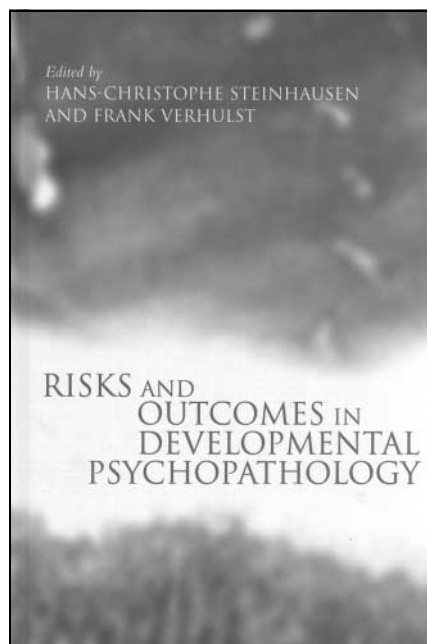


Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

Risks and Outcomes in Developmental Psychopathology

Edited by Hans-Christophe Steinhausen & Frank Verhulst. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1999. 332 pp. £47.50 (hb)
ISBN 0 19 262799 6



The bringing together of clinical and developmental research perspectives that is intrinsic to the concept of developmental psychopathology has been one of the most important recent advances in the field of child and adolescent psychopathology. Accordingly, I approached this book with a high level of positive anticipation but, unfortunately, I came away gravely disappointed. It does contain useful summaries of research findings on the children of parents with various forms of psychopathology and there are reasonable accounts of many of the major forms of psychopathology that affect young people. All that is good and worthwhile, but there are two major features almost entirely ignored.

First, developmental perspectives are barely considered. Apart from an account of a questionnaire study of international adoptees and a chapter on child maltreatment, there is no systematic discussion of high risk as defined in terms of psychosocial

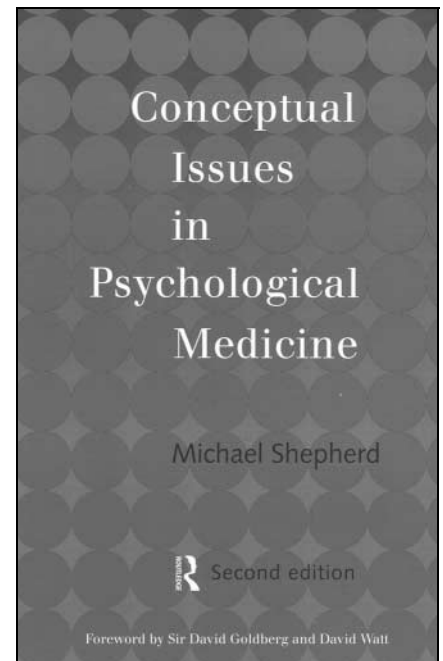
features (such as family discord, scapegoating or neglect), or prenatal factors other than maternal alcohol consumption (such as very low birth weight or infection) or extrafamilial influences (such as those involved in peer groups, schools or the community). Similarly, key research areas such as Hetherington's studies of parental divorce and remarriage or Dodge's work on attributional biases are not even mentioned. The concepts of resilience and developmental programming are similarly ignored. Developmental psychopathology pioneers such as Cicchetti or Sroufe are not referenced. Child development research as a whole is very inadequately dealt with.

The second extremely surprising omission is genetics. How can a book on risk ignore a field in which there have been huge advances of direct relevance, and in which findings on gene–environment correlation and interactions have forced a reconceptualisation of both how risk factors operate and how environmental risks need to be investigated? All the book does is pay misleading lip-service. Steinhausen claims that “it is quite clear from a large series of studies that alcohol use and abuse are genetically *determined*” (emphasis added). They are not! Genetic influences are indeed important, but they are not determinative. Taylor rightly says that “genetic influences on hyperactive behaviour are known to be strong”, but gives no details. Gillberg manages to discuss risk factors for autism without even mentioning genetics (a remarkable feat), and the same applies to McClellan and Werry's account of schizophrenia. As a consequence, the book has a very old-fashioned feel and readers are left with no idea of how research is moving ahead, let alone how it is likely to affect clinical practice. I am astonished that the very distinguished contributors to this edited volume allowed themselves to be constrained in the way that seems to have been the case. Regrettably, not a book I can recommend.

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Conceptual Issues in Psychological Medicine (2nd edn)

By Michael Shepherd. Foreword by Sir David Goldberg & David Watt. London & New York: Routledge. 1998. 250 pp. £17.99 (pb).
ISBN 0 415 16530 X



It is a lazy book reviewer who starts with an extensive quotation from the book reviewed, but I think the following encapsulates the contents of this book and the characteristics of its author:

“Psychological Medicine has now been in existence for about as long as its predecessor, and during this period, I, like Winslow (the editor of the first journal called Psychological Medicine, published between 1848 and 1861), have been its sole editor, responsible for the appearance of a journal which has so far carried some 2000 articles and many million words. In the process I have come to appreciate that to most readers a journal is little more than an object which appears on desks or through letterboxes at regular intervals and may or may not be scrutinised, according to inclination. Very few readers of journals have assumed editorial responsibility, though some may have served on editorial boards or refereed manuscripts. Their professional contact with editors largely comes about in their capacity as potential authors, one of whom has indicated the emotion latent in the relationship by defining an editor as a person with a mission to suppress rising genius.”

This extract falls into three parts. The first sentence looks like pompous self-importance: the great editor is speaking. The next two sentences are a complete contrast. They demonstrate a precision in the use of language and a sardonic attention

to detail often shown in the writings of others, but seldom in apposition to sentences such as that which precedes them. This is the characteristic of mocking erudition. The third sentence demonstrates something which Michael Shepherd had in abundance, humour, which often had a hint of malice about it, best summed up as the German word *schadenfreude*. These three elements combined in one man and his writings may or may not be unique, but I have certainly never seen it before, and this may explain the puzzlement which many experience when reading and hearing about Michael Shepherd and why there is such a contrast in people's views of him.

The 18 papers in this revised anthology, nicely chosen by the two Davids who were his greatest admirers, illustrate all three of these characteristics in abundance. His original paper on morbid jealousy, published in 1961, includes words from nine languages, and some of the English ones, such as *hormic*, *congeries* and *gynocidal*, are worthy of Anthony Burgess at his worst excesses of etymological gymnastics. His account of the relation between Jaspers's views of psychopathology and current science also shows elements of this. Mocking erudition is shown in his interesting account of Arise Evans, a soothsayer with claims of divine knowledge at the time of Charles II, whom Shepherd concludes "had a revelatory psychosis". His painstaking review of John Ryle "originally published as an introduction to a book", his whimsical account of Otto Rank, and barbed critique "What price psychotherapy?" also demonstrate this characteristic. Michael Shepherd was never far from iconoclasm and his delicate dismemberment of Emil Kraepelin, illustrating that politically he had the same combination of German nationalism and racial purity that would have made a Nazi glow, is perhaps the best of this group.

His humour comes through repeatedly in his writings, but sometimes it is so wrapped in disguises that it takes a great deal of hard work to identify. I include several of the most readable chapters in the book under this heading, including his two chapters on Aubrey Lewis, which, while praising Lewis to the skies, sends barbs in every direction, at his Maudsley lecture on changing disciplines in psychiatry, which he starts by quoting Virginia Woolf "that lecturing is a total waste of time", and ends by suggesting that psychological medicine embraces multi-disciplinary

polygamy. However, it is best demonstrated in his linking of Sherlock Holmes and 'The case of Dr Freud', where, after bringing them together in a masterpiece of invention he leaves them "basking in mutual admiration in the no-man's land between fact and fiction".

Having identified these three elements, I still do not feel I understand the real Michael Shepherd, and this book only gives vague clues that need an expert detective. Which one of these would be his most fitting epilogue? When I worked for him as a registrar 30 years ago he wanted me to make a full assessment of a young man whom he found had had a certain amount of social contact with a neighbour, who happened to be one of his colleagues, Professor John Wing. He quickly devised a scenario whereby it was possible to obtain the diagnosis of this young man only by interviewing Professor Wing. I dutifully fell into the trap and persuaded John Wing to see me. His conclusion was "in the United States this young man would be described as having a personality disorder". When I reported this back to Michael Shepherd he was amused beyond belief. I never understood why. What was he really getting at? I wonder if in his life's work he was just taking all of us for a ride.

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I Can Get Through It

By Sheila Hollins, Christiana Horrocks & Valerie Sinason. 80 pp. ISBN 1 901242 20 X

Going into Hospital

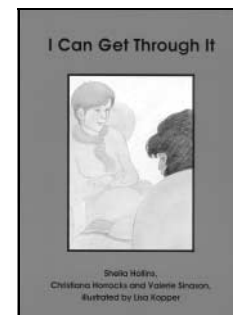
By Sheila Hollins, Angie Avis & Samantha Cheverton. 80 pp. ISBN 1 901242 19 6

Going to Out-Patients

By Sheila Hollins, Jane Bernal & Matthew Gregory. 72 pp. ISBN 1 901242 18 8

All published in London by Gaskell/
St George's Hospital Medical School. 1998.
£10 (pb)

The three titles reviewed here form part of a wider series entitled *Books Beyond Words*, the purpose of which is to assist people with learning disabilities to understand events such as going into hospital and so lessen any associated anxieties. Other titles



in the series seek to address the emotional aspects of difficult and potentially traumatic life events such as bereavement, or less common events such as being under arrest and going to Court. I believe these books to be an essential purchase for any service where these issues are likely to be of concern. They are supported by helpful glossaries and details of organisations that can provide further resources. The illustrations that form the main content successfully avoid being 'pictures belonging to childhood' and manage to stand independently, as they surely must in such a series. I did wonder, however, what standards may have been achieved if the UK had as strong a tradition of *bande dessinée* production as say Belgium or France and their more developed tradition of picture-based narration for adults.

These books raise interesting issues regarding the use of narrative with this client group. While there is an implicit picture-based narrative, there is also a descriptive text, as well as suggestions on to how to use single images as a basis for the (co-) construction of more individualised, personal narratives. Originating from a therapeutic position, the books encourage narratives of resolution. In some senses, these are stories of hope and 'wonder' as defined by the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp as "any narrative... that develops from an act of injury or state of lack, through certain mediating functions to an eventual wedding or other concluding