Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing: The Field of Knowledge

Edited by

Stephen Tilley

Blackwell Science
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*Alexander McMurdo Carson*

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*Susanne Forrest and Hugh Masters*

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*Mary Chambers, David Glenister, Carol Kelly and Tessa Parkes*

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This book is dedicated to

Annie Altschul 1919–2001

who brought, gave, and left so much to the field
'The field cannot well be seen from within the field.'

Ralph Waldo Emerson.
Foreword

This book was designed to give a picture of the field of knowledge of UK Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing. The strategy for doing this is described in the Introduction. The core of the book is a set of seven accounts by UK authors of nursing knowledge as institutionalised in their academic institutions. In some of these chapters authors also explore tensions between experiential and professional knowledge of mental illness. There is then a collective reflection on the field, made up of each author’s response to the papers by all the other authors. Then, to widen the reflexive arc all these documents were read by international respondents, who commented on the UK authors’ text in light of their own sense of the field in their own countries. Finally, a sociologist, familiar with issues of mental health nursing, read all this material and provided an interpretation of some salient features of the accounts from a sociology of knowledge perspective.

The reader will, therefore get most from reading the book in its entirety and in sequence. However, readers wanting to read selectively will learn about different perspectives on mental health nursing practice, education and research by reading individual chapters in Section 2; those interested in brief, well-informed accounts of mental health nursing issues in selected countries outwith the UK might like to start with Section 3. Readers from disciplines outwith nursing, particularly sociology and social policy, might find it useful to read Chapter 12 first, as a view of the field refracted through a sociological lens.

The chapters and commentaries are written in varying styles, and with varying degrees of reflexivity. The book will be of interest to those psychiatric and mental health nurses who, through individual and collective efforts, construct the field in practice, education and research, and whose experiences cause them to reflect on their relations with their institutions and on the repertoire of knowledges they must master to be effective professionals.

Stephen Tilley
Edinburgh 2004
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