Emotion, Development, and Self-Organization: Dynamic Systems Approaches to Emotional Development

Marc D. Lewis and Isabela Granic (Editors). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2000, 411 pp. $47.95 USA.

Lewis, Granic and the several chapter authors have produced a rich volume encompassing emotion theory and research with integration to clinical practice.

The book begins with a necessary introduction which defines several key terms one must grasp in order to follow the book with its heavy emphasis on emotion theory. These definitions include dynamic systems theory, non-linear dynamic, state space, chaos theory and variants of self-organization.

The book is otherwise broken into 3 major sections. Intrapersonal processes focuses on internal working emotional systems and their development. Neurobiological processes focuses on the neurobiological equivalents of emotion and emotion development. Interpersonal processes elaborate, in detail, on the role of parent-child relationships, attachment, interpersonal dynamics and the role of marital relationships as a model.

The various chapters take an in depth look at both recent and some more classical research findings. This is interwoven with new thinking of some of the brightest minds in this field today. The chapter on Marital Modelling for example blends theory to this (Washington University) group’s own research, to practical assessment and therapeutic instruments. To whet the theorist/researcher’s appetite, the chapter goes into a model.

The various chapters take an in depth look at both recent and some more classical research findings. This is interwoven with new thinking of some of the brightest minds in this field today. The chapter on Marital Modelling for example blends theory to this (Washington University) group’s own research, to practical assessment and therapeutic instruments. To whet the theorist/researcher’s appetite, the chapter goes into a mathematical model describing the marital dyad. Finally, it concludes with eight hypotheses that this group is studying toward the development of an empirically based marital intervention. Such a chapter is bound to stir up other researchers’ competitive and collaborative instincts, resulting in the provocation of both thought and emotion.

This book is definitely dense, and, despite its relative brevity, it is geared primarily for a subgroup of research based professionals and interested others. Regardless of this challenge, it is well worth the read as much more than a primer on this evolving and cutting-edge research and clinical area.

Allan Abbass MD, FRCPC

Margaret Steele, HBSc, MD, FRCPC, MEd

DSM-IV Diagnosis in the Schools: 2002 Update.
Alvin E. House, Guildford Press, NYC, 2002, 237pp. $32.00 USA.

DSM-IV Diagnosis in the Schools, 2002 is an updated version of the 1999 edition. The author states that this book is intended to increase child psychologists’ familiarity with the Diagnostic Statistical Manual Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) and to bolster their confidence in using it within school settings. It discusses how the system is organized and how its organization relates to common presenting problems, as well as to other classification systems. This book is divided into three parts: 1) Diagnostic issues and the use of DSM-IV; 2) Guidelines for evaluation of presenting problems and 3) The application of DSM-IV in school settings: issues and topics.

The first section of the book is well written and clearly explains the model of the diagnostic process and gives a nice overview of the DSM classification model and the important constructs within this system. This section would be helpful for medical students, psychiatric residents, pediatric residents and family medicine residents who are learning about the DSM classification system. It is a fine refresher for the practicing physician.

This is definitely a book for American practitioners. In the first chapter the author states that one of the roles played by psychiatric diagnosis is the primary “gatekeeping” function for insurance companies and government agencies in determining reimbursement decisions. Throughout the book, the author comments on the application of the DSM-IV criteria to the American Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The second part is divided into a number of chapters that focus on symptoms, specific problems such as substance-related problems, or diagnoses such as personality disorders. Some of the topics could have been better positioned in the book. For example, pervasive developmental disorders were included in the chapter with psychoses when it may have been more helpful to place them in the chapter on “problems with mental ability, learning, communication and cognition.” Although there are similarities between some symptoms of pervasive developmental disorders and persons with schizophrenia, persons with pervasive developmental disorders have communication and learning difficulties and are much less likely to have psychotic symptoms. The topic of selective mutism was placed in the chapter entitled “Highly Focused Symptom Patterns.” Current literature seems to indicate that selective mutism is an anxiety disorder so it might have been more helpful to have placed selective mutism in the chapter focusing on “Emotional Symptoms.”

In the chapter on emotional symptoms, the author discusses anxiety, mood, somatization and dissociative disorders. In the section “dissociative identity disorder” the author seems to impart his biases more than any other place in the book. He brings up the concept of “false-memory syndrome” which is not part of DSM-IV. Raising the controversy is important but it is unclear why the author emphasized his position so strongly.

In the third section, the issues associated with the application of DSM-IV in school settings are nicely described. Two of the chapters in this section pertain to American practitioners. The other three chapters are very practical. One chapter focuses on ethics and professional responsibility in evaluation while another chapter features important aspects of the case record. The last chapter summarizes the concerns with respect to using the DSM-IV classification system. The following concerns are raised: the “academic” nature of the diagnoses, the inability to apply the classification system to all cultures, the reliance of making diagnoses on clinical judgment and decision making, the number of diagnostic categories and the frequent occurrence of multiple diagnoses; and the lack of empirical data on the global assessment of functioning (GAF) ratings. The author stresses the role that psychiatric classification has played and will continue to play in research and clinical practice and the increasing application of the DSM classification system in educational settings.

Overall, the book would be a useful resource for practitioners working in school settings.

Margaret Steele, HBSc, MD, FRCPC, MEd