

Preface

Analysis and synthesis are thus the incessantly alternating mental activities, a stroke of the one preparing the way for a stroke of the other, much as, in walking, a man's two legs are alternately brought into use, both being indispensable for any orderly advance.

William James (1890, p. 550)

Clinical neuropsychologists work across diverse cultures and clinical settings, and with an enormous range of patient presentations and health conditions. There are a number of common strands to what we do. Perhaps the three most consistent components are clinical assessment, cognitive testing, and diagnosis. There is almost always a fourth component: neuropsychological formulation. It is this core skill that perhaps sets us apart from other health professionals. It is in this process of analysis and synthesis that we draw together those disconnected facts—the history, clinical interview, and cognitive test results—and create a meaningful narrative to describe a person's experience after neurological illness or injury.

This book is an attempt to illustrate some of the complexities, themes, and diversity of neuropsychological formulation. As our profession continues to develop rapidly across the world, I believe that neuropsychological formulation will increasingly be seen as the core competency that defines our contribution to healthcare. I am enormously grateful to the chapter authors for providing such fascinating and informative insights into the process of neuropsychological formulation as practised in different clinical settings and countries, with a diverse range of referral questions and presenting problems.

Clinical psychology training typically involves a focus on formulation: A pivotal process in the assessment and therapeutic process of working with people who have mental health problems. Clinical psychologists are encouraged to utilise therapeutic frameworks such as cognitive-behavioural theory to develop hypotheses, help people understand their situation, and to plan intervention. Formulations might be diagrammatic; illustrations of a person's psychological experience. Alternatively, and perhaps more commonly, narrative formulations summarise the predisposing, precipitating, and maintaining factors that explain a person's psychological distress. The same process applies equally well to neuropsychological assessment and intervention. The added dimensions that often make this process more complex include neuropsychological data, neurological history, and neuroimaging.

In many countries, most clinical neuropsychologists are originally trained as clinical psychologists. The concept of formulation has perhaps, therefore, been intuitively integrated into the practices of many neuropsychologists. Most considered, thoughtful, neuropsychological assessments will implicitly lead to meaningful formulations. However, there is limited literature on the subject. Trainees and assistants are likely to struggle to find numerous published examples of diagrammatic or narrative formulations around which to frame their own work. This book is an attempt to add to this literature and in doing so to describe the various ideas, perspectives, techniques, and skills that make clinical neuropsychology such a valuable component of modern healthcare.

Each chapter of this book focuses on one or more cases in which an important neuropsychological process, concept, or issue is elucidated. The focus is of course always on neuropsychological formulation in its many guises. We are fortunate to have a breadth of patient ages, neurological conditions, clinical settings, and countries of practice represented across the chapters. As a UK-trained clinical psychologist and neuropsychologist now living and working in New Zealand, I am interested in the commonalities and differences in our work internationally. I believe that we can all benefit from an understanding of how neuropsychology is practised differently across cultures. This book is just a step in that direction, with an admittedly narrow focus on neuropsychology in UK, Italy, New Zealand, the USA, and Australia.

The authors of this book have my sincere gratitude for sharing their clinical and academic insights, as do the people who all kindly consented for their neuropsychological formulations to be described. Where possible, all potentially identifying client information has been altered to maintain confidentiality.

Finally, because I may never have another chance to do so, this book is dedicated to my beloved whānau: the wonderful, wilful, and always vital Georgia, Phoebe, and Rebecca.

J.A.B.M., 2015

References

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<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-18337-4>

Neuropsychological Formulation

A Clinical Casebook

Macniven, J.A.B. (Ed.)

2016, X, 246 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-18337-4