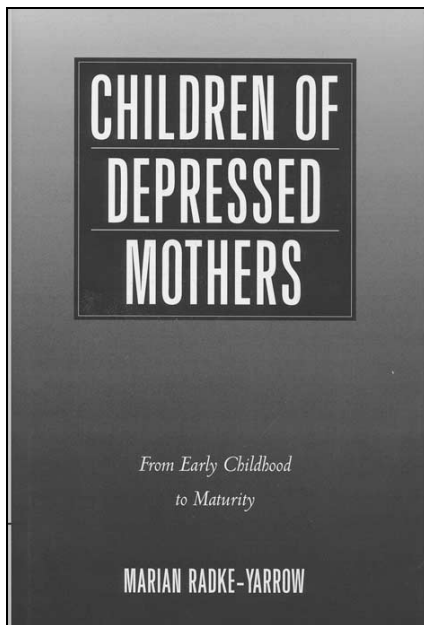


Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

Children of Depressed Mothers: From Early Childhood to Maturity

By Marian Radke-Yarrow. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press. 1999. 216 pp.
£27.95 (hb). ISBN 0-521-55131-5



When someone who has spent most of their working life researching a particular topic condenses all that knowledge into a book, it is well worth taking note of. And so it is with Marian Radke-Yarrow's *Children of Depressed Mothers*. She has the ability to present the complex interactions that exist between mother, child and family in a way that is both comprehensive and comprehensible.

The book is based around a longitudinal study of 98 families, with children followed up from toddlerhood to late adolescence. Sixty-eight of the mothers suffered from either major unipolar or bipolar depression. The study was carried out at the National Institute of Mental Health in the USA and has the strength of including fathers (many of whom were also depressed) and taking into account the effect of the child's problems on the family dynamics.

Some children had no apparent symptoms or difficulties in social functioning, but many had significantly impaired social

functioning, with serious psychiatric disorders in addition to depression. An interesting subgroup of the children had severe depression, while managing to cope well, although quite precariously.

The highest rates of child problems were associated with depressed mothers who were angry and irritable and/or those who encouraged an enmeshed dependency in their children. Girls of depressed mothers were especially likely to develop disruptive disorders.

Psychopathology was strongly influenced by the direct effect of the mother's depressive behaviour on the child's development from early childhood onwards. The pervasiveness of the negative influences across many social contexts within the family had an accumulative effect over time, while the child's temperament and coping strategies were also important in the development of psychopathology.

Each chapter is clearly structured, with a concluding summary, and a good balance is kept between well-referenced academic material and more informal discussion based around case histories. The book is strongly recommended to anyone interested in developmental psychopathology. It should be included in every general psychiatric library.

John B. Pearce Emeritus Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Nottingham University, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham NG7 2UH

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, A Comprehensive Text

Edited by Philip A. Saigh & J. Douglas
Bremner. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. 1999.
434 pp. ISBN 0-205-26734-3 (hb)

This is a multi-author, North American textbook on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A number of similar texts, of variable quality, have been published over the past 10 years and one might question the need for yet another.

This one suffers from a number of the limitations common to such books. However carefully chapters and authors are

selected, it is difficult to be comprehensive. Some topics are either not covered or are difficult to find and pertain only to a particular aspect of PTSD. For example, if one were interested in risk factors or the epidemiology of PTSD there are mentions of these topics in the chapters on 'PTSD in adults relative to criminal victimization', 'combat related PTSD' and 'child-adolescent PTSD', but there are no comprehensive individual sections devoted to these important areas. There are other omissions, for example, road traffic accidents (motor vehicle accidents in US jargon) have 22 references in the index, but no section in any chapter actually covers this important area.

There are, however, some significant strengths in the book, particularly for those interested in research. There are outstanding chapters, which are among the best reviews of particular topics that I have come across; for example, 'the psychophysiological assessment of posttraumatic stress disorder'. The text is well referenced and the research literature is summarised in tables that include an indication of key findings together with methodological shortcomings. Four chapters relate to PTSD in children and adolescents. Treatment is well covered, with a balanced perspective including both psychological and pharmacological approaches. Previous texts have sometimes concentrated on the treatment modalities typically delivered to the Vietnam veteran patient population, which often are of less interest to UK readers. This topic is covered, but there is equal coverage of individual exposure-based cognitive-behavioural therapy, which would be more common practice this side of the Atlantic. Eye movement desensitisation/reprocessing gets a mention too, perhaps too briefly for true converts.

The contributors include some of the most important workers in their particular field, for example, Alexander McFarlane, Douglas Bremner, Edna Foa, Jonathan Davidson, Terence Keane, Landy Sparr and Roger Pitman.

Overall, although it is not totally comprehensive, it comes fairly close, and if I had to take one text on PTSD to my desert island, it would be this. I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone who has a serious interest in the disorder.

Martin Baggaley Consultant Psychiatrist and Honorary Senior Lecturer, Ladywell Mental Health Unit, Lewisham Hospital, Lewisham High Street, London SE13 6LU