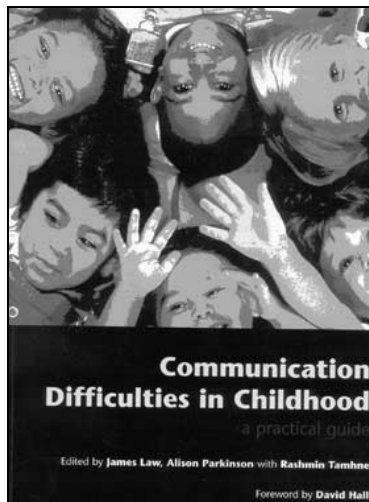


Audit project coordinators will also find it a practical guide to the area.

Stuart McLaren, Consultant Psychiatrist in the Addictions, South Devon Drug and Alcohol Service

Communication Difficulties in Childhood. A Practical Guide

By J. Law, A. Parkinson & R. Tamline (eds). Radcliffe Medical Press Ltd. 2000. 338 pp. £19.95 (pb). ISBN: 1-85775-098-5.



The objective of this book is to serve as a text and practical guide for a range of professionals who may have a role in the assessment or management of a child with a communication difficulty. Following the introduction the book is divided into two sections. Part 1 begins with a clear overview of the nature of communication in children followed by epidemiological data and the implications of these for services. This is followed by descriptions of methods for assessment and a discussion of general management strategies. The inclusion of multicultural issues is very relevant given the anxieties that parents have and misperceptions among professionals of the consequences of bilingualism.

Part 2 consists of sections each focusing on a particular clinical problem or disorder including its assessment and management. Problems range from children who have been abused to pervasive developmental disorder. If appropriate, the diagnosis in relation to DSM-IV is given.

The book is written in a clear and readable style. The content is divided into sections and use is made of tabulations, boxed text to enhance understanding and facilitate learning. As the book is presumably intended for use in the UK as well as in other countries, including developing countries, I was sorry that the DSM classification system was used rather than the

ICD system. Advice on management and referral to other agencies seemed at times too prescriptive and not reflecting the diversity of service systems that in reality exists.

However, I thought the book a valuable text certainly of use to the professionals for which it was written and for trainees and clinicians working within child mental health services.

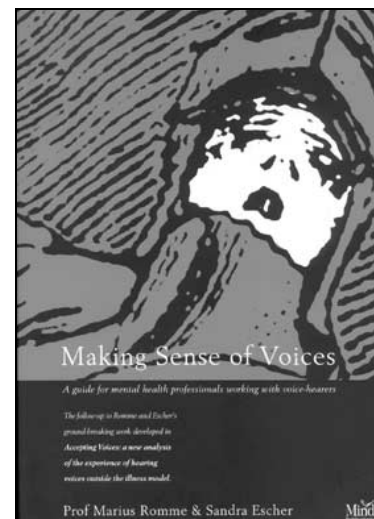
A. D. Nikapota

Making Sense of Voices

By M. Romme & S. Escher. London: Mind Publications. 2000. 143 pp. £25 (pb). ISBN: 1-874690-86-3.

The recognition that people in the general population hear voices is at the foundation of Romme and Escher's work. They are leaders in setting an understanding of voices in a mental health context within this wider framework, with the important consequences of understanding that hearing voices is not by itself a problem or a symptom of mental illness. For Romme and Escher, voices are only a problem when the person hearing them has difficulty coping with them. Their research has found that ordinary people who hear voices accept them and find them predominantly positive in impact, whereas psychiatric patients who hear voices are more likely to find them distressing and to feel powerless in relation to them.

This 'practitioner's handbook' is about helping those who find their voices difficult and distressing. In some respects it takes a radical approach: it is not concerned with psychiatric diagnosis, it is decidedly lukewarm about the benefits of medication, it emphasises self-help and social empowerment and it treats seriously the contributions of alternative therapies. But the heart of the book draws heavily on the more mainstream approaches to voices developed in the past decade within social psychiatry and clinical psychology. The social psychiatric perspective (Romme and Escher's own approach) proposes that difficulties coping with voices are best understood by examining the person's life history, in particular traumatic life events thought to be related to the onset, and the wider context of often overwhelming social difficulties, such as housing, work or relationship problems. However, the authors also draw very extensively on psychological, in particular cognitive-behavioural, approaches to helping people with distressing voices. Such approaches also set the voices in the context of a person's life circumstances and consider the role of triggering events, but emphasise the appraisals made of the voices – for example, as powerful and



malevolent – as mediating between the voice experience and the way the person responds. Both approaches require a very detailed assessment of the voices themselves, their onset, the person's life history and circumstances. Both also see the content of the voices as important and meaningful, usually pointing to the person's concerns.

The handbook is divided into three parts. The first part is introductory, providing some of the background research on the authors' understanding of voices. The second part, on the assessment process, provides a full description of the authors' assessment interview, as well as an exceptionally detailed set of instructions on writing a report and deriving a formulation (called here a 'construct'). This is certainly useful, but strangely prescriptive given the open-mindedness evident elsewhere in the book. For example, using case material, the reader is instructed on every element of writing a report, including the choice of first or surnames (always use first names) and what to include about a person's occupation ('the fact that she followed a chiropody course . . . [is] not relevant'). Nevertheless, the interview and the method described for deriving hypotheses about the development and understanding of voices, coupled with case descriptions, evidently stem from extensive experience of working with voice hearers. Drawing on this will enrich my clinical practice.

The third part is on interventions. For me, this part was less convincing and strikingly different from the previous section. It lacks an essential feature of a handbook, in that it does not point the practitioner to a coherent set of methods with guidance on their use. Rather, it surveys a range of approaches, generally quoting directly and at length from others' work. This covers cognitive-behavioural, and alternative therapies (with an intriguing more detailed description of reincarnation therapy), self-help and

working within the voice hearers' own theories (mystical, transpersonal, meta-physical, reincarnation, parapsychological). Although passing reference is made to studies of some of the cognitive-behavioural approaches,

the rest of this section relies for its evidence base on occasional case histories.

Overall, this is an intriguing and readable book, which opens up new ways of making sense of voices. It will be of

interest to anyone working in the field. However, I would not recommend it to an inexperienced practitioner as a handbook.

Philippa Garety

miscellany

The International Society for Affective Disorders

The International Society for Affective Disorders (ISAD) is a society of scientists, from any discipline or country, who are active in the field of affective disorders research. The basic requirement to qualify for membership is authorship of articles on affective disorders that have been published in peer reviewed journals. The membership includes those working in a scientific capacity in universities, hospitals, industry and other settings. ISAD operates a policy of mutual respect for different scientific approaches to the investigation of the affective disorders, providing they remain within an evidence-based framework. Members will receive the *Journal of Affective Disorders* as part of their membership and gain access to the network of researchers through the organisation's website (<http://www.isad.soton.ac.uk>). When fully operational the site will contain an open access section for information to the public and for announcements. There is currently no conference that focuses solely on research into the affective disorders from all disciplines and brings together recent research findings on a yearly or biennial basis. The first meeting is being planned for 9–13 March 2002 in Sicily. For more

information on how to join ISAD please contact David K. Beck, Director and Administrator, The International Society for Affective Disorders, Professional Education & Training Unit, Mental Health Group, University of Southampton, Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton SO14 0YG (tel: 023 8082 5543; e-mail: isadsoton.ac.uk).

2001 Burden Research Prize

The Burden Research Prize is awarded by the Burden Trust every 3 years for outstanding research work in the field of learning disabilities. This year the prize of £1000 has been awarded to Dr Jeremy Turk, Senior Lecturer in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at St George's Hospital Medical School for his research on fragile X syndrome.

The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation Butterfield Awards for UK-Japan Medical Research

The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation was established in 1985 to further

understanding and cooperation between the peoples of Japan and the UK in the fields of culture and society. Lord Butterfield of Stechford, a former Trustee, Chairman and Patron of the Foundation, was a distinguished medical researcher, clinician and administrator. His connections with Japan were close and as a lasting commemoration of his death in July 2000, it was decided to introduce the Butterfield Awards. In principle, three awards of £5000 are offered annually, or a total annual commitment of £15 000. Proposals for continuous funding of up to £5000 per annum for a maximum of 3 years are acceptable. There are no absolute restrictions on the field of research, provided that it is one in which the UK and Japan have a mutual and beneficial interest, for example the genetic aspects of ageing; geriatric medicine; palliative care; child and adolescent mental health; or community health care. Applications can be accepted by 31 December 2001 for awards to be made in the second half of 2002. For further information regarding eligibility and other conditions for these awards, and for obtaining application forms, please contact The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, 43 North Audley Street, London W1K 6WH (tel: 020 7355 2229; fax: 020 7355 2230; e-mail: gbsfgbsf.org.uk; website: <http://www.gbsf.org.uk>).

forthcoming events

The 9th Conference of the Society of Expert Witnesses will take place on 12 October 2001 in Sheffield. The conference will look at human rights issues and the expert witness and will offer a mix of formal presentations and associated workshops. The Society of Expert Witnesses is the largest expert witness association in the UK. As an independent, non-commercial association, it provides a forum for experts from all disciplines and offers members practical support on the various aspects of providing expert services. For further information about the conference or the Society of Expert Witnesses please contact Teresa Baron, Society of Expert Witnesses, PO Box 345, Newmarket CB8 7RB (tel: 0845 702 3014).

The Institute of Mental Health Law would like to announce the following courses:

Human Rights Act – 1 year on Health, Mental Health and Community Care, which takes place on 20 November 2001, will bring together some of the leading players and will provide an examination of the cases that have been heard, a look at those in the pipeline and anticipation of further impact; **Victims: Their Status, Role and Function in Criminal Justice and Mental Health Policy**, which takes place on 21 November 2001, will look at a series of topics including compensation for victims, the right to information v. patient confidentiality and the White Paper on mental health reform; **The Human Rights Act and Mental Health Practice**, which takes place on 12 December 2001, will provide an introduction to the Human Rights Act 1998. All three courses will be held in central London and qualify for continuing professional development points. For further

information please contact The Institute of Mental Health Law, PO Box 5721, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 2YU (tel/fax: 01773 550900; e-mail: tracyofficemagic.co.uk).

The Division of Psychological Medicine at The Institute of Psychiatry would like to announce **The Second Annual Institute of Psychiatry 'Matter-to-Mind' Symposium**. This year's symposium, titled **Bipolar Affective Disorder – From Matter to Mind** will focus on bipolar affective disorder and builds on the success of last year's meeting, **Schizophrenia – 'From Matter to Mind'**. The Matter to Mind title reflects the integration of work from all disciplines in academic neuroscience focusing on areas at the cutting edge of research. Leading international psychiatrists will be presenting their current research in bipolar affective disorder. This