

The background of the cover features a dark, moody photograph. It shows the silhouettes of two children in a room. On the right, a child is standing with their back to the camera, their right hand pressed against a window pane. On the left, another child is partially visible, also in silhouette. The light from the window creates a grid-like pattern of light and shadow across the scene. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues, purples, and blacks, with a touch of reddish-pink light coming from the window.

# Child Psychopathology

**From Infancy to Adolescence**

  
**BARRY H. SCHNEIDER**

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BARRY H. SCHNEIDER

with Paul Hastings, Amanda Guyer,  
Mara Brendgen and Eli Cwinn



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# Child Psychopathology

This textbook covers the classification, causes, treatment and prevention of psychological disorders in the infant through the adolescent years. Chapters balance the social and historical context of psychopathology with the physiological roots of abnormal behavior, leading students to a comprehensive understanding of child psychopathology. The book is totally up-to-date, including coverage of DSM-5 and criticisms of it. In four parts, this textbook describes the empirical bases of child psychopathology as well as the practice of child psychologists, outlining the classification and causes of disorders in addition to methods of assessment, intervention and treatment. Students will be able to evaluate the treatments used by professionals and debunk popular myths about atypical behavior and its treatment. Complementing the lively writing style, text boxes, clinical case studies and numerous examples from international cultures and countries add context to chapter material. Study questions, diagrams and glossaries offer further learning support.

**Barry H. Schneider** is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Ottawa, now teaching at Boston College.

This book is dedicated to Dr. Sonja Poizner, the supervisor of my first clinical internship. Sonja could not complete her formal education during World War II because she had to flee her native country to escape persecution. She completed her doctorate many years later and then went on to inspire me and many other future psychologists to make judicious use of their knowledge of child psychopathology in the ethical and responsible practice of psychological assessment. She continues to inspire me long after her retirement.

## PREFACE

In the psychology department where I have taught for the past 32 years, I am regarded as one of the more research-oriented of the clinical-psychology professors and one of the most clinically oriented of the researchers. Although the commitment to bridge research and practice is strong in North America, tension between the two pillars of clinical psychology emerges all too often. Such tension is often much greater in the countries where I have collaborated and worked around the world. My need to resolve as much of this tension as possible for the students I teach and for my overseas colleagues was the primary impetus for this book. My course on child psychopathology has always been among my favorites. However, I have never found a textbook that bridges research and practice very well or one that my students enjoy reading. I have endeavored to provide such a resource by writing this volume. Let me mention some of its distinctive features.

*Consistency of writing style.* I want to tell the story from the beginning to the end in a coherent way. Therefore, I have been actively involved in writing all the chapters. Except for a few for which I needed the expertise of co-authors in areas that are outside my main fields of competence, I have written them all.

*Just the right amount of information.* Other books in this field provide either an entertaining but sketchy overview or too much encyclopedic detail.

*Empirical basis.* It is important to me to teach not only what is known but also how it is known and how well it is known. I have attempted to do this without excessive detail about individual studies or picky methodological objections.

*A balanced perspective on the medical model.* It is important for students to become familiar with the

DSM and ICD schemes, which are essential tools of the field, without accepting them uncritically.

*Social and historical context.* Theories and beliefs about child and adolescent psychopathology do not emerge entirely from advances in science. Students should be aware of the roots of new ideas and methods.

*Physiology and genetics.* Although many psychology students bring little background in these areas to their study of child and adolescent psychology, it is imperative that they familiarize themselves with the physiological bases as well as the social and familial bases of abnormal behavior. Together with colleagues, Paul Hastings, Mara Brendgen and Amanda Guyer, I have presented this material in language that should be accessible even to science-phobes.

*A truly multicultural, international perspective.* Most previous textbooks in this area mention culture only in passing. It is an undeniable fact that researchers in the United States have been the most active contributors to knowledge in this area. Without minimizing the importance of work done in the United States, this book is suitable for readers around the world. It is my firm belief that students in the United States benefit from an appreciation of the multicultural nature of that country and of the psychological functioning of people in other countries.

*Readability.* One of my foremost objectives has been to provide a book that is authoritative but also a volume that students will enjoy reading.

*Critical but constructive stance.* I believe it important for psychology students to neither accept blindly everything they read nor engage in picky, trivial criticism to the point of not appreciating the value of a very useful theory or research study.

## Aids to learning

Although I have used non-technical language to the fullest extent possible, glossaries are provided with concise definitions of the terms that the student most needs to know.

*Diagrams* are provided to illustrate the more complex processes involved in child psychopathology, especially its physiological aspects.

*Boxes* present interesting material that is sometimes tangential to the main presentation of material but enriching.

*Case studies* of different lengths are included, first of all, as examples of the disorders and their treatment. Another purpose of these case studies is to portray the children and adolescents affected in a way that increases empathy and reduces stigma. Most of the case studies enable the reader to follow the child through a course of psychological treatment.

*Chapter summaries and glossaries* are provided to assist students in remembering the material and preparing for examinations.

*Study questions* are useful to the students in gauging their mastery of the content.

## Structure of this book

The book is divided into four parts:

1. Basic concepts and processes. The first part begins with definitional issues pertaining to the delineation of normal and abnormal behavior within the context of normal child and adolescent development. This part includes chapters devoted to the possible causes, processes and correlates of psychological distress, including genetics, physiological roots, family factors, culture and peer relations. A capsule history of the field is included as well. The part concludes with an overview of the work of the psychologist in terms of prevention, assessment and intervention.
2. High-incidence disorders. This part is devoted to the psychological problems that are the most frequently referred to psychologists and about which there has been the most research.
3. Developmental disorders. This part presents a psychological perspective on these disorders, which typically originate during the childhood and adolescent years and that often (but not always) persist throughout the lifespan.
4. Less frequent and less clearly defined forms of psychopathology. This part is devoted to disorders that emerge less frequently than those in the previous parts and/or that are less clearly characterized as separate, well-defined mental health conditions. Some of these conditions are infrequent in childhood and more common in adolescence. These conditions are omitted in some textbooks, which is unfortunate. Less research has been devoted to these disorders than to those discussed in the earlier parts; consequently, these conditions are introduced only briefly. In the last chapter, on gender variance, the issue of what constitutes psychopathology is reprised together with information about the disorder.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank, first of all, my colleagues and friends, Paul Hastings, Mara Brendgen, and Amanda Guyer, who agreed to collaborate with me on the chapters on genetics and psychophysiology, making those chapters much better than if I had written them myself. I would also like to acknowledge the dedicated assistance of the following gifted psychology students: Julian Caza, Eli Cwinn, Laura Galliana, Tanner McInnis, Kojo Mintah and Jesse Roberts.

## Concluding note

The final thing that I would like readers to know is that writing this book has been an immense pleasure.

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## **Part I**

## **Basic concepts and processes**