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The title of this book is a bold assertion of the fact of multicultural Britain. There are those, of course, for whom multiculturalism or the very idea of a multicultural society is anathema. Multiculturalism as an idea challenges the established order. For example, if we were to embrace the notion of multiculturalism, whose values will come to determine how society will be governed, whose values will hold sway even in domestic matters and whose etiquette and conventions will guide social practice in day-to-day life? There is inherent in celebrating multiculturalism the implicit assumption that all views will be equally valued and accepted. Convergence of values is not the goal of multiculturalism, rather multiculturalism, if it espouses any ideology at all, espouses the idea that all cultures are equally valuable but different. No hierarchy of values exists nor is there a unifying central view of how the good life will be lived. Thus, it is easy to see how some people will have come to perceive multiculturalism as the vanguard of chaos.

The question is how psychiatry in the West, in Britain in particular, will respond to the challenge of multicultural societies. This new book edited by Bhugra and Cochrane is a bold response to the many complex issues that multiculturalism raises. The editors set themselves a high standard indeed. Their aim is to 'bring together the best of contemporary research and scholarship – both pure

and applied – that is relevant to understanding the patterns of mental illness in minority ethnic communities in Britain'. Furthermore they hope to stimulate debate about psychiatry as the now classic works by Rack (1982) and Littlewood and Lipsedge (1982) did 20 years ago. In many respects they succeed in their goal. There are exceptional chapters but also not so good chapters; the variability in the quality of writing is a sign of a multi-authored text.

Littlewood's chapter on psychiatry's culture is as we have come to expect of him: surfeit with erudition, highly theoretical and well argued. His analysis of the terms 'culture' and 'nature' and of the uses and abuses of these terms is illuminating. But in the end, for the practitioner faced with the sharp reality of the clinic, there are few answers or guidance. Bhui's chapter on epidemiology and social issues draws our attention to the complex meanings and limitations of the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity'. He gives an instructive example of Punjabis settled in Britain. Cochrane's chapter on race, prejudice and ethnic identity is an accessible guide to the experience of racial prejudice in Britain or elsewhere. It is particularly good at describing the possible influence of prejudice on self-identity and self-esteem. Bhugra and Cochrane's chapter, Mental illness and ethnic minority groups, gives a comprehensive summary of the epidemiology of

psychiatric disorders in ethnic minorities. The chapters by Shah, Patel and Mirza on old age psychiatry taken together provide one of the best sources of the demography of ageing in minority groups. Nikapota's chapter on child psychiatry provides a wealth of clinical examples to illustrate how cultural practices may influence presentation of child psychiatric problems. It is an intelligent, flexible and humane approach to children and their families. Cope's chapter on forensic psychiatry is well written and full of information about ethnic minorities and the criminal justice system. She identifies the likely explanations for the over-representation of African-Caribbeans in the judicial and secure psychiatric setting.

This book will be of interest to all psychiatrists for its strength is that it focuses on what is most distinctive about psychiatry: the exploration and elucidation of the complexity of human life and psychology. A multicultural society challenges us to understand and tolerate what is peculiar about the other. That is of course the business of psychiatry.

LITTLEWOOD, R. & LIPSEGE, M. (1982) *Aliens and Alienists. Ethnic Minorities and Psychiatry*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

RACK, P. (1982) *Race, Culture, and Mental Disorder*. London: Tavistock.

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miscellany

Kurt Schneider Scientific Award

This prize for exceptional scientific achievements is sponsored by Janssen-Cilag GmbH Germany, and endowed with €10 000. The prize will be awarded for the ninth time at the 14th Weißenauer

Schizophrenia Symposium in 2003. The aim of the prize is to encourage psychiatric research (clinical psychopathology, biochemistry, physiology, pharmacology, genetics and epidemiology), diagnostics, prevention, therapy and rehabilitation. Usually only one original paper should be submitted (already published or accepted

for publication). Entry papers should be sent to the Board of Trustees no later than 1 September 2002, for the attention of the Chairman, Professor Dr med. Dr h. c. Gerd Huber, Universitäts-Nervenlinik, D-53105, Bonn (Venusberg), Germany (fax: +49 (0) 228 287 5725 or +49 (0) 228 322 883).

forthcoming events

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit is organising a 1-day conference titled **Achieving Good Practice in Mental Health Care: From Clinical Governance to the National Plan**. The conference will take place on 17 April 2002 at the Commonwealth Institute, London. For further details please contact Jo Baker (tel: 020 7227 0827; e-mail: joanne1.baker@virgin.net).

Mole conferences would like to announce the following events. **Poppies Instead Of Daddies: The Unresolved Wounds of Childhood War** is a combined theoretical and experimental seminar, which takes place on 18 April

2002 and aims to look at the worldwide web of unresolved world war wounds and to raise awareness of mental health professionals to childhood war trauma. **Whose Evidence is it Anyway?: The Role of Research and the Nature of Evidence from a Service User Perspective** will be held on 24 April 2002 and will examine how the development of user- and survivor-led research can inform and contribute towards evidence-based practice in mental health services. **Asperger's Syndrome, Practical Solutions to Practical Problems** will take place on 29 April 2002.

All events will be held in London and attendance may be used for continuing

professional development (CPD) purposes. For further information please contact Mole Conferences, 26 Church Road, Portslade, Brighton BN41 1LA (tel: 01273 242 634; fax: 01273 235 095; e-mail: info@mole-conferences.com; website and online booking: <http://www.mole-conferences.com>).

The **Critical Psychiatry Network Annual Conference** will be held on 27 April 2002 at the Paragon Hotel, Birmingham. The theme is 'beyond drugs and custody: renewing mental health practice'. Further details can be obtained at <http://www.critpsynet.freeuk.com/Conference2002.htm> or from Strangefish Conferences (tel: 01452 380 326).