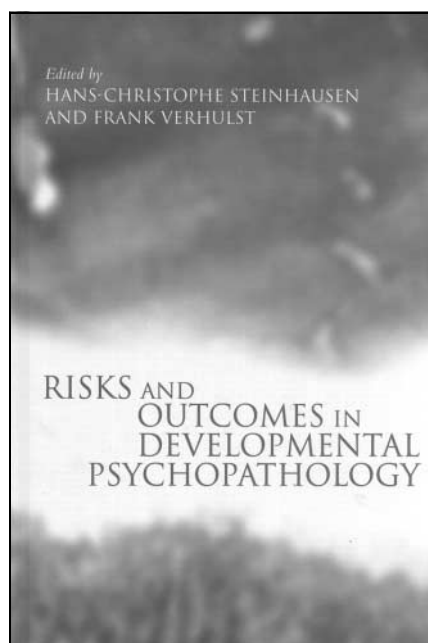


Book reviews

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

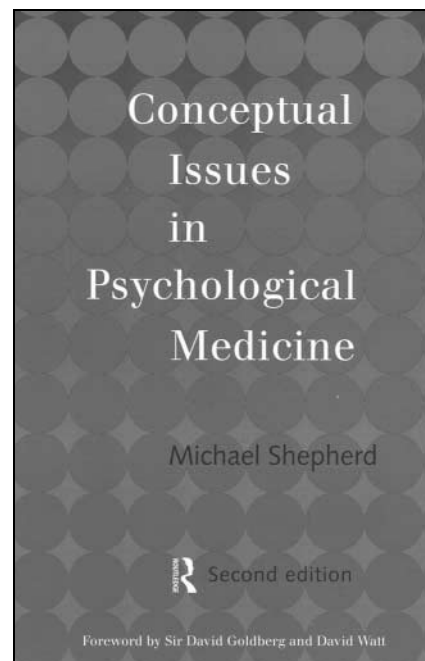
features (such as family discord, scapegoating or neglect), or prenatal factors other than maternal alcohol consumption (such as very low birth weight or infection) or extrafamilial influences (such as those involved in peer groups, schools or the community). Similarly, key research areas such as Hetherington's 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