

neurobiological alternations associated with PTSD, and Ronnen Segman and co-authors review work on gene–environment interactions.

Two refreshingly candid chapters deserve mention. Landy Sparr and Roger Pitman discuss the legal implications of PTSD, underscoring the challenges assessors encounter when endeavoring to distinguish genuine PTSD from cases of malingering where financial rewards can be considerable. In one startling study, clinical researchers, who consulted DD-201 military personnel files, were able to corroborate reports of combat trauma in only 41% of 100 Vietnam veterans who recently sought treatment and service-connected disability compensation at a VA hospital (Frueh *et al.* 2005). In striking contrast, using DD-201 files, researchers corroborated reports of combat trauma in 86% of Vietnam veterans in an epidemiological sample, and boosted the corroboration rate to 91% when they consulted additional archival and newspaper sources (Dohrenwend *et al.* 2007).

John Fairbank and his colleagues review findings on the prevalence and impact of trauma in children. They cite an exciting preliminary report, now published, by Finkelhor & Jones (2006) documenting that the frequency of childhood trauma has dropped dramatically since the early 1990s. For example, substantiated cases of sexual abuse plummeted by 49% between 1990 through 2004 after having risen steadily throughout the previous 15 years. Substantiated cases of physical abuse of children and sexual assaults of adolescents dropped by 43% and 67%, respectively.

The major limitation of this otherwise fine book is that few of its contributors address the many intense controversies that inflame the field of traumatology. Readers seeking information about these contentious – and fascinating! – issues must consult other sources such as Brewin (2003), McNally (2003*a, b*), and Rosen (2004), especially the chapters by Allan Young and Ben Shephard. Only then will readers acquire a truly comprehensive understanding of our field.

RICHARD J. MCNALLY  
(Email: rjm@wjh.harvard.edu)

## References

- Brewin CR (2003). *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Malady or Myth?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Dohrenwend BP, Turner JB, Turse NA, Adams BG, Koenen KC, Marshall R (2007). Continuing controversy over the psychological risks of Vietnam for U.S. veterans. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 20, 449–465.
- Finkelhor D, Jones L (2006). Why have child maltreatment and child victimization declined? *Journal of Social Issues* 62, 685–716.
- Frueh BC, Elhai JD, Grubaugh AL, Monnier J, Kashdan TB, Sauvageot JA, Hamner MB, Burkett BG, Arana GW

(2005). Documented combat exposure of US veterans seeking treatment for combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 186, 467–472.

- Frueh BC, Grubaugh AL, Elhai JD, Buckley TC (2007). US Department of Veterans Affairs disability policies for posttraumatic stress disorder: administrative trends and implications for treatment, rehabilitation, and research. *American Journal of Public Health* 97, 2143–2145.
- Institute of Medicine (IOM) (2007). *Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: An Assessment of the Evidence*. The National Academies Press: Washington, DC.
- McHugh PR, Treisman G (2007). PTSD: a problematic diagnostic category. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 21, 211–222.
- McNally RJ (2003*a*). Progress and controversy in the study of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Annual Review of Psychology* 54, 229–252.
- McNally RJ (2003*b*). *Remembering Trauma*. Belknap Press/Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Rosen GR (ed.) (2004). *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Issues and Controversies*. Wiley: Chichester, UK.

*Psychological Medicine*, 38 (2008).

doi:10.1017/S0033291707002486

First published online 4 January 2008

*Empathy in Mental Illness*. Edited by T. F. D. Farrow and P. W. R. Woodruff. (Pp. 532; £55.00; ISBN-13: 9780521847346 hb.) Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 2007.

From examining the contents page of this book without knowing its title, it would be difficult to guess its main theme and understand how such a wide range of topics are related. However, the foreword by Peter Woodruff provides an elegant overview which clearly describes the progression of ideas and the overarching structure. The book is a mixture of literature review combined with some original data and is written by well-recognized international contributors. Each chapter presents a stand-alone literature review and discussion, but the book is well edited to minimize the amount of redundant repetition of key concepts across chapters. The underlying premise is that understanding empathy dysfunction increases knowledge regarding normal empathic processes, such as its role as a protective factor against aggression and as an aid to moral judgements and conflict resolution. However, conversely, studies of healthy populations can also raise questions regarding the measurement of empathy and its variability, and this should be integrated into pathological empathy research.

Part I has a very broad scope, covering the literature on empathy in a wide range of psychiatric disorders. These include conditions with well-recognized

empathy difficulties such as psychopathy, schizophrenia, autism and brain injury. However, there is the novel inclusion of a chapter on depression as a disorder of empathy 'turned on the self' leading to excessive self-blame and guilt about distress caused to others (O'Connor *et al.*). The chapter by Chris Gillberg was also particularly persuasive with regard to the concept of a normal distribution of empathic abilities, with disorders falling at the extreme ends. This issue of a continuum is sometimes lost in empathy research where a 'can he/can't he empathize' dichotomy is often adopted.

Part II provides a slightly more eclectic range of chapters construed to address empathy and related concepts in health, including neuroimaging, neurophysiology and genetics. There is a fascinating chapter on 'empathogenic agents' which proposes that ecstasy is an empathy-inducing substance (Velea and Hautefeuille) and suggests a potential neurochemical basis for empathy with reference to mirror neurons, through an increase in imitative behaviour which facilitates social integration. This middle section of the book also covers the bigger picture of empathy including its early development of empathy in infants (Diego and Aaron Jones) and the evolution of empathy (Harris), both important pieces in the jigsaw for understanding potential empathic disturbances. In addition the role of motivation and other softer 'psychological' concepts are included in this section, and helpfully complement the neuroscience literature. It seems intuitive that there are multiple external factors contributing to empathy, which are often overlooked with a more reductionist approach.

The final and shortest section of the book covers models, regulation and measurement of empathy. There are a range of original ideas presented including the 'empathy expense account' and the disadvantages of 'over-empathizing' (Hodges and Biswas-Diener). Several models are provided including a chapter updating the perception-action model of empathy by Preston and de Waal. The Shared Manifold Hypothesis (Gallese) focuses on the concept of simulation and attempts to explain how schizophrenia and autism arise through 'defective intentional attunement'. The final chapter is the only chapter dedicated to application of knowledge about empathy and proposes that empathy could be trained in medical students by using approaches from the arts. This seems to bring the book full circle back to the issue of understanding empathy disorders in psychiatry and serves as a reminder that furthering our knowledge of these difficulties should ultimately improve care and appropriate interventions. In summary, this book is an excellent addition to the literature on social

cognition – an ambitious attempt to draw together the multiple branches of empathy research seems to have been met with success.

JESSICA BRAMHAM

(Email: Jessica.bramham@iop.kcl.ac.uk)

*Psychological Medicine*, 38 (2008).

doi:10.1017/S0033291708002870

First published online 1 February 2008

*Pediatric Neuropsychological Intervention*. Edited by S. J. Hunter and J. Donders. (Pp. 496; £60; ISBN-13: 9780521875509 hb.) Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. 2007.

Whilst textbooks covering adult neuropsychology have been common, up until the last decade texts dedicated solely to paediatric neuropsychology have not. As Hunter and Donders point out, the recent proliferation reflects growing enthusiasm in the area and its development into a field in its own right. The uniqueness of this text is its focus upon intervention, rather than assessment in paediatric neuropsychology. However, as will be evident to many, separating assessment and intervention is difficult, with assessment often acting as intervention in itself. Therefore, at several points in the book, the emphasis on assessment is stronger than may be expected given the title.

The book is a collection of 22 concise chapters written by a range of contributors from North America. The book begins with a brief introductory chapter, in which it is stated that the authors have 'sought recent and accumulating information to support the field's goals of defining the best means for remediating, supporting, and accommodating children and adolescents with developmental and neurocognitive difficulties' (p. 4). The introduction is followed by chapters covering issues fundamental to paediatric neuropsychology including taking a developmental approach, research, empirical aspects, multicultural aspects and use within the educational system. Whilst the majority of the book would be of international interest, this final chapter of the first section specifically relates to the educational system in North America.

The subsequent section is made up of several chapters, covering a number of congenital or acquired neuropsychological disorders of childhood. A major strength of the book is the broad range of conditions covered, with a chapter dedicated to each of the following: traumatic brain injury, cancer, seizure disorders, autism spectrum disorders, right hemisphere disorders, genetic syndromes associated with intellectual disability, specific learning disabilities, attentional