

**Event-Related Brain Potentials in Personality and Psychopathology: A Pavlovian Approach.** By R. C. HOWARD, G. W. FENTON and P. B. C. FENWICK. Chichester: John Wiley. 1982. Pp 112. £12.75.

This is the first book in a series edited by Peter Fenwick entitled *Psychophysiology Research Studies*. The aim is to interest workers in the field of neurophysiology, "to launch new ideas about brain function and its investigation by electrophysiological techniques". The present volume is slim and reports studies carried out on patients at Broadmoor Hospital. Some readers may not totally be aware of the meaning of the term "event related brain potentials". The particular potential studied here is the Contingent Negative Variation (CNV) or more colourfully the "expectancy wave" of Grey Walter, who with colleagues first noted it in 1964. There is a shift in brain activity when a subject is asked to turn off a flashing light following a warning tone a second or so earlier. These potentials could be regarded as a complex type of brain evoked response in contrast to a simple response resulting from a series of clicks or flashes where the patient or subject does not have to make a conscious action.

This is not an easy book to read, and is one directed largely to the specialist; nevertheless it is of considerable interest because it presents information which suggests that the size of brain potentials can relate to a disease such as schizophrenia, or, equally important but more difficult to define, to such concepts as sociability or impulsiveness. These in their turn can relate to clinical outcome in terms of adaptation to a non-hospital life. The paradigms used here, the authors suggest, could have a wide application in the study of personality and psychopathology, but as these investigations were performed on hospital patients of a particular type, we must wait for further information to check this tentative claim.

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**The Clinical Interview of the Child.** By STANLEY I. GREENSPAN in collaboration with NANCY THORNDIKE GREENSPAN. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill. 1982. Pp 203. £13.50.

There is a need for a book on this subject, although it is doubtful whether this book satisfies the need, particularly for child psychiatrists in the United Kingdom. The author is a child and adult psychoanalyst working in Washington, D.C. His style is clear and readable. He provides a good perspective of American child psychiatry practice. However, the

contrast in approach between the USA and the UK could be confusing for trainees in child psychiatry in this country.

The book describes the process of the clinical interview and links this with the author's conceptual model of child development: the developmental structural approach. I did not think the attempt to link theory and practice was successful. The virtues of this particular approach were not apparent and could be regarded as another model of child development for the trainee to assimilate.

The book is most successful in its description of the sequence of a clinical interview. The author conveys well his skill in conducting an interview. Trainees may well find some useful ways to negotiate the pitfalls of interviewing. However, the range of psychopathology described in the 11 interviews is limited. Psychotic phenomena are largely ignored. There is no adequate discussion of issues such as how to assess attention, concentration and level of activity in an interview. In addition, the references are rudimentary with no mention of any recent research in this area.

The book cannot be recommended as a standard text on the subject, although it shows how a good clinician practices his art.

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**The Evaluation and Care of Severely Disturbed Children and Their Families.** Edited by LEON HOFFMAN. Lancaster: MTP Press. 1982. Pp 130. £13.50.

This book describes the work of the Child Psychiatric In-Patient Unit at Mount Sinai Medical Centre in New York. This is a short-term admission unit for children predominately from social disadvantaged backgrounds. The duration of care is 1-3 months. This is determined by the availability of insurance cover for the period of care. The limitations imposed by this are acknowledged.

The main purpose of the book is to describe the treatment philosophy of the Unit. This is based on the milieu approach within the psychodynamic and developmental framework. The individual chapters are devoted to an account of the work of the different disciplines within the Unit. Although the style is clear, many chapters are brief with little attempt to describe the problems involved in in-patient care. Issues such as staff support in a multi-disciplinary team and the conflicts between the child's individual therapist and other staff members are not adequately discussed. Furthermore, it would have been useful if there had