work for and the professional bodies who represent them’ (p. 1).

He therefore challenges counsellors and psychotherapists to examine the presuppositions of their profession from a value base that is philosophically grounded. In doing so he investigates and rejects the post-modern emphasis holding sway in current practice and encourages counsellors and psychotherapists to turn for guidance to theories of late modernity offered by Jurgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens.

Using Habermas’ theory of communicative rationality, Bennett convincingly asserts that many purposes of counselling and psychotherapy can be justified. Examples of such purposes include: to enable people to achieve autonomous decentred self-identity and the capacity to act ethically and morally when other socialisation processes have failed them, and to create the capacity of the individual to make the existential or ethical decisions than enable her to live an authentic life. His three chapter long theoretical analysis relies on a close examination of ideas associated with authenticity, the decentred self, ethics and morality, autonomy and individuation. While interesting, this part of the book seems repetitious and overly laboured, which sometimes detracts from Bennett’s argument.

Bennett is also inconsistent in the application of his critical, philosophical gaze. While spending much time and analytical effort on the ideas outlined above, he neglects to examine in any significant detail the differences in purpose between counselling and psychotherapy. Treating them as one, he asserts that ‘psychotherapy [and by implication counselling] . . . involves working with a client over a period of time such that the trust invested in the therapeutic relationship will enable the
client to bring to the surface, and act out, the disturbed feelings in a way that slowly releases them from compulsion to repeat’ (p. 108); and the role of the therapist and counsellor is to be able to experience the erotic desires and yet contain them (p. 137). Psychotherapists may be happy with this characterisation of their work but I much prefer the view that the purpose of counselling is to enable the client, rather than the counsellor, to determine both the length and focus of therapy. It is also important to acknowledge the major role the client plays in transformation. While Bennett acknowledges that humans are not passive in the face of abstract systems he does not carry this acknowledgment into the counselling arena. He therefore ignores the burgeoning evidence that success in counselling is as much about extra-therapeutic processes and encounters, and client motivation, as it is about counsellor’s authenticity.

Bennett’s characterisation of brief therapy as surface-oriented, symptom-focused, and locked into the medical model, whereby the client is fixed by the counsellor ready to return to perform in the same social context that caused the original symptoms, is unhelpful. His perspective fails to acknowledge the full range of brief approaches to counselling and their explicit rejection of the medical model. Both narrative and solution-focused therapies have, as core assumptions, that meanings are socially constructed and that clients will engage more with their environment when they re-gain self-confidence and a sense of agency. I dispute that such therapies cannot be included in approaches that enable clients to realise decentred selves that are able to maintain their identity throughout the various roles that they perform.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Bennett explores how Habermas’ theory might apply to both theoretical and practical issues in psychotherapy and counselling. These chapters are particularly engaging. He intelligently creates a picture of a profession that has lost its way. I share his concerns that the rush into professionalisation ‘gives dubious legitimacy to a practice that results in the significant failure of counselling and counsellors to become involved in social issues’ (p. 200). Similarly, I agree with his assertion that codes of ethics can create a false sense of security and discourage people from exercising their own wisdom and judgement that may lead to practitioners colluding with practices that might otherwise be thought to be unethical or immoral. I also share his concern that, in an environment of third-party funding, the criteria on which ‘success’ are measured become increasingly tied to the requirements of the funder.

Few would disagree with Bennett’s belief, expressed in Chapter 6, that abstract systems such as fragmentation, commodification, loss of meaning and expert systems are having a negative impact on the identities of people. His examples are salient and will not fail to alert the reader to think about changing some of their practices. I was particularly unsettled by the accuracy of his observation that ‘it is strange that it can take weeks before we can arrange to meet a close friend’ (p. 174). It helped to emphasise his point that counselling and psychotherapy have been duped (by the same abstract systems) into concentrating on the personal and for-
getting their political purpose. Bennett’s solution is to remember that: ‘Counseling and psychotherapy provide one of the very few platforms from which people can...understand how their individual difficulties are directly related to disruptions operating at the economic and societal level’ (p. 167).

In sum, this book is impressive both in scope and theoretical complexity. Bennett successfully convinced me that there are different and better ways to theorise a new vision for counselling. A few more concrete examples of how this new vision might manifest itself would have improved the book, but leaving that aside, I found myself sufficiently challenged to want to re-read some sections and engage closely with this work. Bennett’s hope that counsellors and psychotherapists will practice more authentically will be closer to realisation if counsellors/psychotherapists and their teachers read and reflect on his words.

Supervision: Questions and Answers for Counsellors and Therapists
JACOBS, M. & WALKER, M., 2004
London: Whurr
ISBN 1-86156-414-7

Reviewed by Alex Millham, Family Therapist, Portsmouth

Supervision is often a neglected area in clinical training. Nurses, counsellors, therapists and psychologists can qualify and be thrown into supervising others after receiving little or no training in giving supervision. In turn those requesting supervision are often unclear what to ask for or expect. They may even approach supervision feeling that asking their supervisor questions is making demands and being unreasonable. This remains the case despite there being a drive for all manner of professionals to receive supervision on their contact with their clients. I have been struck by how colleagues can be reflective and generous with their clients but when supervising can become directive and critical.

This book arose from the authors’ training on supervision. Whilst being open about their theoretical preferences this book would be useful for counsellors using many different approaches. The authors are consistently thoughtful and even-handed in their discussion of difficult issues. The book covers supervision from the perspective of both the supervisor and the supervisee and provides detailed and clear suggestions. Questions that it provides answers for supervisees include:

- What should I be looking for in a supervisor?
- Is it important for me to have a supervisor who has the same theoretical base as that which informs my training?
- I am not very happy with the supervision I am receiving, but when I try to raise this with my supervisor she tells me it is because I have issues with her as an authority figure and I should take it to my own therapy. I think it’s because I don’t find her very effective. How can I resolve this?

All these questions have been important for me throughout my career. As a trainee mental health nurse a task I was given was to find myself a supervisor. I had little idea what to look for. I knew very little about how I might learn effectively or what approaches might help me with meeting clients for the first time. My first supervisor provided a
great learning opportunity for me in what to avoid. He would often cancel our meetings, leave early or when we did meet simply tell me how impressed he was with what I had done. As a result I needed to end the arrangement very quickly. I found this terrifying but was glad I had done it. If this book had been compulsory for me perhaps I would have known what to ask for and avoided such a mess.

My hope for the book would be that it would result in students becoming more demanding and clearer about what they would like from their supervision. One tradition of supervision that it misses, however, is that of my background where supervision is both live (the supervisor is usually in an adjacent room) and through review of video taped sessions. I have frequently found video-tape review a useful learning tool. It has helped me to notice things that I would not have seen (like when my posture changes) or pushed me to reflect on things that I may not have shared in supervision. It is admirably clear and comprehensive and would be of value for anyone who is supervising or receiving supervision (just about everyone reading this journal, I would imagine).

**Dictionary of Counselling (2nd ed.)**

*Feltham, C. & Dryden, W.*, 2004

London: Whurr

ISBN 1-86156-382-5 (pbk)

Reviewed by Alex Millham, Family Therapist, Portsmouth

My initial approach to reviewing a dictionary of counselling was to try to catch it out. I began looking for words that it may have missed. Then I searched for definitions that I disagreed with and looked for words that I wasn’t sure why they were included. I quickly turned to terms like ‘missed sessions’ which I assumed would be too obvious to warrant inclusion. The authors used terms like ‘acting out’ uncritically in their definition. This left me wondering what informed the authors in their choices of what to criticise and what to leave.

As a family therapist I was impressed by the description of what unites the diverse approaches within this particular field: ‘all regard the interpersonal dynamics as more important than individual intrapsychic factors’. I was reassured that it added that there were specific skills in working with family members alongside each others. I was also impressed that it made reference to my preferred ways of working like narrative and solution-focused therapy. It even offered definitions of key techniques from solution-focused therapy including scaling questions and the Miracle question. I was concerned that the term ‘diversity’ only appears within ‘race awareness training’. Diversity deserves a far more thorough account and to encompass issues such as age and gender. I consider issues of diversity (or put simply any issues of difference) to be central to informing any counselling meeting.

The exercise, however, of pointing out omissions is rather pointless. I am sure that this would be a worthwhile book for trainees or even left in a waiting room for clients to learn a little of our language. But what is the value of all these words? Do they bring us closer to our clients or closer to our own preferred ideas or ways of working? I am not sure. I am even left wondering what would happen if all these words were to disappear and be erased from our collective
minds. Would we listen with a different sort of ear to what was being said to us? Would we be more interested in what the words that the client is using mean to them? Perhaps we should put the dictionary to one side and ask the people before us for their definitions and meanings. I predict this would lead to a richness that a book or even a book review could not.