

A Skillful Guide Through the Field of Depression in Children: A Review of William M. Reynolds and Hugh F. Johnston (Eds.) Handbook of Depression in Children and Adolescents. New York: Plenum Press, 1994, 616 pp. ISBN 0-306-44742-8. \$85.00

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Article:

On the day this book first arrived for my review, one of my colleagues spotted the sizable volume on my desk. Curious, we turned directly to the list of contributors. We were graciously greeted by an impressive collection of names. Reynolds and Johnston certainly deliver on their claim to include contributions from the leading experts in child and adolescent depression. The editors should be commended for inviting and coordinating the efforts of such distinguished figures in the field; nearly every major name in the field is present (with a few notable absences, such as Kovacs, Rehm, Puig-Antich, and Angold). After my colleague and I skimmed over the Table of Contents, I was able to casually recline in my chair, listening to her tell me how she was envious of my acquisition and how she would need to promptly order this book.

Virtually every professional interested in the mental health of children, including those engaged in clinical practice as well as those pursuing research, will be eager to acquire this book. Such child mental health professionals, growing in number, represent diverse disciplines working in a variety of contexts. Contrary to standard supply and demand principles, as the supply of qualified practitioners in child mental health grew, the demand for others of their ilk also grew, reflecting a guilty recognition of the long-overlooked need to provide services to children. Training that had traditionally emphasized clinical research and practice with adults has now witnessed many specializing in areas specifically targeting children.

Despite idealistic views of childhood, we are increasingly coming to accept that children encounter numerous events that render their youth less than ideal. The concept of child psychopathology is no longer viewed as remarkable in our ever-changing, self-conscious society; estimates that 14 percent to 20 percent of children experience moderate-to-severe psychological problems (Brandenburg, Friedman, & Silver, 1990) do not strike us as overly liberal. With the acceptance of the diverse range of disorders that children may encounter came lengthy texts that attempted to cover the major disorders in clinical child psychology (e.g., Walker & Roberts, 1992). Although some were willing to accept that children displayed external behavioral difficulties, the acceptance of childhood affective disturbance did not come easily. Yet children of all ages are now recognized as capable of experiencing sufficient distress to warrant a mood disorder diagnosis in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed.; American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The past 15 years have seen an amazing surge of interest in depression in children and adolescents, building enough research literature in this area to merit a text of its own to synthesize the salient findings.

To some, childhood depression deceptively appears to be a relatively circumscribed topic in psychopathology. However, the vast number of articles in print on this disorder highlight the countless angles researchers have assumed. When evaluating the contribution of a book of this length (and substantial weight, for that matter), clearly one major issue pertains to its breadth. The book is made up of 25 chapters, which are divided into six sections. The first section, Introduction and General Issues, begins with an overview of the book's structure and

topics (Reynolds and Johnston), proceeds to cover the phenomenology and epidemiology of mood disorders (Poxnanski and Mokros), including a chapter on adolescent bipolar disorder (Carlson), and follows with a discussion of the validity of major depression in youth (Norcombe). The second section, Theories and Models of Depression, presents perspectives including dynamic and interpersonal (Bernporad), cognitive—behavioral (Kaslow, Brown, and Mee), developmental psychopathology (Cichetti, Rogosch, and Toth), and neurobiological (Emslie, Weinberg, Kennard, and Kuwacht). The third section, Approaches to Assessment and Diagnosis, addresses issues in classification and diagnosis (Sherak, Speier, and Cantwell), followed by a chapter each on assessment with clinical interview (Hodges), self-report (Reynolds), and other-report (i.e., parents, teachers, peers; Clarizio), and ending with a chapter on informant variability (Kazdin). The fourth section, Treatment Approaches, reviews psychological (Stark, Rouse, and Kurowski on children. Lewinsohn, Clarke, and Rohde on adolescents), family (Kaslow and Racusin), and pharmacotherapy methods (Johnston and Fruehling). The fifth section, Depression in Special Populations, covers depression in infant (Trodt), medically ill (Kashani and Breedlove), and special education populations (Schloss, Sher, and Wisniewski). The sixth section, Selected Topics in the Study of Depression in Young People, covers such issues as parental mental illness (Beardslee and Wheelock), maltreatment (Downey, Feldman, Khuri, and Friedman), psycho-social stress (Compas, Grant, and Ey), suicide (Reynolds and Mazza), and co-morbidity (Anderson and McGee).

This impressive array of topics should satisfy most readers hoping to pinpoint recent developments in a precise area of childhood depression. Perhaps the book's most apparent oversight involves coverage on cross-cultural as well as ethnic and urban issues. With regard to cross-cultural issues, several studies have been conducted across the globe investigating numerous aspects of childhood depression. For example, researchers have conducted work in Spain, Italy, Egypt, and Israel, to name but a few of our international colleagues who are interested in this area of child psychopathology. Closer to home, the North American authors seldom note the impact that urban life and ethnic diversity may have on the various features of this disorder, including the potential role in epidemiology, phenomenology, assessment, and treatment. Clearly, as the population becomes more ethnically diverse, many more youth will need to have these cultural issues addressed to adequately treat their difficulties. With the majority of the North American population residing in urban settings, the stressors associated with the reality of urban life likely place many more children at risk for emotional and behavioral difficulties, compounding an already pressured lifestyle for these children and their families.

The book does offer a most intriguing chapter on depression in infants (Trad, Chapter 18) that treats the reader to the review of a topic that has received little notice in the research press. Surprisingly, then, there is relatively infrequent mention of depression in preschool children, with the exception of a brief mention of prevalence in the epidemiology chapter. Thus, possible implications for the assessment and treatment of these younger age groups are not explored. This omission likely betrays the neglect that emotionally troubled preschoolers receive in the research literature (perhaps because they cannot complete standard self-report questionnaires).

In addition, those who are looking for much on bipolar depression may be disappointed with this book, given that comparatively less attention is offered in this area. A brief chapter on adolescent bipolar disorder (Carlson, Chapter 3) may address some of these concerns, although the book's general focus on unipolar depression may reflect the relative rarity of bipolar depression in children and adolescents and the consequent lack of research attention.

Another underdeveloped area in the book involves an increasingly common question, "What about fathers?" Much of the literature continues to focus on the significant influence of mothers, ranging from their contribution to assessment, to their role in the maintenance of symptoms, to their facilitation in treatment; the father's role remains nearly forgotten. Fathers, regardless of whether they are current members of a nuclear family or whether they serve an important role in their children's lives outside of the traditional home, warrant increased research attention. Some children will have negotiated the modern family structural definitions better than others, and the role that fathers' presence or absence can have in assessment and treatment of these children requires more investigation. The chapter on family therapy by Kaslow and Racusin (Chapter 16) is the only

place one comes across brief mention of fathers; in that chapter, even siblings receive some notice because they represent yet another overlooked participant in the child's system.

In addition to the breadth of topics, the quality of the book merits discussion. Overall, the quality of the 25 chapters is a credit to the contributors, yet some of the chapters are particularly conspicuous in their efforts to synthesize the existing literature and form novel perspectives and ideas. Cichetti and his colleagues (Chapter 7) provide an excellent presentation in their chapter on the basics of the developmental psychopathology model. In addition, Reynolds's chapter on self-report measures (Chapter 11) is cohesive and rigorously evaluative, a feature readers will appreciate when making decisions regarding assessment. Consistent with his customary style, Kazdin's superb chapter on informant variability (Chapter 13) is delivered in a thorough and fresh manner. Finally, the chapter on psychological treatment of adolescents (Chapter 15), by Lewinsohn and his colleagues, is exemplary; the chapter is at once instructive and provocative, covering nearly every major treatment issue, even if only to note the imperative need to further account for some of these issues.

In comparison, the other chapter on psychological treatment of children (Chapter 14), by Stark and his colleagues, is narrower in scope. This chapter would be more aptly referred to as primarily a review of the cognitive—behavioral treatment of children that proceeds to focus on specifics in treatment programs, which many practitioners will find invaluable. In the final chapter of the book, covering comorbidity (Chapter 25), Anderson and McGee thoroughly describe findings of comorbidity in a longitudinal study. The substantial co-occurrence of depression with other diagnoses clearly has implications for treatment. Thus, the authors could have devoted more coverage to these concerns given that many of the overlap areas with substance use, eating disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, or personality disorder are mentioned only in passing.

Taken as a whole, this volume reflects that the editors thoughtfully considered the topics included, and their Introduction prepares the reader for the areas that will be tackled. Apparently some of the contributors had access to the submissions of their fellow contributors, which is reflected in their comments regarding areas they were not addressing in their own chapter and in their discussion of possible issues of contention. Unfortunately, not all contributors seem to have had such access because some appear unaware of statements that may contradict those made by others in separate chapters. In addition, these contributors were not able to address potential criticisms that fellow contributors may have raised.

Given the current stage of discovery in the field of childhood depression, with dozens of articles appearing annually, this book is a long-awaited, welcome relief. With its broad focus on epidemiology, theory, assessment, treatment, and correlates of affective disorder in childhood and adolescence, the book is singular in its significance and contribution to all those interested in the area of child psychopathology. Researchers in child psychopathology will find that they must order a personal copy to ensure access to the latest developments in childhood depression; for child mental health practitioners, the availability of a library copy will prove resourceful, particularly with regard to the more applied aspects of some of the chapters.

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