

worse, capable of sinister interpretation. When sex offender programmes are contrasted with the cynical comments of the recipients, it looks more like old-fashioned special hospital cynicism ('motivational interviewing's too good for 'em') than radical critique. And surely therapy stands or falls by the outcome of clinical trials rather than salacious anecdotes? The gory stories titillate rather than illuminate, and it is profoundly depressing that one of the authors is a research nurse.

We should worry about the trend for forensic texts to include the e-word. It coincides with the growth of the fundamentalist right in the USA, and it reeks of punishment and stigma rather than treatment and rehabilitation. These are tough times for science and those who would discard it need something better than sociology and brimstone to put in its place.

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Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in Changing Times

By Ingrid Schoon. Cambridge University Press. 2006. 242pp. £22.99 (pb). ISBN 0521541565

This is a scholarly and thoughtful book in which Ingrid Schoon presents her work analysing longitudinal psychosocial and educational data from two UK birth cohorts, 1958 and 1970 through to the present. The introduction and the first two chapters outline the concepts and definitions that underpin the study. The work is about how children escape from disadvantage with a particular focus on academic

attainment as a pathway for overcoming adversities. There is a particularly thorough discussion of the definitions of the concepts of risk and resilience and a highly readable review of the theoretical perspectives, taken over the past four decades, regarding the role of developmental influences on risk and resilience over the life course. Indeed, the first two chapters are so well done they should constitute essential reading for all behavioural scientists, mental health practitioners and those involved in forming health and education policy. Chapters three through seven constitute the empirical work charting persisting inequalities at times of marked socio-economic change in chapter three, through to personal goals and life plans by chapter seven. The reader is not assailed by numbers or statistics and each chapter gives a highly succinct summary of the findings. For example, the author concludes clearly from the data (p. 55) that 'despite dramatic economic and social advances witnessed in the UK during the 2nd half of the 20th century, inequalities of opportunities and life chances have remained or have even become greater'. Similarly, when summarising the impact of cumulative risk effects on education outcomes, Schoon (p. 72) notes, 'despite improving material conditions there are persistent or even increasing inequalities in academic attainment and adult psychological well-being'. It is striking in this chapter that there is much greater influence of parental social class on academic attainment in those born in the 1970 cohort compared with those born in 1958. Social contextual factors had an increasing influence on individual attainment as the 20th century progressed. There are other examples throughout the text pointing to a worrying growth in inequalities between socially disadvantaged and advantaged groups in our society as we get wealthier. The findings on protective factors are less

compelling perhaps because of the increasing importance of measuring processes within the individual as a component of a multimethod approach to the impact of risk on individual attainment. Schoon acknowledges this and points to a need for future studies to combine measures of genes and physiology with psychosocial data, but also emphasises the importance of maintaining a clear scientific focus rather than trawling through data sets to see what can be found.

The final two chapters on conclusions, outlook and implications for interventions and social policy are as thoughtful and clear as the introduction, with a particularly helpful analysis focusing on the importance of available social and educational resources as well as delineating risks. Risk specificity is also clearly noted. For example, children can be resilient in the face of poverty via positive and emotionally supportive relations with parents. The latter is no protection, however, against underfunded and failing schools. The children of low-income families are less likely to survive a high-risk school system, even if they have adapted to their impoverished circumstances.

This is an excellent academic text that should be essential reference reading for mental health professionals. For researchers in the field of risk and resilience I would deem it fundamental. Psychiatrists-in-training should have access also as they would learn a great deal about the value of longitudinal, non-experimental studies that provide key information about the changing world we live in and the importance of the interplay between an individual and their environment over time.

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