Book Reviews


This volume consists of the presentations (revised and updated) from the 1997 International Conference on Anxiety Disorders in Children and Adolescents held in the Netherlands under the auspices of the Curium Academic Center of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the Netherlands Psychiatric Association, and the Netherlands Institute for Postgraduate Studies. The book consists of 16 chapters, including 4 that were not part of the original conference, and 25 contributors from 8 countries. The chapters encompass a broad range of topics including affective, behavioral, cognitive, and interpersonal factors involved in anxiety disorders, neurobiological and learning models, peer relations, attachment, classification, diagnosis, and assessment, epidemiological facets of the disorders, psychosocial and pharmacological treatments, and prevention.

There are many chapters to praise and singling out one or two might unwittingly and undeservedly slight others. Chapters completed by the editors convey the thrust. Philip Treffers, as the lead author, provides an excellent introductory chapter on the historical contexts and evolution of thinking about anxiety disorders in children. Wendy Silverman, as the senior editor of the book, is the lead author on a superb and quite current chapter on evidence-based psychosocial interventions.

Overall, the book brings together remarkable expertise on a range of topics. With this special group of authors, it is reasonable to ask whether more might have been accomplished. It would be useful to have an integrative chapter or two at the very end of the book to convey more clearly the current status of the knowledge base in key areas and high priority questions to be addressed in the coming years. For example, there are all sorts of correlates and risk factors (e.g., cognitive process, temperament, peer relations, attachment patterns) of anxiety disorders. Further studies on the accumulation of these and indeed perhaps even other factors are less than inspiring. There is all too little research on mechanisms of action, etiology, and causal paths. It would be helpful to have the authors or editors identify which models warrant high priority attention, what it would take to move the field forward, and the key questions to be addressed. At the end of the book we are left with quite simple and quite complex questions that are not only unresolved, but also unaddressed (e.g., What do we know? What do we need to know next? What specific studies are needed to get there?).

The accumulation of knowledge, advances in information technology, and increased specialization within research (e.g., different types of brain imaging techniques) make more important than ever the need to convey broader messages in addition to the specific findings.

Overall, the book is quite comprehensive in its coverage and brings together literatures that otherwise would not be published together. The book is suited to a professional audience of other researchers interested in anxiety disorders. Perhaps the book is too advanced for graduate students other than those directly involved in research on the disorders themselves. For these individuals this would be an excellent reference. Some of the writing is technical (e.g., neurobiology); other portions present tables with results of studies that one would find in journal articles. Nevertheless the chapters are quite readable; they also reflect admirable editorial guidance to foster consistency. The book, with some of the changes noted previously, might well serve as a model for charting advances for psychiatric disorders more generally. Of course, it is always a pleasure to read the books produced by Cambridge University Press, which are at once meticulous and artful.

Alan E. Kazdin


This book brings together a wide range of highly authoritative writers on the subject of antisocial behaviour. It casts its net wide, and the quality is high. There is little overlap between chapters, suggesting tight editorial control.

The biological context is covered by Jonathan Hill himself, who reviews hormonal and neurotransmitter evidence. So far there is not much conclusive to be said. I personally would have liked to have seen more about the interaction between an abusive early upbringing and the effect it has on neurohumoral modulation of the emotions. Robert Hinde and Judy Dunn each put in strong chapters on the wider ecological and social context, and Adrian Angold with Jane Costello cover epidemiology and comorbidity well. Emily Simonoff points out that despite a host of behavioural genetic studies, there is really no agreement so far as to the extent to which conduct disorder is a heritable problem or chiefly due to environmental influences, although it seems likely that the early onset pattern will be more genetically determined. Thomas Dishion and colleagues restate the traditional reinforcement model championed by the Oregon Social Learning Centre, whereas Michelle deKlyen and Matthew Speltz come closer to the maelstrom of confused emotions one sees in these children when they describe the findings that have come from studying attachment patterns. The difficulty here is disentangling attachment status from other factors such as parental disadvantage and harsh parenting, and the extent to which these are all aspects of the same processes, or add strong independent information, needs to be studied.

Treatment programmes are covered by Alan Kazdin, and prevention by Richard Tremblay and colleagues. These are masterly summaries of the scientific evidence. However, they sometimes lack a clinical feel and thus do not address the need to look at wider factors in conduct disorder, such as maternal depression, interparental discord, and other risk factors. Nor is the recognition and treatment of comorbid hyperactivity, which is common in clinical samples, discussed.

The book is ended by a review of the longitudinal course of antisocial behaviour by Barbara Maughan and Michael Rutter, which is characteristically thorough and careful. In summary, I believe this is by far the best single book on conduct disorder by a judicious selection of North American and British authors. It brings together state-of-the-art contributions and, if I had to buy only one book on the subject, this would be it.

Stephen Scott