



BOOK REVIEWS

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Balancing on the tightrope of technology

On *Anxiety* by Renata Salecl and *Shades of Loneliness* by Richard Stivers epitomise the paranoiac society we find ourselves immersed in at the beginning of the 21st century. Both books project mental illnesses ranging from anxiety and depression through to schizophrenia as a product of modern-day technological society. We as humans, Salecl and Stivers argue, have become so obsessed with the idea of 'success' and avoidance of anxiety that we have lost touch with our true sense of self. As the reality of new technology smacks humanity full in the face, we find ourselves bitter, disillusioned and ill. Far from the goal of security and happiness that we should be reaching out towards, we are submerged in a world of fragmentation and dissolution with only our insatiable desire for progress to blame.

Although the fundamental arguments are similar, the authors view these differently. *Anxiety* takes a psychoanalytic approach, coupled with aspects of modern life as diverse as film, art and the resulting war from September 11, to illustrate anxieties of our time. The chapter 'Anxiety of motherhood' is especially interesting as it links mothers

Anxiety

RENATA SALECL
LONDON: ROUTLEDGE; 2004;
Pb £8.99 (ISBN 0 415 91276 0)

Shades of Loneliness: Pathologies of a Technological Society

RICHARD STIVERS
OXFORD: ROWMAN AND LITTLEFIELD; 2004;
Pb £13.95 (ISBN 0 7425 3003 5)

REVIEWED BY **Judith Horne**

who have killed their children to anxiety and social-psychoanalytic theory. This is perhaps the most convincing of the chapters, as Salecl's argument can seem a bit weak in places, especially to the Freudian sceptic. Salecl occasionally gives the impression that she is struggling to convince herself, let alone her reader. On the other hand, social 'answers' to anxiety such as Paxil (seroxat) and psychoanalysis are examined effectively. The section on Paxil shows how marketing demands change in response to the fluctuation of social norms and leaves one chewing over the hypocrisy of society's values on 'good health'.

Stivers takes a more sociological approach. Adopting a strong line of 'anomie', Stivers emphasises the alienation that has resulted from the 'pathology' of technology. One almost feels one is reading a reconstructed reality of Orwell's *1984*. The latter half of the book, which is dedicated to obsessions, compulsions, narcissism, depression, paranoia and schizophrenia, is particularly striking; although again, perhaps suspiciously, one frequently feels that it has 'all been heard before'. In spite of this there is much merit in this book. It has solid Marxist analysis of how product and productivity has constructed the world around us, and manages to take the individual out of mental illness and make it a social rather than personal phenomenon. Withdrawing one's head from this book results in the belief that in our world it is abnormal not to be mentally ill. The logic is frighteningly convincing.

Both these books would be of interest to readers who are dabbling with the paranoid theory of society – that we are in some way manipulated by forces outwith our control. Those more interested in psychoanalytic theory would be advised to look at *Anxiety*, as some specialist knowledge is required. *Shades of Loneliness* is more 'readable' and accessible. Both, however, leave the reader with the unsettling feeling that society is balancing on a stretched tightrope, waiting to snap.

■ *Judith Horne is undertaking an MSc at the University of Strathclyde.*

Psychological Investigations of Competence in Decision Making

KIP SMITH, JAMES SHANTEAU & PAUL JOHNSON (EDS)
CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2004; Hb £45.00 (ISBN 0 521 58306 3)

REVIEWED BY **Fiona Ulph**

THIS edited book forms part of a series concerning judgement and decision making. It purports to be for academics and advanced students. At first glance the book does appear too specialist for people without existing knowledge of this field, as there are no easy introductions or conclusions to its three sections (metacognition—self, metacognition—others, and enablers of competence) and it covers topics as diverse as laparoscopic surgery, weather forecasting and the stock exchange. However, on further reading it becomes clear that this book will provide

readers of all abilities with insight and cause for thought regardless of their discipline. This is due to the strength of writing and, as the editors themselves argue, the fact that the importance of good judgement and decision making is pervasive through disciplines. The final chapter alone should be staple reading for researchers, as it has some far-reaching arguments about the processes of research, truth and expertise.

■ *Fiona Ulph is a PhD student at the University of Nottingham.*

Children's friendships: Views from the UK and the USA

Children's Friendships: The Beginnings of Intimacy

JUDY DUNN

OXFORD: BLACKWELL; 2004; Pb £12.99 (ISBN 1 4051 1448 7)

Children's Peer Relations: From Development to Intervention

JANIS B. KUPERSMIDT & KENNETH A. DODGE (EDS)

WASHINGTON, DC: AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION; 2004; Hb £45.95 (ISBN 1 59147 105 2)

REVIEWED BY Peter K. Smith

THESE two books give complementary accounts of children's friendships and peer relationships. Judy Dunn's book is written for a more general audience; the text is lightly referenced (though full sources are available), and the style is accessible. The book concentrates on friendships in childhood, and especially the beginnings of friendship. There is considerable discussion of the role of pretend play in early friendships, and the way in which friendships are linked with theory of mind abilities. The author also brings out the darker side of friendship, with a chapter on intrigues, bullying and loneliness. Other chapters cover gender differences, and the roles of parents and siblings in friendships.

This is an authoritative account, drawing widely on recent as well as classic research, and of course using the author's own studies in the area, including longitudinal studies in Pennsylvania and in London. The longitudinal data are mainly used to examine issues of stability, and of possible causal influences between friendships and other factors. These are considered carefully and thoroughly. Less well covered are changes with age in the actual nature of friendships, and children's conceptions of friendships. Not covered is the area of sociometric status – popular, controversial, rejected, neglected and average children, based on peers' likes and dislikes.

The Kupersmidt and Dodge book, by contrast, stems from a Festschrift held in honour of John Coie in May 2000. Coie (with colleagues, especially Dodge) set going a whole area of peer relations research following a classic 1982 paper on sociometric status. This edited volume has 13 chapters that provide an excellent overview of the mainstream of peer

relations research in the USA in 2000. The opening chapters provide especially useful reviews of two decades of peer relations research, gender and peer relations, and friendships and antisocial behaviour. Peer relations are considered through into adolescence, including links to delinquency.

There are two caveats about this book. One is that it seemingly took a while to publish. Almost all the references stop at 2000. Partly because of this, and partly because of an inherent conservatism in much of US developmental psychology, this mainstream perspective only touches lightly on some critical perspectives. For example, the sections on the social information processing approach lack critical bite. Sutton and colleagues' work on theory of mind and bullying is not cited. The sections on social skills and aggression largely lack the recent work by Hawley, and Pellegrini, arguing that some aspects of aggression are in fact adaptive (Rodkin's work is mentioned). There is however an informative section on interventions at the end, including a more challenging chapter by Miller-Johnson and Costanzo bringing in social psychological perspectives.

Both these books are excellent in their own way, Dunn's being suitable for wider reading, Kupersmidt and Dodge's for a more academic audience (advanced undergraduate upwards). They share some topics; both discuss gender and friendship and are critical of too simplistic a dichotomy here. Neither volume, however, tackles friendships in children with disabilities. Both are 'psychological' volumes; there is very little of the anthropology or sociology of friendships, or childhood generally, to be found.

■ Professor Peter Smith is at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

The Psychology of Gender (2nd edition)

ALICE H. EAGLY, ANNE E. BEALL & ROBERT J. STERNBERG (EDS)

NEW YORK: GUILFORD PRESS; 2004;

Hb US\$45.00 (ISBN 1 57230 983 0)

REVIEWED BY Janine Bosak

EXTENSIVELY revised and expanded, the second edition of *The Psychology of Gender* gives invaluable up-to-date insights into the differences and similarities between men and women in cognition, personality and behavioural tendencies. This edited volume addresses the central questions of how, when and why gender influences people's lives from a rich array of perspectives, including biological, developmental, social-cognitive, evolutionary and psychoanalytic viewpoints.

Compelling biological topics like 'The organization and activational effects of sex hormones' and 'Evolutionary influences on sex-typed behaviors' have challenged my preconceptions as a psychologist with a sociocultural background. Sophisticated and empirically supported models of gender-related behaviour are presented and allow the reader to catch up on new theoretical developments, such as the search for the origins of sex differences. Besides the greater emphasis on biological factors and the increased salience of theory, this edition also expands its coverage of the subtle role of status and power on men's and women's behaviour and evaluation. The main contribution of the new edition, however, is to integrate diverse perspectives and research traditions within a single book and, therefore, stimulate scholars and students to think about gender in ways that bridge these perspectives.

In summary, Eagly, Beall and Sternberg have succeeded in bringing together excellent researchers with a diversity of approaches to the topic of psychology of gender. Throughout, this volume is well-structured, comprehensive and a fascinating read. I highly recommend this book to advanced undergraduates, postgraduates and academics with interests in the field of gender.

■ Janine Bosak is a Marie Curie Fellow with the Department of Social and Developmental Psychology, University of Cambridge.

Conveying complexities in sex offending

THESE are comprehensive resources, providing up-to-date literature on, and useful insights into, the management, treatment and assessment of sex offenders. Both are, however, specialised and clearly written for the practitioner or academic involved in this area of practice/study. Their value to readers outside of this context is limited.

The Craissati book is particularly good, however, at attempting to frame this topic in the context of public opinion. Her outline of the *News of the World's* 'name and shame' campaign in the introductory chapter and the negative impact this had is a good example of this. Craissati does touch on issues concerning

adolescent sex offenders, although this is clearly a main focus of the O'Reilly *et al.* book.

O'Reilly *et al.* complete an excellent job of summarising the relevant literature, highlighting the potential role of the often forgotten family of the abuser. They provide some thought-provoking discussion on the distinction that should (or should not) be drawn between 'normal' adolescent experimental sexual behaviour and potential developing deviance.

Both O'Reilly *et al.* and Craissati make excellent use of case studies to illustrate their points and to ensure their books are both an informative and enjoyable read. Although the content and focus of each book is different, both convey the same message; namely, that not all sex offenders are the same, all are different in terms of their risk factors, background and motivation to change. They both do well to appropriately challenge the not uncommon public perception of sex offenders as 'demon-like' figures lying in wait for their victims. What is conveyed in both books are the complexities of such offenders and the difficult task faced by those professionals trying to manage their behaviour.

In short, I would wholeheartedly recommend these books to both practitioners and academics although readers outside of these groups may be disappointed.

■ *Dr Jane L. Ireland is with Psychological Services, Ashworth Hospital, and at the University of Central Lancashire.*

Managing High Risk Sex Offenders in the Community: A Psychological Approach

JACKIE CRAISSATI

HOVE: BRUNNER-ROUTLEDGE; 2004; Pb £16.99 (ISBN 1 58391 158 8)

The Handbook of Clinical Intervention with Young People Who Sexually Abuse.

GARY O'REILLY, WILLIAM L. MARSHALL, ALAN CARR & RICHARD C. BECKETT

HOVE: BRUNNER-ROUTLEDGE; 2004; Pb £27.99 (ISBN 1 58391 126 X)

REVIEWED BY Jane L. Ireland

Press Committee

Media Training Days 2005

Monday 9 May 2005

Monday 26 September 2005

Monday 5 December 2005

All Media Training Days will be held at the Society's London office at 33 John Street.

The days will include:

- news writing
- snapshots of the media
- media releases
- interview techniques

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