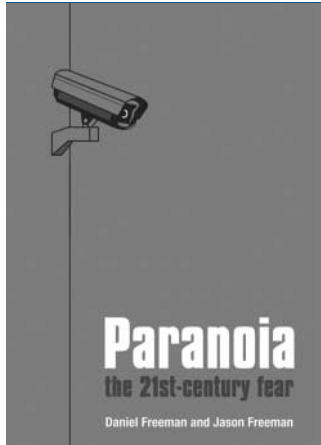


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



**Paranoia:
The 21st-Century Fear**

Daniel Freeman & Jason Freeman.
Oxford University Press. 2008.
£9.99 (hb). 224pp.
ISBN: 9780199237500

This book has been written by two brothers, one a consultant clinical psychologist, the other a writer and editor. This creative mix has produced a popular scientific account of the social and clinical phenomenon of paranoia. The book has an engaging style that suits its intended audience. Readers are not burdened with specific references, yet the academic sources for each chapter are provided.

The authors are keen that paranoia should be understood as part of general experience rather than just psychiatric illness. Perhaps this should not be seen as a surprising perspective. After all, Melanie Klein regarded persecutory anxiety as having its origin in the infant's fear of retaliation of the 'bad breast', with such psychotic thinking being retained into adulthood. The authors struggle, though, with what they regard as messy, complex psychoanalytic explanations. They refer to Freud's analysis of paranoid delusions as the consequence of repressed homosexual urges, yet they favour the commonsense view that unfounded mistrust exists generally among a substantial minority of people (this is supported by the authors' study of reactions to a virtual reality underground train ride). Paranoia is hence for them an everyday, emotional concern that is associated with anxiety, depression, worry, interpersonal sensitivity and negative ideas about self.

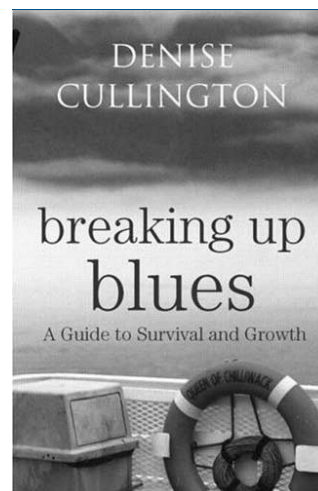
The authors speculate that paranoia is increasing, although admittedly there is no historical evidence for comparison. They blame social factors such as urbanisation, social isolation, migration, trauma and victimisation; they also mention mistrust of authority and media effects on assessment of risk. They do not explicitly set this in the context of the 'risk society'. However, the view that the role of government is to manage risks on behalf of the citizens has led to increased accountability across society that is not always sensibly applied. But the modern emphasis on ensuring accountability does not necessarily mean there has been an increase in paranoid thinking.

The book characterises our society as one in which we do not let our children out unsupervised for fear they will be abducted by a paedophile. A summary of six steps for cognitive-behavioural therapy for this new age of paranoia is included. Overall, I found the book enjoyable and educational, but I would not make as much of the issue of paranoia as the authors do, particularly when

they suggest that there should be government intervention to combat the issue. None the less, we need reminding that we are not always as rational as we might think we are. It may not be the menace the authors suggest it is, but their engagement of public interest in the subject of paranoia is to be welcomed.

Duncan Double Northgate Hospital, Northgate Street, Great Yarmouth NR30 1BU, UK. Email: dbdouble@dbdouble.co.uk

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**Breaking up Blues:
A Guide to Survival
and Growth**

By Denise Cullington.
Routledge. 2008.
£9.99 (pb). 296pp.
ISBN: 9780415455473

Scanning Amazon using 'divorce' yields dozens of titles – the market is well stocked. However, the author of *Breaking up Blues* is a British psychoanalyst whose monograph claims to be a 'practical self-help book'. Divorce, especially splintering of families, is not only a growing social and economic concern. It increases the risk of adult psychopathology and long-term vulnerability in children of divorcing adults. There is death (e.g. attacks by men with morbid jealousy on former partners) and illness (e.g. self-harm in adolescent children). What outcomes does the author mean by 'growth' after a life event like divorce?

Cullington uses 'her own experience of break-up', but research evidence cited is limited and rather old. One section ('Emergency toolkit') might provide short-term 'survival' tips, around the time of a break-up. However, the intellectual framework for survival and growth is one-size-fits-all (men, women, heterosexuals and homosexuals) using preverbal infant models, personal 'experience' and Janet-and-John-style superficial vignettes. As a life event, divorce is equated with trauma or occasionally bereavement, including offensive analogies with the history of Israel or suicide bombers. The few black-and-white illustrations are poorly reproduced. Gaps include 'practical' financial, housing and legal matters, responding to threats of violence, relationships with older dependents or step-children, and desertion linked to pregnancy or postnatal depression. Religion is never considered in relation to the many descriptions of guilt, shame and grief. I never grasped what was meant by 'growth' – certainly not, say, flourishing, participation or the search for meaning. By the end, readers may feel like audiences at recent Woody Allen films: where did the humour go?

Overall, this book is boring and repetitive. A revealing interview with Cullington is podcast on the publisher's website (www.routledge.com/mentalhealth.com/breaking-up-blues/interview.asp).