

Giving up and breaking down

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Addiction Research. Editors-in-chief J. B. Davies and E. Drucker. *Gordon and Breach*. 4/yr. ECU198, \$238 (institutional); ECU124, \$90 (personal).

Depression. Editor-in-chief C. B. Nemeroff. *Wiley-Liss*. 6/yr. USA \$150, Canada and Mexico \$210, elsewhere \$232 (institutional); USA, Canada and Mexico \$60, elsewhere \$90 (personal).

WITH refreshing honesty, one of the editors of *Addiction Research* writes: "There are very few instances in the addiction field of stunning new insights". How right he is: our ignorance of both the causes



Mary Evans/1938

and the mechanisms of addiction remains almost complete, while the only methods of alleviating the condition unequivocally shown to be useful are replacement therapies — methadone for heroin addicts and the patch, the lozenge or the forthcoming nasal spray for smokers. Although the nicotine spray is likely to be the most effective product for weaning people from tobacco, it has been licensed in the United Kingdom only under a doctor's prescription. This is surely bureaucratic folly, for however addicted ex-smokers become to the nicotine spray, it must be better for them than inhaling tar and carbon monoxide. Indeed, it is not yet proven that small doses of nicotine have any adverse effects.

Addiction Research loftily ignores such down-to-earth issues. Most of its pages are devoted to alcoholism: perhaps appropriately, there is a high proportion of Finns among the authors. Many of the articles are vacuous. One of them concludes that people drink more if they are with friends who are drinking: it disguises and dignifies this banal finding by referring to friends as "the social context".

We know a little more about depression than about addiction, but the gaps in our knowledge are much wider than is usually admitted. True, cognitive therapy and antidepressants are some help but their effects are considerably less than is often

claimed. As to causes, unfortunate life events play a role but just how is unclear. Abnormal activity in some neurotransmitter systems is also implicated, but we have no firm knowledge; as one of *Depression's* contributors lamely remarks: "it appears that interactions among norepinephrines, serotonergic and dopaminergic systems may be of paramount importance". Quite so, but why not throw in the glucocorticoids as well? Moreover, the mechanisms by which the specific symptoms and feelings of depression are produced are completely unknown. Like *Addiction Research*, *Depression* covers all aspects of its subject from "Grief Intensity in Late-Life Spousal Bereavement" to "Triated Platelet Imipramine Binding".

Since both journals can and do claim to have that magic quality of being interdisciplinary, they are likely to be bought (although the price of *Depression* is monstrous, particularly as it takes advertisements from drug companies boosting their wares). Many of the articles contain such time-honoured threats to the reader as "The need for further controlled prospective data is highlighted". Unless the data in question are more informative than any in these two journals, one can only hope that their originators will have the decency to keep them to themselves. □

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Unforgettable

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Memory. Editors Susan E. Gathercole and Martin A. Conway. *Lawrence Erlbaum*. 4/yr. Europe £40, USA \$82, elsewhere £43 (institutional); Europe £20, USA \$44, elsewhere £23 (personal).

In 1991 four psychologists at the University of Lancaster, England, organized an international conference on memory. The meeting was attended by prominent researchers in all subdisciplines of memory research and highlighted the breadth of work in this area. Despite this spread, the attendants were pleasantly surprised by the large amount of overlap among the current research approaches. It would seem that as research on different aspects

of memory has progressed, psychologists have borrowed successful theories and techniques from neighbouring disciplines. Any attempt to tie together different branches of such a broad area of study should be encouraged, and to promote this approach two of the conference organizers, Gathercole and Conway, have provided psychologists with a forum in which to present high-quality research on all aspects of memory.

Succinctly titled, *Memory* has already provided subscribers with a steady flow of good papers and is excellent value for money; better value still for those interested in one of the topics covered in the series of special issues, which have so far addressed "Memory tests and techniques" and "Memory for proper names". The latter issue is particularly interesting and includes four important neuropsychological case studies. These report cases of brain-injured patients who showed a preserved ability to recall proper names (for instance, 'John Major' or 'London') along with impaired recall of common names (for example, 'telephone' or 'stethoscope'). Before the publication of this special issue, accounts of this particular pattern of performance have been extremely uncommon, whereas there have been numerous reports of patients showing the reverse pattern. Until now, psychologists have taken this marked asymmetry of selective breakdown into account when developing models of naming. These new studies suggest that the mechanisms underlying recall of proper and common names can be dissociated, posing a considerable challenge to current models of naming.

The editors state that one of their policies is to produce special issues on topics of exceptional current interest and on research perspectives with which the general readership will not be familiar. With two more special issues already planned ("Long-term retention of infant memories" and "Semantic memory and semantic representations") this feature seems destined to become an important aspect of the journal's character.

Clearly *Memory* is not intended to provide a home for an emerging research discipline. Instead it provides a forum for psychologists interested in all aspects of memory to share their literature reviews, psychological tests, empirical data, computational models and theories. It is easy to forget that a laboratory-based study examining subjects' abilities to remember unfamiliar objects may be tapping similar memory systems to an eyewitness testimony interview. *Memory* aims to remind us of this possibility and offers access to a number of perspectives on memory functions and how best to study them. □

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