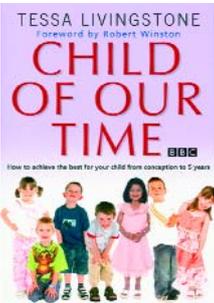




## BOOK REVIEWS

If you would like to review a book for *The Psychologist*, contact Mike Thompson on [mictho@bps.org.uk](mailto:mictho@bps.org.uk). Publishers should send advance title information and books for possible review to *The Psychologist* at the Leicester address.



# Looking at the big picture

## *Child of Our Time – How to Achieve the Best for Your Child from Conception to Five Years*

TESSA LIVINGSTONE

LONDON: BANTAM PRESS; 2005; Pb: £15.00 (0 593 05400 8)

REVIEWED BY **Deborah Riby**

**F**OLLOWING the success of the BBC television programme of the same name, this book addresses chronologically the development of children through their first five years. With chapters dedicated to each year of the child's life (in addition to pregnancy and birth), this colourful and attractive book focuses on numerous areas of child development (from communication to play, personality, gender, empathy and the basics of eating and weight gain). The author ultimately asks 'What makes us who we are?' and aims to provide insight using evidence from the traditional nature versus

nurture debate. Cognitive, social and behavioural psychological issues are intermingled with biological aspects of development.

It should not be assumed that this is an academic text suitable for scholars of developmental psychology. Far from it – the author describes the book as a 'parenting sourcebook' and indeed this succinctly summarises the book's appeal. *Child of Our Time* fits comfortably into the realm of popular psychology, helping parents understand some of the typically bewildering aspects of their child's

behaviour. Livingstone presents evidence from psychology experiments worded so that all parents can understand and consider how their own child fits into the 'bigger picture' of child development. Tips, games and entertaining tests are provided to help the reader understand some of the issues raised in each section (I personally found the 'parent's happiness test' interesting). Tips on 'how to praise your child' and 'games to play with two-year-olds' add to the appeal of the book for parents, grandparents and anyone who looks after children.

Neither the book nor the television programme would have been possible without the 22 families who allowed their child's development to be continually assessed. One of the introductory chapters introduces these families in turn, and scattered throughout each section are quotes from these parents and children to illustrate important issues. Additionally, throughout this attractive and appealing book, photographs of the children demonstrate the points being made, and hardly a page is turned without a colourful photograph being found.

So, as a reader, if you're a searching for an easy-to-read book addressing the important milestones of child development through pregnancy, birth and those first five crucial years, pick up this book. Indeed for tips on how to encourage good behaviour, questions on feeding toddlers and games to entertain young children this book is the perfect answer. Even at nearly 400 pages this is easily readable (or parents can just pop to the chapter related to their child's age to pick up relevant information). However, if you are a scholar of developmental psychology searching for an appropriate textbook full of references and experimental assessments, look elsewhere. This text is a perfect example of how to employ psychological research in an applied setting to a wide-ranging audience. The author should be congratulated on allowing parents an insight into how such research can inform us of the immense development undergone in the first five years of life.

■ *Deborah Riby is at Stirling University.*



## KLEIN MADE EASY

### *Melanie Klein (2nd edition)*

JULIA SEGAL

LONDON: SAGE; 2004; Pb: £16.99 (ISBN 0 7619 4301 3)

REVIEWED BY **Sally Playle**

**M**ELANIE Klein was without doubt one of the most significant figures in the growth of psychoanalysis. Most psychologists will have studied or heard of her theories at some point in their education and career; and many, like me, will have grappled with understanding her key concepts. There have been many books written about Melanie Klein, yet there are few that can be described as providing the general reader with a comprehensive and accessible understanding of her work; many require specialist psychoanalytical knowledge. But in this second edition, Julia Segal provides a remarkable introduction to Melanie Klein – well informed, concise and refreshing.

Segal starts by describing the life of Melanie Klein, which provides a good background to how her theories and concepts developed, as well as the personal and professional struggles she faced. She goes on to assess Klein's major theoretical

and practical contribution to the psychological profession, using Klein's own case studies, which I found intriguing. I was eager to understand how Klein related her concepts and theories with a client population of children and adults, and I was not disappointed. Julia Segal gives enough of a taster to illustrate the key concepts without overdoing them.

Finally, this book provides a reflective critique of Klein's work and the influence she has had on subsequent generations of psychoanalysts and theorists.

I am unable to find any criticism of this book and would recommend it to everybody interested in learning about Klein's theories and concepts, whether they are a complete novice or someone who just needs a refresher. It is a book that should be in any good psychology library.

■ *Sally Playle is a trainee on the South Wales Clinical Training Course.*

## Comprehensive description – disappointing discussion

### *Evaluating Mental Health Services for Older People*

JENNY FINCH

OXFORD: RADCLIFFE; 2004; Pb £29.95  
(ISBN 1 85775 610 X)

REVIEWED BY **Matilda West**

**T**HIS book describes an impressive and large-scale piece of work, in which the Health Advisory Service (HAS) developed standards and methodologies to evaluate mental health services for older people. It resembles a thesis that has an exceptionally well-researched literature review, an interesting methodology, but disappointingly short results and critical review sections. I expected this book to be a general discussion of issues surrounding the evaluation of services; the actual content came as a slight surprise.

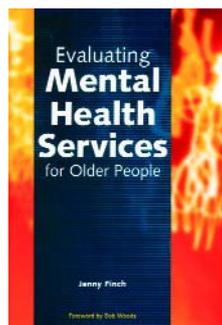
During the first half of the book the author provides a detailed description of the history of mental health services for older people. The often tentative writing style belies the comprehensive content of the chapters that describe service development in the UK, Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia.

In the second half of the book the focus moves to the issue of evaluating these services. The work carried out by the HAS is described. Finch is quite explicit about focusing her discussion on organisational evaluation (i.e. structure and process of care) rather than evaluation of processes and outcomes of care. Whilst this is appropriate to her context in policy development, clinicians are likely to be

interested in the issues surrounding process and outcome of care for clients, which is not tackled by this book. The three short sections discussing validity, reliability and the future were of most interest to me and, I suspect, this would be the case for most practising psychologists. Unfortunately, this accounts for less than 15 per cent of the book.

Finch concludes that the study was valid and reliable, and, according to the positivist epistemology from which she works, I would agree. Certainly the scale of the study and the effort required to produce standards of care and evaluations of their validity and reliability make impressive reading. For me, the weakness of the book was not the study itself, but the lack of space dedicated to reflections upon it and to discussion of its implications. I think this, and the reduction in length of many long and overly complex sentences, could have helped to make a very useful and informative book a slightly more interesting read.

■ *Dr Matilda West is with Northamptonshire Healthcare Trust.*



### *Cognitive Neuropsychology of Alzheimer's Disease (2nd edition)*

ROBIN MORRIS & JAMES BECKER (EDS)

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2005;  
Hb £60.00 (ISBN 0 19 850830 1)

REVIEWED BY **Jennifer Lane**

**T**HIS second edition of *Cognitive Neuropsychology of Alzheimer's Disease* aims to collate the most current information in Alzheimer's disease to aid all professionals working within its field. The book has an excellent material content, which is divided into comprehensive sections detailing explanations of neuropsychological functions that can be affected by Alzheimer's. I found these chapters very entertaining as they included a range of material, all extremely important to the neuroscientific study of Alzheimer's. The editors resisted the temptation to 'back track' over past obsolete information or focus their attention to one specific neuropsychological function over the variety of others which deserve equal recognition. The editors also include a few chapters on background issues to bring readers knowledge to a good foundation basis before progressing through the more complex chapters. All the information appears to be appropriately selected so that experts in the field may find it an interesting and useful read along with readers new to the study of neuroscience. Nonetheless, the book could possibly be 'lost' on people without a basic knowledge of neuroscience principles and terms.

Although the book provides an extremely useful collection of relevant information, there are many grammatical and typographical errors that interfere with the flow of the text, sometimes making meaning difficult to decipher. This was frustrating. The large number of errors demonstrates a careless attitude to the presentation and editing of the work, an attitude that neuropsychologists should not be expressing.

I believe the editors have successfully identified relevant information from a variety of authors thereby completing their aim to pull together recent advances in Alzheimer's, useful for those with research or clinical interests in the disease. However, it was disappointing that more care wasn't taken when editing the text to accurately represent the discipline of neuropsychology.

■ *Jennifer Lane is an assistant psychologist at Ashworth Hospital.*