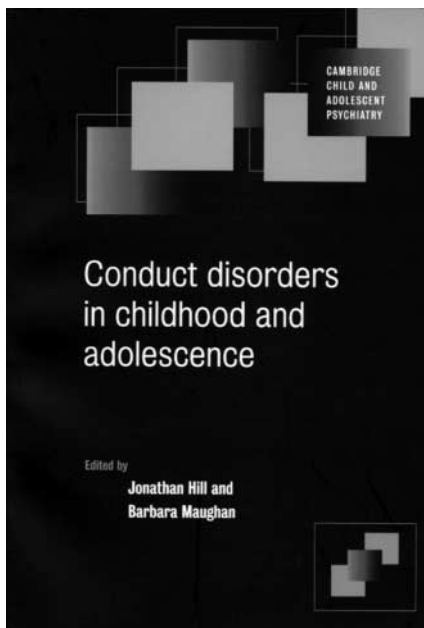


Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

Conduct Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence

Edited by Jonathan Hill & Barbara Maughan.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2000. 581 pp. £39.95 (pb). ISBN 0 521 78639 8



Is it possible to study bad behaviour in children from a scientific standpoint? The answer to the question is by no means obvious. Society has puzzled for thousands of years over what to do with children who do not do what adults want them to. Most of its solutions have little to do with science and much more to do with criminal justice and the moral standards of society. Of course, no one can seriously dispute the fact that some children show a syndrome of antisocial behaviours that has substantial effects on others. This syndrome can be assessed with high reliability and passes many of the conventional tests that psychiatry sets for its diagnostic categories. Indeed, conduct disorder passes more of these tests than many other child psychiatric problems. For example, more than 30 years of research has consistently shown that a diagnosis of conduct disorder in childhood is a robust predictor of

important outcomes in adulthood, particularly personality and social dysfunction. Conduct disorder also shows a reliable association with a cluster of family problems such as poor supervision and family discord.

But the question remains: can a disorder in which the chief characteristic is behaviour that gives rise to social disapproval ever be studied using conventional scientific methods? This excellent book shows that it can, but only if the approach taken is multi-disciplinary and tackles the problem from several different viewpoints. The book is based on three key themes and each is approached from a variety of perspectives.

The first is the nature and phenomenology of conduct disorder. It might be thought that, since conduct disorder is now operationalised in both DSM and ICD, any questions about its nosology have been resolved. This is very far from being the case. Current controversies centre around three main issues: (a) 'normal' behaviour *v.* conduct disorder; (b) the extent to which antisocial behaviour at one age is isomorphic with antisocial behaviour at another; and (c) the best way of dividing up what is undoubtedly a heterogeneous group of problems. This last issue provides a good illustration of the scope of this book, in which aggression is studied from a cognitive, neurobiological, phenomenological, philosophical and epidemiological perspective.

The second key issue is the interface between these perspectives. It is clear that the field is now moving beyond the question of how much is biology and how much is social to the much more interesting and potentially rewarding question of how the two interact. Of course, it is almost a cliché these days to talk of the interaction between nature and nurture. One of the many strengths of this book is that we are given examples of how the two work together. This comes over particularly well in the chapters on neurobiology and genetics, but is touched on by many other contributors.

The third theme is the prevention and treatment of conduct disorder. Conduct disorder is notoriously difficult to treat and often presages poor social adjustment in adulthood. One of the heartening themes from the research reviewed here is that treatment is possible. Intensive interventions that are delivered at several different levels, including the child and the family, do seem to work. Nevertheless, they are very labour intensive and not surprisingly there has also been a lot of research on prevention. Again, there are some encouraging findings. Early interventions can help to prevent important outcomes several years later, although the effects are typically small.

This publication provides a comprehensive and up-to-date account of conduct disorder and it will be of interest to a wide range of mental health professionals. The editors are to be congratulated not only because they have assembled some of the best known researchers and academics in this field but also because they have encouraged them to produce some truly first-class work. Much original material is presented, something that cannot always be said about multi-author books on problems like conduct disorder. This is one of the best current books on the topic and it deserves to be widely read.

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The Sociology of Mental Disorders (3rd edn)

By William W. Eaton. Westport & London: Praeger. 1999. 378 pp. £56.50 (hb), £20.50 (pb). ISBN 0 275 96323 3 (hb), 0 275 96324 1 (pb)

Reviewing the third edition of a work that has been a standard textbook in several countries for nearly 20 years seems at first to be hardly necessary. This is particularly so when it still seems to have no serious rival. But preparing a 'new edition' may mean anything from correcting a few spelling mistakes to the production of what is virtually a new book. Eaton says that his work has been heavily revised, 'reflecting what I have learned in the ensuing 15

years', and that substantial additions have been made to each chapter. This makes a strong case for discarding well-thumbed copies of the second edition.

The relationship between sociology and psychiatry has mostly been an uneasy one. From the 1960s, under strong Marxist influences such as that of Foucault (who was really a philosopher), sociologists mostly tended to ride the 'anti-psychiatry' bandwagon. They denounced psychiatrists as agents of social control who were ignorant or dismissive of their patients' social context and of cultural influences on psychological disorders. Eaton was different, in coming from the 'mental hygiene' tradition and, in the footsteps of Morton Kramer, having an outstanding knowledge of the epidemiology of mental disorders. This difference from mainstream sociology can be seen particularly in his clear, jargon-free style as well as in the lack of doctrinal influence.

Among psychiatrists, the target readership of this text will be senior trainees, but consultants may wish to refresh their minds with it for continuing professional development; social work students and those doing advanced nursing courses would also find it very useful, although not necessarily recommended by their teachers. With the closure of many mental hospitals, specialist psychiatric libraries may now be much fewer, but libraries for health professionals should certainly find room for it. It is very adequately illustrated with figures and tables.

The most important sections include: the social construction of bizarre behaviour (e.g. mental disorder in non-Western culture); the methods of epidemiology; stress and depressive disorder; social selection and drift; theories of collective behaviour; and diffusion of therapeutic innovations. Eaton concludes that a most important role of the sociological framework is in showing how we, as a group, come to define a given emotion or behaviour as important. Although mental disorder is defined at the level of the individual, 'insanity' is defined at the level of society. He urges an end to polemics about genes *v.* environment, since the social environment provides a powerful tool for understanding the effects of genes on behaviour. This integrative view is a valuable one.

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Mental Health in India 1950–2000: Essays in Honour of Professor N. N. Wig

Edited by R. Srinivasa Murthy. Bangalore: People's Action for Mental Health. 2000. 299 pp. £5.00 (pb). No ISBN. Copies available from: Apt C-301, Casa Angal 18, NS Palya, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore 560076, India

This is almost a very good book. If the contents had a little more accurately reflected the title, we would have had a fitting tribute to one of the leaders of Indian psychiatry in the second half of the 20th century. I know of Professor Wig, but it was only on careful reading of the 25 chapters that I was reminded (or learned) of his very substantial achievements: his contribution to outcome studies in schizophrenia; his work on acute and transient psychosis; his coining of the term 'Dhat syndrome'; his promotion of the delivery of psychiatric services through primary health care; his leadership in developing the National Mental Health Programme in India; and so on. Glimpses of the man appear in chapters such as those written by Ahmad Molit and David Goldberg but the one-page biographical sketch does not do him justice. A more detailed assessment of his contribution to Indian and international psychiatry would have been welcome.

But there are some nuggets of historical information buried deep in the text: the first lunatic asylum was opened in Madras (now Chennai) in 1794, but it was only in 1905 that psychiatry was recognised as a speciality in India. At the time of independence in 1947, although there were several hundred million Indians, there were only 17 mental hospitals with 8425 beds. Then, as now, as this book emphasises again and again, almost all care of the mentally ill in India was provided by the extended family. However, as Murthy and Ghosh point out, how long this will last remains to be seen, with increasing urbanisation, increasing numbers of nuclear and single-parent families, and the increasing influence of the mass media in shaping the aspirations of young people and family life.

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The Maudsley Neuropsychiatry Modules: A Teaching Package for Self-Paced Learning or Small Group Seminars

Author/Producer: Steve Church; Director: David Goldberg; Editors: Anthony David & Alwyn Lishman. London: Maudsley. Pack contains: Workbook, 163 pp. Package price £250. ISBN 0 9500289 8 3; Answerbook (on floppy disk); 2 video-tapes (2000); reference textbook: Lishman (1997)

What a splendid idea: neuropsychiatry is a clinical subject, so the notion of providing video-taped interviews with experts in the field, followed by clinical interviews with real patients accompanied by a workbook must be one of the best ways of learning the subject. In addition, the package contains, as a reference textbook, a copy of Lishman's *Organic Psychiatry* (1997).

The videos and workbook are divided into seven modules, dealing with the main areas of neuropsychiatry. Each module is subdivided into various sections, with revision exercises and feedback after each exercise. Throughout the workbook further reading is recommended from *Organic Psychiatry*. (An outline of the modules is available at www.iop.kcl.ac.uk/main/publineu.htm.)

The videos are interesting and well-produced and the reference to Lishman's text means that anyone who has conscientiously studied the course will have learnt a great deal about neuropsychiatry and will have enjoyed the trip.

This teaching package will form an excellent preparation for the MRCPsych examination. More broadly, it presents examples of how to take a neuropsychiatric history, carry out a cognitive state examination and observe movement disorders or other neuropsychiatric symptoms – all of which will be invaluable to any clinician.

The package is intended for use not by individuals, but by local psychiatric training groups in which a clinical tutor might take responsibility for the pack and for providing supplementary help to trainees. The videos contain recordings of real patients and therefore a number of restrictions apply and the product is not available to individuals outside an academic setting.

As far as neuropsychiatry is concerned, some parts of this package are better than others. The neuroimaging section is particularly successful, and the opportunity of seeing Professor Lishman carrying out a