

BOOK REVIEWS

CRISIS INTERVENTION AND COUNSELING BY TELEPHONE. *David Lester and Gene W. Brockopp (Eds.).* Springfield, Illinois, Charles C Thomas, 1973, pp. xi + 322. \$11.75.

CRISIS INTERVENTION. *Gerald A. Specter and William L. Claiborn (Eds.).* New York, Behavioral Publications, 1973, pp. x + 210. \$9.95.

Reviewed by Glen D. King

David Lester, editor and contributor, is presently an Associate Professor at Stockton State College in New Jersey. He received the Ph.D. degree from Brandeis University and formerly served as the Research Director for the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service in Buffalo, New York. Dr. Lester's dissertation concerned suicidal behavior in college students and he followed his initial work with numerous articles and books on suicide, curiosity, and the fear of death. Gene W. Brockopp, coeditor and contributor, is presently the Executive Director of Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service Inc. in Buffalo, New York. He received the Ph.D. degree from Indiana University. Currently he also holds an appointment as Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the State University of New York. Dr. Brockopp is the editor of Crisis Intervention and the author of numerous articles on techniques in telephone counseling and suicide prevention. Gerald A. Specter, editor, is currently Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Maryland. He received the Ph.D. degree in clinical psychology from the University of Rochester. Specter is particularly interested in programs promoting mental health through early intervention with children and entire families. He is also the coauthor of a forthcoming text on community psychology. William L. Claiborn, coeditor, is also currently Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Maryland. He received the Ph.D. degree from Syracuse University. Dr. Claiborn has published several articles on public policy and community psychology, and he consults on program development, evaluation, and training. He has edited a previous book on school intervention and he is editing further work in the community-clinical psychology series. Glen D. King, the reviewer, is Assistant Professor of Community and Clinical Psychology at Auburn University. He received the Ph.D. degree from Florida State University and has major interests

in crisis intervention and innovative service development. Dr. King currently serves as consultant to Lee County Crisis Center, Auburn Police, and County Alcoholism Services. He conducts research on the effectiveness of community programs and has written articles on telephone counseling techniques and innovative uses of crisis centers.

The articles in *Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone* comprise an important initial step in the direction of developing a methodology, policy, and theory for telephone counseling consistent with those of crisis intervention. The articles were compiled in an attempt to acquaint the reader with the development of the telephone counseling movement and the issues and problems generated by that movement. The book is divided into five sections, each of which deals with a major facet of the development, maintenance, and evaluation of telephone counseling centers.

Section 1 is comprised of articles concerned with the variety of telephone crisis centers that have developed nationally during the last 15 years. Section 2 presents a series of articles dealing with some of the theoretical underpinnings for telephone counseling and the unique properties of providing crisis intervention by telephone. A significant article in this section, contributed by Richard McGee, points out the importance of considering telephone crisis intervention as a temporary technique which is most useful when integrated with an outreach approach such as a "care team" that assists the client in his home environment.

Almost all the articles in Section 3 were written by Brockopp and Lester and present generally excellent information, strategies, and supporting rationale for the management of obscene, chronic, cry-for-help, silent, nuisance, and "one-counselor" callers. Section 4 focuses on the issues and problems of selecting and training telephone counselors and provides opposing viewpoints on the issue of whether the telephone counselor should be professional or nonprofessional. Finally, Section 5 discusses the problems, strategies, and important questions in assessing telephone counselors and services, providing potential investigators with an excellent outline for research, which is almost nonexistent in this field.

Although *Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone* makes some significant contributions in the specific areas of strategies for handling problem callers and the evaluation of services, it has many serious shortcomings. First, in general the book is poorly organized, edited, and written. There is often very little integration of chapters both between and within major sections. A prime example is the shift from Chapter 3, which deals with the operation of a teen hotline, to Chapter 4, which discusses the use of the telephone in psychoanalytically oriented psychiatric practice (replete with resistance and transference). The transition could have been aided by a more thorough and critical introduction to each section. The lack of critical comments before and/or after chapters or sections results in a particularly weak presentation of the controversy over the

use of nonprofessional volunteers rather than paid professionals to work the phones. The chapters vary considerably in writing quality and importance of content, with more spelling and syntax errors than should be expected. Also, some psychological concepts or terms are confused at times, as indicated by the use of the concept of "negative reinforcement" in Chapter 12 when "punishment" is the actual process described.

Second, although crisis intervention theory is espoused as the theoretical basis for the existence and operation of the telephone crisis center, a discussion of that theory in terms of its application to telephone counseling does not occur until Chapter 6, whereas it would have been much more appropriate as an introduction or first chapter. Most previous and subsequent chapters are noteworthy for their lack of reference to crisis intervention or any other theory.

Third, at least one of the suggested operating procedures is at least questionable and possibly unethical. It is suggested that it is perfectly acceptable to tape a phone call without the caller's knowledge for research and supervisory purposes, revealing this to the client only if asked. Regardless of the fact that the caller is anonymous, it seems to the reviewer (and with respect to the APA ethical standards) that any client on the phone or otherwise is entitled to know all the conditions of counseling before he contracts for service.

Fourth, and perhaps most disappointing, is the overall lack of reference to relevant research. Out of 24 chapters, 16 have no references to literature supporting the opinions put forth and no effort is made to discuss impressions or opinions within the context of a developing research program.

Keeping these strong limitations in mind, the potential reader of *Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone* may find some valuable information with regard to the development and techniques of telephone counseling and the possibilities for necessary research.

Crisis Intervention provides a sample of papers presented at the Second Annual Symposium on Community-Clinical Psychology held at the University of Maryland. Preceded by a well-written and interest-arousing introduction, these papers are organized into three sections concerning crisis intervention concepts, personnel and training, and innovative services. Unlike a great many of the recent volumes on crisis intervention which seem to summarize old or recent well-known research and theory under new covers, *Crisis Intervention* provides some new extensions for crisis theory, training, and practice as exemplified by I. N. Korner's distinction between exhaustion and shock crises and the different strategies necessary to deal with each, and Edwin Shneidman's discussion of inter-, intra-, and extratemporal crises. In this respect, *Crisis Intervention* is notable for a small but significant and refreshing extension of crisis intervention theory and a refinement of some important crisis intervention concepts for a more productive level of understanding.

The blend of theoretical considerations with discussions of personnel and training issues that follows culminates in a series of articles on innovative services

including training clergy in family intervention techniques after the death of a family member, turning a "bad drug trip" into a useful and important life experience, using college students as companion therapists for released mental patients, and using multiple impact family crisis therapy, all of which are based on and integrated with the crisis intervention model. Progress within the book from theory to resultant personnel and training policies to innovative services binds the esoteric to the practical and illustrates the exciting but pragmatic applications of the crisis intervention model.

The editors have done a superb job of integrating the chapters and sections with timely questions and comments, forthright critiques, and well-organized introductions and discussions. These editorial skills have made *Crisis Intervention* easy to read, absorb, and question across chapters and sections, especially where important controversies exist.

Although it is gratifying to note that a number of the articles present data from an ongoing evaluative research program, it is also frustrating to find incomplete data collection as in the case of the companion therapy and family crisis therapy articles. Unfortunately, a promise that "findings are forthcoming in a later report" is no substitute for the real thing and detracts seriously from the impact of two of the articles.

On a more general level, the proselytizing and zealous implied or direct rejection of the medical model offered by various contributing authors of *Crisis Intervention* is somewhat disturbing. This may be more a criticism of the field of crisis intervention than of the book, in that the rejection of all "medical model" techniques for dealing with crises may result in a crisis intervention *cul de sac* whereby some of the useful techniques of the medical model are ignored or branded as unnecessary when in fact they may be necessary and can be incorporated into the crisis intervention model.

The reviewer found *Crisis Intervention* to be an excellent text to accompany academic courses in crisis intervention and one which provides new and valuable information for the experienced crisis intervention worker or theoretician as well as the novice. Since *Crisis Intervention* is a direct product of the Second Annual Symposium on Community-Clinical Psychology, the reviewer looks forward eagerly to the aftermath of the next meeting.