Useful reference source

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Child Development
BRIAN HOPKINS, RONALD G. BARR, GEORGE F. MICHEL & PHILIPPE ROCCHAT (EDS)
CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2005; HB £80.00 (ISBN 0 521 65117)
REVIEWED BY Deborah Riby

next section of the encyclopedia addresses the methods used to delve into the world of the infant or child to help formulate these theoretical arguments.

Subsequent chapters are concerned with selected topics relevant to developmental psychologists today (each written by prominent researchers in their field). Just to give a taste of the topics included, we see chapters devoted to social development, language, memory, temperament and imitation. Developmental pathology is included in a following section, again with chapters written by leading experts, for example Simon Baron-Cohen discusses autism and Margaret Snowling tackles issues relevant to dyslexia. At the very end of this volume the link between developmental psychology and other areas of research is discussed to give the ‘bigger picture’. For example, links with behavioural genetics and cognitive neuroscience are addressed, emphasising the way forward for these disciplines and domains of developmental research.

With just a small number of pages dedicated to each topic of research (each chapter) the reader is provided with a brief but concise introduction, along with suggestions for further reading. Pulling together aspects of theory, methodology and interesting research on a variety of developmental topics, this comprehensive guide makes a useful reference source for students, whether asking a question of a specific topic of research, or seeing where this topic fits in with other aspects of development. But this hardback book comes with a high price tag and is therefore more likely to be a good library source.

Deborah Riby is a postgraduate student at Stirling University.

Not a classical approach
Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Psychology
GRAHAM DAVEY (ED)
LONDON: HODDER ARNOLD; 2005; HB £125.00 (ISBN 0 340 81252 4)
REVIEWED BY Helen Ross

This encyclopedia aims to give definitions and short articles about the main topics within psychology, at a level suitable from school to postgraduate. It thus represents a view of the current syllabus for academic psychology.

It would seem that students learn much detailed physiology and statistics, and a lot of social and clinical psychology. They also study cognitive psychology, but they no longer learn much about classical approaches to perception and learning. Helmholtz and Hull are not listed in the index. Size constancy is reduced to a short definition – ‘the tendency to perceive the size of a rigid object in a consistent manner, despite variations in viewing distance’. If I didn’t know better, I would find this confusing. What about wobbly objects and inconsistent manners?
Reads well

This compendium presents a state-of-the-art review of research investigating the science of reading. The distinguished contributions made by both editors to the area, offer an indication of the quality of work included throughout.

A multidisciplinary and international overview of contemporary knowledge about reading and related skills is offered. It follows a logical sequence and considers the fundamental domains, including processes of word recognition, theories of literacy development, reading comprehension and impairments. The handbook is comprehensive, and it considers recent trends in cross-linguistic research alongside studies of dyslexia in different languages. A focus is placed on disorders of reading and spelling and current research on acquired and developmental dyslexia. The impact of hearing and language impairments on the process of reading is also included.

Throughout the book, the reader is reminded of the historical perspective as theoretical models are reviewed and subsequently integrated with contemporary thinking, informed by empirical research at every juncture. A biological framework of reading is upheld, and both brain-imaging and genetic approaches are discussed. Technical advances are introduced and methodological issues, alongside the dangers of over-interpretation, lend further credibility to the information presented.

In order to grapple successfully with the central issues discussed in the majority of the chapters, some prior knowledge of current empirical thinking is assumed. However, some contributions are impressively accessible, given the intricacy of material discussed. Kate Nation’s chapter on reading comprehension is a case in point: she takes the reader through the central issues and points of discussion with immense clarity.

A section on the teaching of reading and proposed interventions is obviously a fundamental part of the handbook. However, the relatively small section given to remediation was disappointing. The question of how best to assimilate current research into intervening and effective teaching in the current educational system was left without adequate discussion. For someone seeking to inform themselves about application, the lack of weight placed on this section failed to do justice to the intricacy of thought put forward in the majority of the book.

All in all, this handbook undoubtedly offers a definitive collection of papers summarising current thinking on the science of reading. It will appeal to those with a specialist interest, who seek to inform their knowledge further through empirical research.

Dr Lucy Brown-Wright is a clinical psychologist at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London.

Practical and sensible – but not too much

How to Be a Student: 100 Great Ideas and Practical Habits for Students Everywhere
Sarah Moore & Maura Murphy
Reviewed by Jeremy Dean

licking through this handbook for students entering higher education, it’s easy to find practical and sensible information. It has 100 topics ranging from developing study skills through to managing your social life. With all this information crammed into 135 pages, the book is broad in scope but, ultimately, a victim of its format.

There are relevant topics throughout, dealing with boredom, watching out for study drift and understanding plagiarism. The authors even tackle more novel topics, like appreciating that students are not customers, while lecturers are not primarily entertainers. There are also helpful insights into the harsh criticisms sometimes doled out by markers to written work.

Unfortunately, much of the book suffers from the limited space. As a result, the authors are forced to equivocate: study enough, but not too much, sleep enough, but not too much. In some areas a more focused approach would have better served the reader. To accommodate this, less important advice, like sitting up straight, could have been cut to make way for more on, for example, playfulness in learning and the use of memory techniques.

There is certainly much here to help students through higher education, but it is somewhat diminished by the limited depth.

Jeremy Dean is a freelance writer on psychology.

Meanwhile, on the opposite page, the Stroop effect gets a long entry with a diagram and five references. Perhaps this is a fair representation of what is taught nowadays.

Some of the definitions seem exceedingly obvious. Even schoolchildren can guess what is meant by ‘partners-in-crime’, ‘grammar’ and ‘paternal interaction’. It would be a better use of space to cut down on this and give more interaction. It would be a better use of space to cut down on this and give more interaction. It would be a better use of space to cut down on this and give more interaction. It would be a better use of space to cut down on this and give more interaction. It would be a better use of space to cut down on this and give more interaction.

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Understanding the context

Rome or Death: The Obsessions of General Garibaldi
Daniel Pick
Reviewed by Lorraine Childs

How much do we need to know about people to understand the development of their psychopathology? In clinical practice it is always a problem to know when to stop collecting the biographical facts and when to move towards a formulation.

In this book Pick has indulged in exploring his subject from every angle, intertwining facts and formulation without apology. Not only does he describe the life of the man, General Giuseppe Garibaldi, but also the historical and social context of the time, placing the individual psyche within the contemporary zeitgeist. How much passion Pick must have for his subject is evident. His literary knowledge of this age is worthy of a seat in Mastermind; furthermore, answerable to no one in the sphere of psychological practice, he has illustrated his text with gilded romanticism. This, however, does not distract the reader from the core storyline of the book, which highlights Garibaldi’s military role in the unification of Italy and his ongoing passion, thwarted by bureaucracy to re-route the Tiber from its destructive, malarial course through Rome.

This was a fascinating glimpse into Italian history with a biographical backdrop and a psychoanalytical formulatory framework. This reflects the author’s professional background in cultural history and psychoanalysis. It’s committed, inspiring and demonstrative of the need to understand the context within which an individual exists, in order to understand the individual themselves. From this perspective it’s a great semi-professional read. However, it’s also an enjoyable socio-historical text that’s a pleasure in itself and would be of particular interest to those who are thinking of taking a trip to Rome!

Dr Lorraine Childs is a clinical psychologist at St Andrews Hospital, Northampton.

Gain and loss

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss
Elizabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler
Reviewed by Tina Perry

Kübler-Ross once said: ‘Listen to the dying, they will tell you all you need to know.’ Never has this statement been truer than in reference to this, her last, book. While Kübler-Ross, who died in August 2004, was a forerunner in grief research, this is by no means an academic text, recounting stories of individual loss and discussing issues such as angels and the afterlife.

Yet, this is not a weakness. For those in the midst of grief, the text verbalises those unspoken feelings that you feel no one else could understand. For those caring for someone grieving, it offers you previously unavailable insight into their world. An essential guide to grieving.

Tina Perry is a postgraduate student at the University of Central Lancashire.
Exploration in the realms of metaphor

The title of this book intrigued me with the bait of metaphor, but I was momentarily alarmed on opening it by the cognitive linguistic language of ‘master tropes’, ‘target domains’ and ‘cross space mappings’. However, I was soon sucked in by some fascinating cross-cultural and anthropological examples.

Kövecses sets out to explain universality and diversity in metaphorical thought, with the wider aim of working towards an understanding of the role of metaphor in culture. En route, he explores how metaphors vary between and within cultures and asks fundamental questions, such as whether metaphors occur in thought rather than simply in language. I was particularly interested in the notion of ‘embodiment’ – how our sensory experiences influence the metaphors we develop.

Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation
ZOLTÁN KÖVECSES
CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2005; Hb £45.00 (0 521 84447 9)
REVIEWED BY: Ange Drinnan

The book is certainly thorough and provides a good overview of existing theories before going on to develop these. At points, the examples become somewhat repetitive and risk losing some of the magic of metaphor; however this is balanced by later discussion of metaphor in literature, film and in the rhetoric and performance of politics.

As a clinical psychologist working within a community mental health team, I was disappointed not to see any reference to psychosis and the relationship between metaphor and delusion. However, this was perhaps beyond the scope of what is essentially an informative, readable and at times entertaining overview of metaphor and culture.

Dr Ange Drinnan is with Stepping Stones CMHT, Bromley.