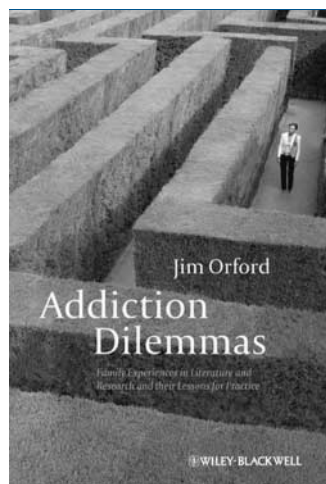


McCrae's strength as a writer is his erudition. His sources are wide, his writing at its best is clear, startling and stimulating. He is a conceptual thinker who sees the links and symmetries between disparate subjects. But in the end the book is disappointing.

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**Addiction Dilemmas:
Family Experiences
from Literature
and Research and Their
Lessons for Practice**

By Jim Orford. Wiley-Blackwell.
2011. £29.99 (pb). 234 pp.
ISBN: 9780470977026

This is an interesting book of 22 short chapters examining the experience of the addict's family. It is ambitious, exploring diverse family relationships and spanning cultures as far as Aboriginal Australians. Chapters cover several topics, including interviews based on Professor Orford's extensive research with relatives and examination of a number of literary figures and their associates, and of pieces of fiction. For example, a brief extract from a play or novel is presented; or biographical accounts from Caitlin, wife of Dylan Thomas, or Sara, wife of Samuel Taylor Coleridge; or imaginary (but based on research experience) interviews with relatives of addicts. The types of addiction range from drug and alcohol to gambling, including compelling accounts of laudanum addiction. Each chapter ends with a commentary drawing together pertinent points, followed by questions and exercises, which would be suited to a wide range of student and professional groups.

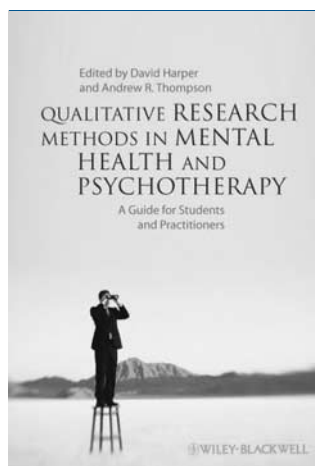
Despite the disparity of material, there is a clear theme highlighting the similarity of relatives' experiences across cultures and history. Examples include British Sikh wives, grandmothers, and the mothers of both Pete Doherty and Charles Baudelaire. Inevitably some differences emerge – in poorer societies and in societies with different marital customs, in different addictions and in individuals – but the commonality of reactions is marked. There is debate regarding the merits of tough love and a softer approach, and the reader is encouraged to draw their own conclusions.

If any criticism can be made, it might be that the chapters are very short, which makes examination of individual examples and ideas rather superficial at times. In my view, the literary and biographical examples are the most powerful, and invite the reader to explore these further. Although the book may lend itself best to a student readership, its diversity and links to the addiction literature will make it of interest to a wide range

of professionals, as well as all who have had any personal contact with addiction.

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**Qualitative Research
Methods in Mental
Health and
Psychotherapy:
A Guide for Students
and Practitioners**

Edited by David Harper
& Andrew R. Thompson.
Wiley-Blackwell. 2011.
£29.99 (pb). 272 pp.
ISBN: 978-0470663707

This is a very useful book that introduces qualitative research in mental health contexts for those wishing to better understand the approaches behind papers they read. It is also a source of specific guidance for those considering doing their own research.

The structure of the book, across and within chapters, is cleverly designed to promote effective use of appropriate methods. There are three sections. The first introduces the basic tenets; the second includes chapters on each of a range of approaches, and the third addresses research quality and future directions. This works well. In particular, it sets the various qualitative approaches in the wider mental health context. This will help students and trainees to gain an appreciation of the underpinning and implications of the different traditions and so make an informed choice of method to address their particular research question.

The editors have drawn together contributions from many experienced researchers with genuine expertise, leading to generally high-quality contributions covering many of the main approaches. Within the chapters on approaches, the consistency of a uniform set of straightforward, practical headings makes each easy to follow, and allows quick comparison between methods. In addition to the more obvious 'how to' content, particular sections that are valuable include those on the type of questions each method best suits and on service user involvement. My only disappointment was the lack of coverage of some of the less verbally focused qualitative methods such as ethnography and participant observation. The integrative chapters contain some of the major highlights of the book, including the thoughtful set of recommendations for ethical practice in chapter 3, the material on asking the right questions in chapter 5, and the considered and balanced overview on judging quality in chapter 16.

In a field that at times feels dominated by obfuscating jargon and a cult-like zeal, the editors have produced an accessible, illuminating text that will be of great value to those wishing to gain an introduction to this essential and developing area of mental health research.

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