

## Book Reviews

The Task Force on Revision of Mental Health Legislation of the Legal Information Service and the Mental Health Foundation.

*Towards mental health law reform.*

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, Parnell, Auckland, 1984.  
Pp488. NZ \$15

*Reviewed by Gregory L. White*

By 1982 it had become apparent that changes in New Zealand society and changes in standards of mental health care rendered the Mental Health Act of 1969 and related pieces of legislation inadequate to deal with complex issues of law and treatment. Both the Health and Justice Departments initiated a review of then current law and invited public and professional audiences to respond.

This report is a massive, comprehensive, and thought-provoking response to that invitation. It is a joint product of two non-profit, private organisations, the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand and the Auckland based Legal Information Service, heretofore not involved with issues of mental health. In 488 pages the report reviews current New Zealand law in several areas of concern, summarises law and practice in several other countries (Australia, Canada, the U.K., and the U.S.), and recommends specific changes in the law. Though one may not agree with all of the recommendations, the joint task force that produced the report has performed an invaluable service in bringing together so much information in a highly organised and coherent form. Whatever the outcome of the legal review, the report provides administrators and practitioners in several mental health care fields with an overview of current practice in both New Zealand and abroad.

The report consists of 22 chapters, summary of major recommendations, and appendices. Two chapters concern informal patients, including children, who are admitted to psychiatric hospital inpatient wards voluntarily. Nine chapters discuss issues related to civil committal of patients who are involuntarily given over to treatment. There are five chapters dealing with patient rights, two chapters on review and discharge procedures, and a chapter each devoted to special patients (mostly concerned with patients

with a conviction), personal guardianship of disordered persons living outside the hospital, alcoholism and drug addiction, and "mental health officers", a kind of advocate for disordered persons based on a system in place in the U.K. Each chapter ends with a summary of recommendations, notes, and references.

Rather than attempt a comprehensive review of this report, I should like to touch on some of the recommendations that seem to me to be particularly controversial and/or to have particularly important long range implications for New Zealand's mental health care system.

Certainly in this category are the recommendations based on the principle of the *least restrictive alternative*. Based on legal principles, empirical research within psychology and psychiatry, and precedents set by the U.S. Supreme Court and courts in other countries, the report argues that both informal and compulsory admissions to mental hospitals should not be made unless it "represents the least restrictive adequate treatment setting appropriate for the patient" taking into account the reason for admission. Once admitted, the patient should be placed in the least restrictive environment within the hospital suitable for appropriate treatment. The report calls on a new or amended mental health act to recognize the need for community based, less restrictive facilities as well as suggesting that the newly created role of mental health officer be responsible for recommending the least restrictive suitable alternative to hospital.

There are two related issues embedded in the consequences of this recommendation. First, different approaches to the treatment of mental disorder are likely to have different interpretations as to what constitutes the least restrictive suitable treatment. Such debates surface both within disciplines as well as across disciplines. For example, some professionals maintain that orderly, quiet hospital routines with many opportunities for patient observations are necessary for the suitable treatment of schizophrenics, particularly those commencing drug therapy. Others maintain that it is just these environments which promote institutionalisation and labelling phenomena and that schizophrenics are best treated in half-way houses or in their family milieu. For both substantive and political

reasons, it is unlikely that the professions would willingly submit to a mental health officer's judgment of what is the best treatment.

The second, related issue has to do with the nature of alternative, less restrictive treatments. While I think the report rightly recommends increased support of community based approaches, it is not at all clear which kinds of community based or other alternatives would be best for different kinds of patients. For example, in the 1960s and early 1970s there was a good deal of enthusiasm for "Fairweather" homes (named after the psychologist who developed the system) for schizophrenics. Patients were taken off the back wards, placed in community homes, and helped to develop their own businesses to support the home. The level of traditional professional therapeutic services was greatly reduced. Such homes were found to be less expensive and arguably less restrictive than chronic wards, but they were no more successful than the wards in changing the patients condition. Humane places to live, probably, but apparently not treatment. We still need a great deal of creativity and research to be able to develop less restrictive environments in which to place patients that are also demonstrably treatment settings as well.

The report also recommends that no person should be civilly committed (beyond time necessary for assessment) unless the person is shown to have a mental disorder which is *treatable* (or unless gravely incapacitated). Treatable can mean either manageable or cureable. Certainly, there are many mental disorders for which drug treatments or behavioral token economies make the person more manageable within an institution, but there is scarce evidence that many of the standard treatments lead to qualitative improvements in the patient's condition in the absence of continued "treatment" within or without the hospital. Further, there are treatments in the curative sense for which data indicate some positive effect, but who is going to dictate which of these is best among alternatives for a particular client? For example, it can be argued that certain cognitive behavioral and family systems interventions have better records for treatment of depression than behavioral programmes, psychodynamic approaches, or some humanistic therapies. Will professionals be required by law (or recommendation of a mental health officer) to deliver only certain kinds of treatments?

Another recommendation concerns the process of civil committal. Based on an earlier

Health Department position paper and law in Tasmania and the U.K., the report calls for the establishment of a special register of professionals competent to certify patients for compulsory admission based on criteria of being a danger to self or others, or gravely incapacitated. One such professionals judgment, along with that of a doctor acquainted with the patient, would be required for initial commitment. Aside from endorsing the idea that senior clinical psychologists or senior psychiatric social workers (and perhaps others) would be as competent as psychiatrists to make this decision, the report leaves it up to the new mental health act to specify the training and experience necessary for being placed on the special register.

This recommendation certainly addresses an important need, but two questions arise. If the person on the register had advanced experience and special training, it seems more than likely that the potential patient's friendly personal doctor would defer to greater expertise if s/he were in doubt. This circumvents the rationale for multiple assessors. The report states that given New Zealand's shortage of qualified mental health professionals, it would be unrealistic to expect two registered assessors to be available. This seems to me to suggest law based on current economic priorities. Elsewhere the report suggests setting up Mental Health Review Tribunals to review the cases of both informal and compulsory patients (a very reasonable suggestion) and developing a force of mental health officers. Both systems presumably entail costs including the expansion of the numbers of trained mental health workers. Why the report chooses to consider shortages of personnel with respect to the register is not apparent. In any event, it seems more reasonable to specify either two such persons be required to commit a person or only one, perhaps with judge's permission (as is suggested for cases of threat of suicide).

However, the register idea is also likely to raise professional hackles as well. While I happen to agree that non-psychiatrists can be as competent at decisions for short-term involuntary commitment as psychiatrists, others I am sure will not agree. For such a register to gain support of various professional communities, the proposed act must carefully spell out the training and competencies required. The catch is, who is qualified to recommend these criteria? Currently only medical doctors, including psychiatrists, are presumably so qualified because current law

gives them alone among mental health professionals the power to commit. The question is both an empirical as well as a political one and I found myself wondering why the report ducked the issue of how registrants were to be qualified.

Each reader of this report will likely find his or her own doubts about certain recommendations. This should not detract from our indebtedness to the task force for producing this superbly documented, comprehensive, and challenging review of mental health law.

Alex Gilandas, Stephen Touyz, Pierre J. V. Beumont and H. P. Greenberg.

*Handbook of Neuropsychological Assessment*

New York: Grune & Stratton, 1984.

Pp. 303

*Reviewed by Jenni A. Ogden*

The authors of this book (two psychiatrists and two clinical psychologists) make it clear from the outset that the book is written as a guide for generalist clinical psychologists and students who in the course of their work are required to carry out a clinical neuropsychological assessment. It is unfortunate that the clinical psychologist is so frequently put in this position, simply because of the lack of trained specialists in clinical neuropsychology in our hospitals and institutions. It is like expecting a psychiatrist to carry out a neurological assessment, a state of affairs that would not be readily tolerated in the medical profession.

These authors attempt to deal with the situation by describing the neuropsychological test battery they themselves have found useful. Although their motives are admirable, their simplistic cook-book approach may do more harm than good if the reader is led to believe that this is what neuropsychological assessment is all about.

The introductory chapters are promising. They describe and contrast the qualitative approach exemplified by Luria (1980) and the quantitative approach typified by the Halstead-Reitan neuropsychological test battery (HRNTB). The authors correctly point out that clinical psychologists without a strong neurological background and specialist training in neuropsychology should restrict themselves to an atheoretical, quantitative approach.

The chapter on the development of test batteries is instructive and demonstrates the enorm-

ous amount of work that such an undertaking requires. Two batteries based on the HRNTB emerge, one for adults and a slightly different version for adolescents. Each battery consists of a number of independent, well established tests that together purport to test, in a quantitative manner, a wide range of motor, sensory, perceptual and higher cognitive functions. The reason given for using this battery rather than the HRNTB is one of cost-efficiency. Whereas the HRNTB takes an experienced examiner about 8 hours to give, this one apparently only takes 3 to 4 hours. According to the authors this means that "most patients can comfortably complete assessment at one sitting" (p.86). In my experience, however, few neurological patients would be able to concentrate for this length of time. The battery includes the WAIS-R, the Benton Visual Retention Test, the Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure Test, the Aphasia Language Performance Scales, the Modified Wechsler Memory Scale, the Wide-Range Achievement Test, the MMPI and *fourteen* further tests. Certainly, on completion of this battery organicity may be established, but it would take a very skilled examiner to complete the battery in 3 to 4 hours without exhausting the patient and invalidating the results. One important factor that many brain-damaged patients have in common is a general slowing of performance, and this often increases the time required to give a test even although the patient may only be able to complete a portion of it.

The psychologist who decides to use this battery must then acquire the various tests. This book provides addresses of suppliers of the test equipment, gives a brief description of each test including administration and scoring instructions, and supplies normative data that in some cases includes Australian data. Also provided is a chapter on the clinical interpretation of the various tests. The authors do not claim that this chapter is comprehensive or by itself of much practical use, but it does include a number of useful references.

In keeping with the quantitative "test everything" approach a guide to neuropsychological report writing is given along with sample case reports. Appendices provide assessment report forms for reproduction so that the assessor has only to fill in the blanks appropriately.

Chapters on clinical neuropsychology in law and medicine furnish some useful information including guidelines for the writing of forensic

reports, and sections on paediatrics, neurology and psychiatry. Unfortunately, some of the summaries of the literature are rather biased. The section on mild head injury is particularly misleading as the authors report the research suggesting that the post-traumatic syndrome has neurotic rather than neurological underpinnings and ignore more recent research that suggests the reverse (Levin et al, 1982).

This book is primarily for the clinical psychologist who has the time and resources to use the battery described and who is willing to do a lot of further reading and training if he or she is to be effective. Otherwise it is a readable introduction to the quantitative method of neuropsychological assessment and may serve to stimulate interest in this important, specialist branch of psychology and neurology.

#### References

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D. D. Clarke

*Language and action: A structural model of behaviour*.

Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983

Pp. 318

Reviewed by Peter White

The specific concern of this book is the study of the temporal structure of social interaction. It should be stressed immediately, though, that the methods and ideas expounded in this book are of relevance to a wide range of concerns: linguistic analysis, business and political negotiations, long term studies of personal relationships, classroom interaction, indeed any domain that consists primarily of sequences of events. The author's approach derives from a synthesis of two apparently unrelated antecedents: generative linguistics, and in particular the work of Chomsky with its emphasis on the competence/performance distinction and the production of recognisably well-formed syntactic structures from a reservoir of deep structures by the application of generative and transformational rules; and the "new paradigm" model developed principally by Harré, in which humans are depicted

as agents able to monitor their behaviour and perform social interaction with competence and insight. The outcome is a view of social interaction as generated with the aid of things like rules that determine its temporal structure, rules the use of which expresses the social competence of the participants. These are not rules for generating a response to a given stimulus, but rules which determine the structure of a sequence of events, somewhat as grammatical rules determine the structure of a complex sentence.

Clarke presents a thorough analysis of approaches to the study of structure, which is used to guide a series of experimental studies intended to investigate the components and organisation of social interaction. These studies are experimental in the proper sense of the word, in that the role they play is not that of establishing definite findings so much as testing and modifying ideas, both theoretical ideas, such as particular speech-act taxonomies and grammars, and methodological ideas. For that reason there are few "findings" to be reported. The studies are designed to contribute to a continual progression towards methodological refinement and appropriateness. Indeed, as a training manual for aspiring researchers in the area this book could hardly be improved upon, for it presents intensive and penetrating analysis of each of a seemingly endless series of theoretical, conceptual and methodological problems.

Much of what is gained from this approach is a clearer understanding of what sorts of questions about social behaviour are important, and why. For instance, Clarke devotes an early study to the question of how far in a sequence the influence of an utterance extends. Although the answer appears to be "not very far", Clarke then points out that the question itself is of little value, comparable to asking how long is a piece of string. One wonders how many research questions in social psychology are of that type. What matters, we learn from this, is how the influence of an utterance is related to the particular structure of the sequence in which it occurs, so that influence emerges at some points and not at others.

Running parallel with the specific problems and approaches studied is the development of a set of notions concerning social psychological theory and research that depart from common conventions. The creative interplay between these levels of discourse is one of the striking features of the book, and exemplifies the very notions propounded within it. Although social

psychology no longer considers itself behaviourist in outlook, the stimulus response conception of social behaviour lives on as the independent variable-dependent variable relationship in social experimentation. This is the hammer under which social interaction is treated as a collection of nails. Clarke has not thrown the hammer away, but he has gone back to the toolbox and retrieved a collection of implements shaped and selected for their appropriateness to the jobs at hand. What is required, first and foremost, is consideration of interaction sequences in terms of what they are, the relations between their components, and not what they can be broken up into: important features of sequence structures are lost in conventional treatments confined to cause-effect pairs rather than entire sequences, pairs often considered at entirely the wrong level of analysis.

This can be most easily illustrated with a study reported towards the end of the book, of disruptive behaviour in school classrooms. Traditional methods involve the consideration of the relationship between extraneous variables such as macro-social structures and incidence of disruptive behaviour, as simple antecedent-consequent pairs. Clarke and his collaborators in this study analysed sequences of behaviour within classroom interactions, yielding a complex network of sequential relationships which reveal, in principle at least, the involvement of disruptive behaviours with other events in the network. The picture that emerges is neither neat nor conclusive: but that is a natural consequence of a refusal to compromise with the complexity of social interaction. The study demonstrates that traditional methods overlook relevant features of sequential structure by oversimplifying and analysing, in this case, at too high a level of generality.

Many, perhaps all, methods tested by Clarke have weaknesses of one kind or another. In some early studies Clarke uses sequences of conversational acts generated artificially by students with pencil and paper, and later on he replaces these with sequences of speech act categories, using a taxonomy of his own devising. In the latter case the strategy is to test hypothetical rule-systems for generating social behaviour by using them to produce artificial sequences of speech act types. In both cases Clarke then relies upon the linguistic analogy with competence by using laypeople to assess the plausibility ("well-formedness") of the sequences generated. This is all very well in principle, but in practice the plausibility judg-

ments often appear to be stereotypic rather than truly informed: some of the student-generated sequences were judged more like real dialogue than real dialogue itself was judged to be, probably because the latter looked noisier and messier than people believe real dialogue to be. The point is that competence of native speakers at judging the correspondence to reality of real or synthetic sequences is of a different sort from their competence at *producing* well-formed sequences in real life. The category sequences further err by being too abstract: the categories have the same sort of conceptual clarity that stereotypes have, and it should not be assumed that judgments of category sequences will map onto judgments of real instances of those sequences.

These drawbacks do not seriously interfere with the role those studies play in the development of ideas and methods: they are all part of the journey of exploration. There is, perhaps, a more serious problem, however. Social act sequences are not possessed of recognisably well-formed structures because they are generated by anything analogous to generative grammars or structural rule-systems, but because they instantiate in behaviour the overriding continuities of human life — goals, practical concerns, relationships, moods, psychological variables and the like. The existence and use of those rules that do shape social interaction still possess, and need, that underpinning. Simulations of speech act sequences appear to "pass" because they do not have to meet the tests that these considerations would impose upon them, because of the very fact that they are abstracted from the social contexts in which speech acts occur, as well as from the individuality of instances of speech acts. The tests that simulations have to meet are not severe enough because they are not drawn from psychological reality, so that the evidence that might show the linguistic analogy to be false cannot be obtained. The least that is needed for any synthetic approach to have value or validity is continual reference to social reality: ultimately synthesised sequences will have to meet the test of actually *being* part of the reality they seek to model, and arguably before they can succeed as such they will need to be based on psychological considerations that go far beyond those explored in this book.

It would be asking too much to expect Clarke to take that step, and for that reason argument over whether the linguistic analogy would have to be abandoned in order for it to be

taken is premature. At this early stage it need only be useful: Clarke's purpose is to take the first step, not the last, and to do so by aiming for ultimate methodological flexibility and rigour, by establishing criteria for the assessment of explanatory power, and by considering what the role of theory in social psychology should be. The last involves relating all levels of discourse and generality in a progression away from the common sense level of description that has been the source of most of what passes for theory in social psychology. Clarke argues:

"... scientific ideas are not motivated by new collections of data, nor by set experimental procedures and paradigms, but by the creativity that can imagine stranger and stranger processes at work in the world, combined with the skill to be right in those imaginings, and the discipline to evaluate them sceptically."

(p.270)

Clarke's book not only states but exemplifies this dictum. Idealism and practicality interact harmoniously and powerfully. The emphasis on coherence contrasts with the haphazard collection of bits and pieces that constitute the corpus of social psychological understanding at the moment. Coherence is a natural end-product of the study of social interaction structure when properly conceived, and this book makes a significant contribution towards that proper conception.

Robert Hockey (Ed.)

*Stress and Fatigue in Human Performance.*

Chichester, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

Pp. 396

Barry H. Kantowitz and Robert D. Sorkin

*Human Factors: Understanding people-systems relationships.*

New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

Pp. 699 \$57.25.

Reviewed by Paul Russell.

Anyone who uses the word "stress" in their psychological dealings or who, like me, has not felt at ease with the term as a scientific construct should delve into this book. The stated primary aim of the book is to present information about the effects of stressors such as extremes of temperature and noise, shiftwork, danger, monotony, fatigue and incentives on human performance in

a manner useful to applied psychologists. The first half of the book achieves this aim well enough, even amusingly at times. The second half of the book is valuable for its scrutiny of some favoured notions about stress. I recommend you begin with Hockey and Hamilton's contribution in Chapter 12 and perhaps Hockey's Chapter 13 and then decide which additional chapters you want to chase up.

Human performance researchers have generally regarded stress as arising from outside the person, as stimulus and environment driven rather than as something generated from within the person. That view has changed. In line with the prevailing cognitive zeitgeist it is now realized that stress arises as much in the mind of the beholder as in the evoking situation. For example in the first chapter boredom is defined as an "individual's emotional response to an environment perceived as monotonous", in the chapter on dangerous environments a person's response is shown to be dependent upon their assessment of the danger and their repertoire of coping skills, incentives are seen to work to the extent that they affect goal setting, and fatigue it seems is more in the mind than the muscle.

Stress and anxiety have long been associated with arousal: boredom is a state of under arousal, anxiety a state of over arousal. The inverted U function enshrined in the Yerkes-Dodson law has been accepted as describing the relationship between arousal (and stress) and performance. The law of course does not explain why performance increases with increases in arousal until an optimal level is reached and then begins its downward trend. The almost as revered Easterbrook hypothesis offers one explanation. High levels of arousal are said inevitably to result in a narrowing of the focus of attention. However, when incentives and loud noises are used to increase arousal, attention is not necessarily narrowed. Rather, subjects appear to exercise voluntary control and focus on inputs or methods, which in the past have proven effective, regardless of where in the perceptual field the information might be presented.

The Yerkes-Dodson law presupposes a unitary concept of arousal, and of performance. It emerges from the chapters on Incentives, Circadian Rhythms and Shift Work, and Diurnal Variations, that there are conditions which decrease performance on some tasks, while actually enhancing it on others. For example, performance on most tasks follows the daily variation in body

temperature, being best later in the day and at its lowest in the small hours when body temperature is at its lowest. Just the reverse pattern is found for tasks with a high short-term memory loading. Such findings are inconsistent with the Yerkes-Dodson law if one follows the generally accepted assumption that arousal rises with body temperature.

Several chapters (e.g. those on Anxiety and Individual Differences, and Coping Efficiency and Situational Demands) replace a generalized arousal with an undifferentiated and allocatable mental resource or attention. Stress arises to the extent that the resource demands of a situation exceed those available. The cognitive component of anxiety (worry) competes with this allocatable resource so that those with high trait anxiety have less of the resource to allocate to the task at hand and consequently suffer in demanding situations. Alternatively, stress occurs not when there is a wide mismatch between demand and available resource — one invokes appropriate coping strategies or alleviates stress by revising goals realistically downwards in such situations — but when demand is just beyond the reach of supply. While subjective feelings of stress are undoubtedly related to the demandingness of a task, there is no agreed measure of task demand. Further, contemporary theories of attention have found it necessary to replace a unitary notion of resource with the idea that many different kinds of mental resource exist, as Hockey and Hamilton (Chapter 12) alone seem to be aware.

The general picture to emerge from this book suggests that whether a situation is experienced as stressful and a person's level of performance depend upon the kind of stressor, the nature of the task, the resource demand composition of the task in relation to other activities, whether the person is alone or part of a diffuse or well established group, the person's level of trait anxiety, their repertoire of coping strategies, and their self-set goals.

Human Factors (Ergonomics in Europe), which arose largely out of the technological advances associated with World War II, was traditionally described as "fitting the task to the man". Over the years the basic philosophy has remained unchanged but the definition has been broadened to incorporate a systems approach, technological developments, and the realization that human factors has application in other than military fields. Accordingly, Kantowitz and Sorokin define human factors as "the discipline that

tries to optimize the relationship between technology and the human".

Kantowitz and Sorokin have attempted to produce an upper level undergraduate to graduate level text with certain specific aims in mind.

Firstly, they contrast a handbook with a problem solving approach to the teaching of human factors. They claim that the human factors professional does not solve problems simply by consulting a handbook of facts and tables. Rather he/she actively works (even iterates) through a problem. Other texts, they claim, are handbook oriented. Two main devices are used to capture this problem solving element. A workbook (which unfortunately was not available to me) containing relevant exercises has been produced, and chapters in the text contain "slice of life" boxes which present reasonably detailed coverage of real life problems and the steps to their solution. These are engagingly described and serve also to integrate material across chapters. However, they have not gone too far. The book does not lack the hard facts and useful information (or where in the literature to find it) used by the problem solving professional.

Secondly, they aimed to produce a text which looked to the future rather than one which merely surveyed the past. This was achieved in a number of ways. Examples, issues, and style of writing are very topical. For example, Three Mile Island and related nuclear power plant problems feature often. The military emphasis of much older work published in technical reports not now readily available has been replaced with more contemporary transport, vehicle, manufacturing, and domestic examples (even the Reach toothbrush comes in for close scrutiny) which can generally be found in the international journals. Chapters or sizeable sections on data entry devices (the mouse, joystick, menus, text and screen editors as well as keyboards), programming languages (if you find flow charts difficult to follow you are in good company), transportation systems, buildings and cities, decision making, inspection and troubleshooting, and legal aspects are also included.

Perhaps the most future looking is the emphasis on useful concepts. The authors are adept at pointing out how concepts of selective attention, mental resources and resource allocation, working memory, automaticity, and human decision making can be used to explain and predict the loci of system breakdown or malfunction. Further, sections outlining the more traditional

human factors fare frequently end by asking "of what use is this to the human factors professional, what general principle is to be gleaned from it?" However, I feel they over-valued information measurement, signal detection theory, and feedback and control theory. Given their problem solving orientation they could have made more use of modern ideas on problem solving.

All in all this is an excellent text. The traditional topics of human information processing and the senses, anthropometry, displays, controls, and the physical environment are generally well covered and in a more enlivened manner than I've encountered elsewhere. With the exceptions of the chapter on visual displays and the section on temperature, exposition is excellent and the treatment of technical topics such as information measurement, signal detection theory, and decision theory is the clearest I have come across. There is liberal use of good pictorial material. As well as the "spice of life" boxes already referred to, most chapters begin with vignettes describing some real life episode — a plane crash, the humble (or scalding) bathroom shower control — which capture and hold interest as they are referred to throughout the chapter. The system of headings clearly portrays the text structure, and good chapter summaries are provided.

In contrast to Osborne (1982) and McCormick and Sanders (1982), which gave me the impression that there has been little change in human factors since the 1960's, this text made me well aware of the chip, nuclear, and other technological developments which present a challenge for human factors. I can now see why human factors courses in the U.S. at least are oversubscribed.

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R. C. Lewontin, S. Rose, and L. J. Kamin  
*Not in Our Genes*

New York: Pantheon/Random House, 1984  
Pp. 322, \$45.00

Reviewed by Gregory L. White.

The last 15 years has seen a rise in public and academic popularity of biological, reductionistic explanations of a wide range of individual and collective human experience. Such explanations have had dramatic impacts on governments' allocations of resources for research, education, social welfare, and mental health. Most challenges to these explanations have come from either the affected interest groups or from scientists advocating one form or another of environmental determinism.

This book is an unsettling challenge to our acceptance of such concepts. The authors are distinguished research scientists in their own fields; Lewontin is a evolutionary geneticist, Rose is a neurobiologist, and Kamin an experimental psychologist. There are three main thrusts of their dissent. First, they present a socio-historical analysis of the underlying social conditions that lead to uncritical acceptance of biological reductionism. They trace contemporary interest in biological explanations to a deflection of the serious challenges to existing systems of authority in the 1960s and 1970s. These challenges are diminished by localizing failure within the individual, rather than within the social system. Second, they present damning critiques of research supporting the reductionistic argument in specific areas. These analyses include sociobiology, intelligence and its inheritance, the genetic bases for schizophrenia, the use of drugs in psychiatry, and so called minimal brain dysfunction or hyperactivity. Finally, the authors present their own outline of an alternative to reductionism of either a biological or an environmental stripe.

For example, most of us will probably have relied on secondary sources for our knowledge of the heritability of intelligence. The IQs of separated identical twins correlate quite highly, for instance. The authors detail how such studies are flawed by the fact that most such twins are not really separated in a way approaching random assignment to environments. Most are raised by friends or relatives within the same neighborhoods! Moreover, recent studies of adopted children have discovered that the correlations between adopted and biological childrens' IQs with that of the adoptive mother are equal, ruling out any substantial contribution of genetics to IQ. Given that the data on heritability of IQ are so tenuous, the authors then suggest that the widespread acceptance of the genetics of IQ reflects a general social climate of opinion which justifies



existing social and academic inequalities by reference to biology.

The authors' alternative to reductionism is a dialectic approach in which biology and environment shape each other. This is not simple interactionism which would reduce effects to interacting causes. Rather, Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin work out specific examples from biology and psychology to show that neither the organism nor its environment can be defined or meaningfully studied independently of the other. The dialectic approach calls for massive revision of the reigning orthodoxies of environmental and biological reductionism as well as for new research methods. New models of this type are already having influence within biology, neurobiology, and psychology. Bandura's reciprocal determinism, the use of systems theory in family therapy and organisational development, and holistic models of brain functioning are current examples.

The book is extremely well written and documented, engaging, and concise. The authors are clear to point out their own academic and political beliefs which partly inform their analyses. The book is appropriate for courses in neurobiology, psychological theory, sociobiology, abnormal psychology, and social psychology at either advanced undergraduate or graduate levels. More importantly, this book is required reading for scientific psychologists interested in the political, sociological, and scientific biases that affect our teaching and research efforts.

Miriam Saphira  
*Amazon Mothers*

Papers, Inc., P.O. Box 47-398, Ponsonby,  
1984.

Pp. 86 \$NZ 8.25

*Reviewed by Hilary Haines*

Miriam Saphira's new book, *Amazon Mothers*, is a portrait of lesbian mothers in New Zealand. In her preface the author states that the idea for the book grew out of her awareness of need for information for the family courts (custody decisions nearly always go against lesbian mothers, and are usually based on ignorance and negative stereotypes rather than on any real assessment of the needs and preferences of the child). She hopes that her book will be read by

teachers, psychologists, social workers and other professionals who come across lesbian mothers in the course of their work, but who are usually ignorant about lesbian issues.

The information in *Amazon Mothers* comes from reviews of the overseas literature, which is sparse, and from a survey of 70 lesbian mothers who were contacted personally through Broad-sheet and Pink Triangle. The sampling procedure is obviously flawed, but is the only one possible in surveying a group of women who have plenty of reasons to be worried about disclosing personal information. The author has made a good effort to contact a wide range of lesbian mothers, as is evident from the fact that there are non-feminist as well as feminist women included, and women from all kinds of occupations.

Throughout the book Miriam Saphira emphasizes that lesbian mothers are, just like heterosexual mothers, a diverse group of women. They share some of the problems of straight solo mothers — financial difficulties, the burden of parenting on one's own — as well as having extra problems to overcome; the often homophobic attitudes of the community at large, vulnerability in custody disputes, and so on. Since most lesbian mothers have been married, as with heterosexual solo parents a special problem arises in helping their children adjust to a new family situation.

The psychological literature on solo mothers now recognizes that, while the period immediately following a marital separation can be stressful for children, they will adapt to the new situation well if their mother can establish supportive social networks. A recent Australian study suggests that for teenagers, parental divorce can have quite positive outcomes, as they often learn to communicate better with parents and take on a more independent role themselves. Miriam Saphira suggests, following Bernice Goodman, that lesbian mothers provide their children with role models that celebrate difference, rather than conformity, surely a positive feature in our rapidly changing society, where the stereotypical nuclear family (Mum, Dad and the kids) now accounts for less than half of households.

Psychologists, psychiatrists and other members of the so-called helping professions have a lot to answer for in the way they have approached lesbian issues in the past. They have been the main perpetrators of the idea of homosexuality as a mental illness, and although most probably no

longer adhere to such an extreme view, they still often attempt to change sexual preference. Because in their work they come across people in trouble, they often have a very distorted view of the ordinary lives of minority groups, and *Amazon Mothers* is an excellent corrective. It should be read by all straight psychologists who are working in clinical fields.

Miriam Saphira is to be commended for producing this lively, readable book. Her previous

book, *The Sexual Abuse of Children*, has probably had more impact on New Zealanders' attitudes than any other recent work by a New Zealand psychologist, and although *Amazon Mothers* will reach a smaller audience, it has the same sensitivity, simplicity and ability to bring alive people's experience that the earlier book had. Straight psychologists have now no excuse for being misinformed about this important topic.