

Early memories are made of this

At the age of 28, having left school aged 15 with no qualifications whatsoever, I started a PhD. Funded to do nothing but research for three years: it was fantastic! I linked up with a local nursery and started to go in and try to gather some knowledge from the children about various everyday concepts and memories associated with them. It was a crushing disappointment to

discover that most three- to four-year olds wanted nothing to do with my crazy questions about what they thought a 'table' was. That was my only venture into developmental research: it convinced me that it was impossible, at least for me, and I gave it up to study what was at the time the equally unknown topic of autobiographical memory.

I guess the old cliché is true, one never really leaves one's first love and I have found it a pleasure to read Mark Howe's absorbing and beautifully well-written book. Howe covers the major findings in the development of infant and child memory, as well as current thinking about what these might mean. Using techniques such as visual habituation, the infant's imitation and training the infant to kick a mobile, researchers have been able to establish that preverbal infants do indeed have memory. Interestingly, and as Howe points out, this may not be just procedural memory – the behaviour of interest is often present only in very specific contexts that duplicate a past context. Howe's particularly helpful review of the neurological basis of memory in infancy concludes that perhaps the best that can be said for preverbal infants is that they have 'episodic-like' memories – the hippocampal formation and associated structures that mediate episodic remembering do not begin to appear until the end of the first year of infancy.

One of the best chapters covers the period around 24 to 36 months, and evidence of an emerging autobiographical memory system. I particularly value the theory that Howe and his colleague Mary Courage first put forward on the emergence of the *cognitive self*, partly based on children's performance on self-recognition tasks and the emergence of an ability to distinguish 'I' and 'Me'. This is clearly a vital development in

creating an autobiographical memory, but I thought that some other conceptual connections might have been made here to issues relating to attachment issues and to the old psychoanalytic concept of separation-individuation.

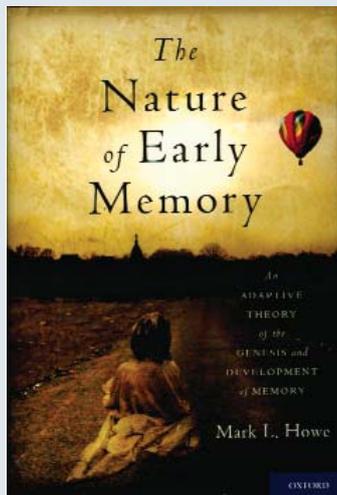
Other sections deal authoritatively with childhood amnesia, memory for trauma in childhood, and autobiographical memory across a range of psychological illnesses. Most importantly Howe, because of his legal expertise, is able to provide a forensic dimension and consider the child as a witness.

Having educated his reader in this rapidly maturing field of research, Howe then takes the opportunity to present his own theoretical thinking on the adaptive nature of human memory. Of high interest is the section on memory, feelings, and self-consciousness. It is remarkable that we come to 'experience' our memories, to feel remembering, in what I have termed *cognitive feelings*. Indeed, Howe has some sympathy with the idea that memory may be a prerequisite for consciousness. Perhaps the development of memory from a basic function critical to survival, to a more autobiographical process, became itself an evolutionary pressure for the emergence of language and more complex states of consciousness. Howe is persuasive in arguing this case.

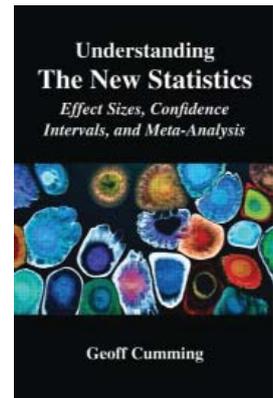
The Nature of Early Memory is an outstanding review of what we now know about the emergence of memory, coupled to stimulating and deep theoretical thinking about memory development through evolutionary history, across species, and in the individual. It will become a standard text for all those interested in how our memories come into being.

| Oxford University Press; 2011; Hb £32.00

Reviewed by Martin A. Conway who is in the Department of Psychology, City University London



The Nature of Early Memory
Mark L. Howe



Statistically convincing

Understanding the New Statistics
Geoff Cumming

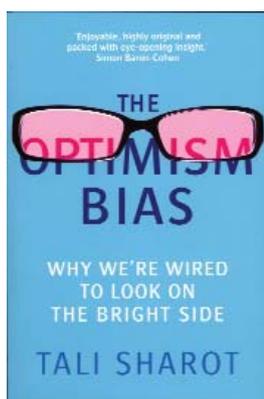
In a clear and explicit style, Cumming describes the paradigm shift away from traditional null hypothesis testing towards the notion of estimation based on effect sizes and confidence intervals. Cumming also eloquently introduces and discusses the importance of meta-analysis within research.

The exceptional value of this book is in the jargon-free and accessible way in which Cumming defines significance testing and its pitfalls and introduces the new statistics. Numerous examples illustrate and emphasise key points throughout, simplifying complex statistical theory or methods. Cumming encourages further exploration with easy-to-use interactive simulations, available on supplementary software. By putting theory into action, Cumming reinforces the understanding of the new statistics and provides the reader with the necessary assistance to practise the methods on their own data.

The overall achievement of this book is the convincing argument for why the new techniques should be preferred over traditional methods. A valuable contribution – even the most novice of reader could not fail in understanding the new statistics.

| Routledge; 2012; Pb £29.95

Reviewed by Victoria R. Kroll who is a postgraduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University



A plausible argument

The Optimism Bias: Why We're Wired to Look on the Bright Side
Tali Sharot

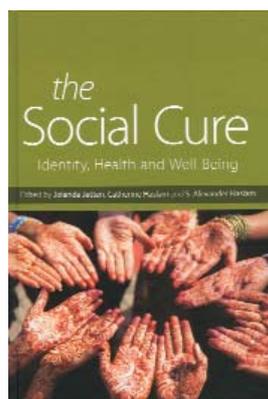
Nothing generates a sense of optimism toward a book like seeing Simon Baron-Cohen's dazzling endorsement haloint its cover. But optimism is justified. This is digestible, engaging pop psychology. A plausible argument is advanced: that optimism in humans is neurologically hardwired as it is essential to survival.

The most satisfying aspect was being shown the argument from multiple perspectives, both psychological and societal, clinical and non-clinical, age-old and recent. Psychology (under)graduates will appreciate the reference to familiar concepts, such as cognitive dissonance and various biases. Consideration is also given to the drawbacks of optimism in its untempered form.

My interest wavered somewhat when continually faced with an overly sanguine attitude toward brain-imaging studies coupled with under-entertaining assertions about their significance. Watching fMRI images light up like Disneyland might itself engender an optimism bias, dulling researchers to the recognition of the blind spots of such a technique. Unfortunately, I did not notice any obvious attempt to educate the reader as to the sobering qualifications.

| *Robinson; 2012; Pb £8.99*

Reviewed by Marc Williams who is a trainee clinical psychologist at the Institute of Psychiatry



Only connect

The Social Cure: Identity, Health and Well Being
Jolanda Jetten, Catherine Haslam and S. Alexander Haslam (Eds.)

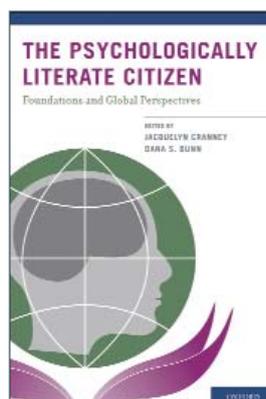
The devastating effects of social isolation have been known for a very long time. To be banished from a tribe or imprisoned in a solitary cell are among the harshest experiences a human being can have. We are social animals; and recently a growing body of research has shown that social networks and identities have a tangible influence on both mental and physical health.

The Social Cure addresses current issues in health within the framework of Tajfel's social identity theory and proposes ways to use this approach to design and implement effective interventions. Covering an eclectic set of topics, from work-stress to brain injury, from a variety of professional perspectives, it is clearly written and well-structured. It begins by outlining the importance of social identity for health and well-being and goes on to discuss its influence on stigma and coping, stress and trauma, recovery and rehabilitation. A concluding chapter considers implications for future theory, practice and policy.

This text should prove intriguing and informative for academic researchers, healthcare professionals and policy makers.

| *Psychology Press; 2012; Hb £39.95*

Reviewed by Wendy Cousins who is a Chartered Psychologist working in the University of Ulster School of Nursing



A vision of the future

The Psychologically Literate Citizen: Foundations and Global Perspectives
Jacquelyn Cranney and Dana S. Dunn (Eds.)

The editors of this interesting work have gathered together a diverse collection of articles by international researchers and writers in to examine the question of what must be taught to our students in order to ensure they are psychologically literate. By bringing a global perspective to the problem, they have produced a rather fascinating picture of where psychology currently stands and how it could move forward under a common vision. More importantly perhaps (certainly within the current educational climate) the book takes a critical look at the purpose of undergraduate psychology and what should be included in an undergraduate psychology degree.

The strength of the book for me lies mainly in its global perspective by not only examining psychology in the

United Kingdom and Western Europe, but also from the likes of Russia and Indonesia.

Annie Trapp and Jacqui Akhurst give a concise and comforting view of psychology in the UK from GCSE through A-level to university and beyond while Sarlito Wirawan Sarwona chronicles the rise of psychology in Indonesia. Niki Harré from the University of Auckland, New Zealand and her co-authors explain how and why issues of sustainability help to create the psychologically literate citizen.

Together, this collection of 23 articles attempts to set out a blueprint of how psychology will look in the not-too-distant future. It perhaps even offers a way in which psychology can change the world for the better by creating citizens who understand the world from a psychological perspective.

| *Oxford University Press; 2011; Hb £40.00*

Reviewed by Marc Smith who is a Chartered Psychologist and teacher at Boroughbridge High School, North Yorkshire

just in

Sample titles just in:

Neuroscience in Education: The Good the Bad and the Ugly
Sergio della Sala & Mike Anderson (Eds.)

British Untouchables: A Study of Dalit Identity and Education
Paul Ghuman

The Ravenous Brain Daniel Bor

Chasing Lost Times Geoffrey Beattie and Ben Beattie

Memoirs of an Addicted Brain Marc Lewis

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