



BOOK REVIEWS

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Unravelling the autistic mind

THE editors of this compilation of papers bring together prominent researchers using innovative techniques to unravel some of the mysteries of autism. The cognitive characteristics of autism are now well established; this collection of papers applies rigorous procedures to reveal some of the origins of this fascinating but highly debilitating developmental disorder. Techniques range from the use of new eye-tracking and fMRI brain-imaging procedures, right back to the basics of Hans Asperger's original case reports.

In the opening chapter Hill and Frith provide a clear, comprehensive review of the main theoretical approaches to autism. Appreciation of these accounts is required to truly realise how research presented in subsequent chapters can build upon our understanding of both causes and symptoms of autism.

The chapter by Klin *et al.* on social cognition describes using eye-tracking methodology to identify abnormal social processing in individuals with autism. When viewing naturalistic social scenes atypical search patterns shown by autistic participants are striking and allow some interpretation of face-processing strategies

Autism: Mind and Brain

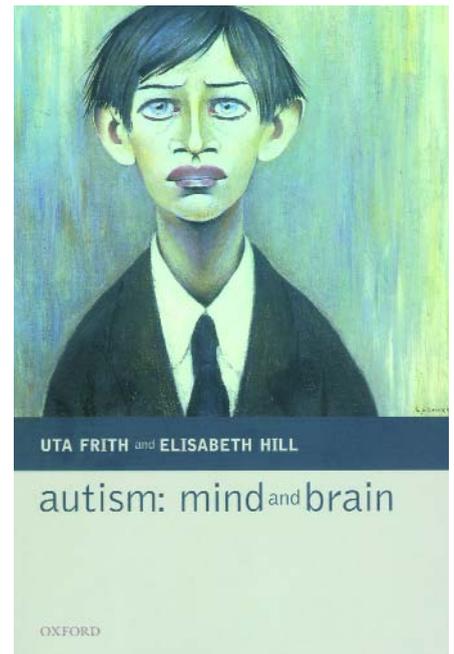
UTA FRITH & ELISABETH HILL (EDS)
OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2004;
Pb £29.95 (ISBN 0 19 852924 4)

REVIEWED BY **Deborah M. Riby**

and an abnormal appreciation of social cues. This paper clearly contributes to our understanding of the enactive autistic mind. A chapter by Schultz and colleagues builds on this understanding using brain-imaging techniques.

The implication of genes in the causes of autism is one issue touched on by Tager-Flusberg and Joseph in their comprehensive discussion of variations in individuals with autism (creating possible subgroups). This chapter clearly relates to the recent abundance of research activity within this field investigating genetic origins of autism.

In summary, the aim of this book is to consolidate our knowledge of the characteristics and manifestations of autism, whilst introducing new techniques to further this field of research. This will be a valuable resource for both established and new researchers who wish to understand how we can take forth our knowledge of



autism and apply innovative technologies in future research investigations.

■ *Deborah M. Riby is at Stirling University.*

An Open window on development

THIS is a new incarnation of one of the four books that comprise the Open University course on child development. Like its popular predecessor, the book is an edited text and contains chapters written by experts in their field. Although aimed at distance-learning students at an undergraduate level, this book will find a readership beyond its main audience because of its simple, unpretentious style and contemporary content. There are many erudite texts outlining Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories, so if you are seeking a book detailing those then this would not be the one for you. This is far from a criticism, because what is lacking in the marketplace is texts, such as this, that show how developmental psychology has progressed in terms of research methods and topics, and beyond the nature–nurture

Cognitive and Language Development (2nd edition)

JOHN OATES & ANDREW GRAYSON (EDS)
OXFORD: BLACKWELL; 2004; Pb £16.99 (ISBN 1 4051 1045 7)

REVIEWED BY **Gnanathusharan Rajendran**

debate, to a more integrated view of development. For example, there are chapters about developmental cognitive neuroscience and executive functions.

The chapters are linked, so that the book does not feel disjointed. There are several nice touches too; for example, the margins contain dictionary-style definitions of terminology. There is also a consistent structure throughout the book; 'Learning outcomes', suggested 'Activities', boxes with more detailed, often theoretical, information, and summaries that are helpful for both learning and revision.

As with many OU books, some

chapters have the innovative format of additional reading in the form of journal articles. This introduces students to the process of going from texts to journal articles – a skill which they will undoubtedly need for their course and beyond. To sum up, as well as providing accessible up-to-date knowledge, I think that the structure and style of this book will facilitate learning.

■ *Dr Gnanathusharan Rajendran is a lecturer in child development at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh.*

Out of adversity, a sweet smell of success

EDITED books too often have either a formulaic feel or a random 'whoever would agree to write something' style. Sternberg and Grigorenko have performed an outstanding task as editors of this book: they have combined a creative approach with a clearly thought-through rationale. The authors cover a range of areas, come from various backgrounds and have different approaches to the subject, yet the volume is coherent and has a clear underpinning theme.

The subject of the book is competence and the types of skills, abilities and knowledge that are developed and valued in different cultures. The reader is expected to have a good grounding in psychological theories and research methods, but knowledge of cross-cultural, or cultural, psychology is not required. Most readers would find something of interest in this book, since it includes contributions ranging from

Culture and Competence: Contexts of Life Success

ROBERT J. STERNBERG & ELENA L. GRIGORENKO (Eds)

WASHINGTON, DC: APA; 2003; Hb £49.95 (ISBN 1 59147 097 8)

REVIEWED BY **Rebecca Horn**

heavily empirical chapters to anthropological descriptions of the types of competencies recognised and privileged in a particular community. Inevitably, perhaps, there is a focus on intelligence throughout the book, but the discussion is not limited to this. A chapter which particularly interested me explored the competencies developed by children in adverse circumstances (e.g. child soldiers, street children). The author notes that research on these children tends to emphasise their lack of opportunities, yet

the limited research that is available suggests that in many cases such children develop skills and competencies that may be more generalisable than the task-specific competencies developed by children at school.

Some chapters captured my interest more than others, as might be expected, but overall the book educated and challenged me. There was no 'party line': authors differed in their stances on fundamental issues (e.g. whether there are universal competencies or not), which stimulates the reader to assess the arguments and come to their own conclusion. In my opinion, anybody with an interest in cultural psychology would find this book of interest.

■ *Dr Rebecca Horn is with the Jesuit Refugee Service, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.*

Putting psychology in the pictures

FILM and psychotherapy in general are like chalk and cheese. One would think they have very little in common. Not so, according to this book. It argues that we can learn a lot, not only about psychotherapy, but also about ourselves. The argument is supported by carefully selecting a sample of films over the last 75 years that depict psychotherapists and psychotherapy, from *Secrets of a Soul* (1926), Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1946) to the recent *Girl, Interrupted*.

Film and psychotherapy have different objectives and agendas. Freud was described as an 'uncritical moviegoer' when he saw the early films in 1907 and 1909. However he was reported to strongly oppose the proposal of filming psychoanalysis as 'educational film'. Psychotherapy is usually used as a context for, rather than a method of achieving, a cinematic objective. When the two objectives do overlap, such as race, gender or politics and psychoanalysis, they produce extremely interesting analyses. For example Andrea Slane illustrates problematic transference according to the contemporary social politics when the racial character – the Jewish psychologist (Lindner) in literature

Celluloid Couches, Cinematic Clients – Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in the Movies

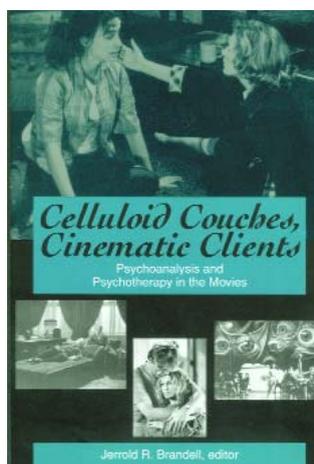
JERROLD BRANDELL (Ed)

ALBANY, NY: STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS; 2004; Pb £17.75 (ISBN 0 791 46082 7)

REVIEWED BY **Ho Law**

– was replaced by the black psychiatrist (Sidney Poitier) who angrily confronts the racist patient (Bobby Darin) in the film *Pressure Point*. Marilyn Charles provides an empathetic feminist's reading, which not only uses film as a critique to psychoanalytic theory, but also equates film with the psychotherapeutic process itself.

The process of film-making is usually linear: psychoanalysis ⇌ literature ⇌ film. Very little influence has been made from film to psychoanalysis. This book attempts



to reverse the process and complete the feedback loop from film to psychoanalysis.

Although film and psychotherapy are both popular topics, this book is not an easy read for the novice, though the editor does make some effort to explain concepts of psychoanalysis, such as transference and counter-transference. This book is for specialists in both film studies and psychoanalysis. If you are one of these specialists, this book is packed with eloquent writings that offer in-depth

analyses and would be a valuable reference to you.

■ *Dr Ho Law is Director of Empsy Ltd, Peterborough.*

All the same, but it's different

IN 1981 the novelist Alison Lurie introduced us to *The Language of Clothes*. Her book, in the wake of structuralism, pointed out what we had always known, that with clothes we try to persuade people who and what we want to be taken for. The metaphor of vocabulary and grammar made a significant contribution to the analysis of the outward show of identity. Now Margaret Maynard, a Queensland professor of English, media studies and art history, takes over the analysis with a useful conceptual discussion in the context of the political disturbances which underlie both sameness and change in the loss of confidence under capitalism.

This book covers the necessary wide ground from the means of decoding the definition of T-shirt logos and slogans to the other obvious communication of traditional dress in non-traditional settings. There are perhaps no arduous conundrums, but it is good to have the repertoire laid out for us. We take for granted now that international politicians will wave the flag with their 'dress uniforms': Yasser Arafat has his *haffiyeh*, and Nelson Mandela his printed shirts which disarm us all. But the *jilbab* at school can now be the issue in the courts of justice in London and Paris.

Dress and Globalisation

MARGARET MAYNARD

MANCHESTER: MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2004; Pb £14.99 (ISBN 0 7190 6389 2)

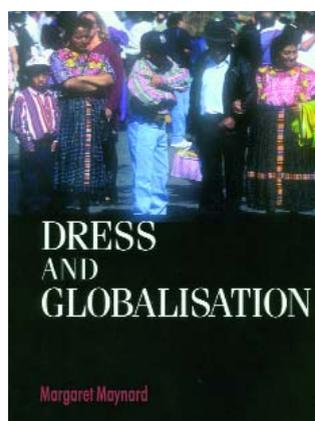
REVIEWED BY **Halla Beloff**

The few photographs tell the story most simply. The Queen of England receives the High Commissioner of Zambia. Elizabeth II is in one of her silk floral print frocks (not 'in formal dress' as Maynard has it) and the High Commissioner in just another such dress with the addition of a traditional *kuamboka* wrapped round her. Each shows she is comfortable in compromise – the Queen 'at home' and the Commissioner demonstrating her nationality over her own print frock and sensible lace-up shoes. Trousers seem functional nearly everywhere for men, but head-dress and the

top half are open to choice communications and we read them well.

The account ends with a consideration of 'smart clothing' – techno fabrics and electronically controlled wear with multifunctional and trans-seasonal performance capabilities, incorporating personal computers. These are intended for sports people, children and industrial uses, but also for street wear. They could bring to the fore anti-fashion and high moral gestures, but will surely provide yet another status signal, showing boundaries which some will enjoy and others resent. Identity will still win over the need to protect ourselves from the elements.

■ *Halla Beloff is a social psychologist, formerly at Edinburgh University.*



CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY!

STILL very much of a Cinderella in the UK, political psychology is an expanding area of international interest. This book of key readings in political psychology is to be welcomed, providing easy access to some of the main articles in this emerging discipline. Topics covered include authoritarianism, political leadership, public opinion, decision making, prejudice, intergroup relations, terrorism and revolution. The readings are structured into clear sections, each prefaced by an editors' introduction, together with discussion questions and suggestions for further reading.

However, for a book that claims to offer 'comprehensive coverage of social psychological research into the processes that have governed local and global affairs

Political Psychology: Key Readings

JOHN T. JOST & JIM SIDANIUS (EDS)

HOVE: PSYCHOLOGY PRESS; 2004; Pb £24.95 (ISBN 1 841 69070 8)

REVIEWED BY **Peter Bull**

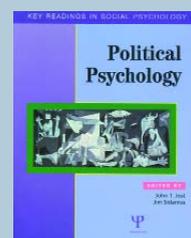
in the postmodern world', this collection of readings is pretty conservative. There is now an extensive literature on political rhetoric, political speeches and news interviews, but you wouldn't know it from this book. There is also some fascinating research on the role of social identity in political protests and demonstrations, but it is not represented here.

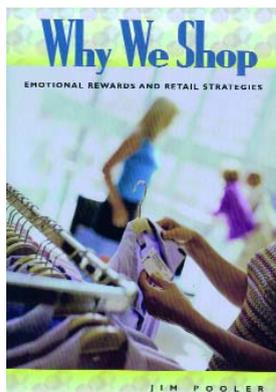
Overrepresented is research on the authoritarian personality, with a full three of the 24 readings devoted to this arguably dated topic. A further irritant is the nature

of the referencing. Each separate reading has its own list of references, but it would be so much easier if there was just one comprehensive list of references at the end. Indeed, the first reading (William Maguire's 'The Pol-Psy Relationship') does not have a list of references at all, a careless start to what is intended as a textbook.

My verdict? A useful – if conservative – sourcebook on political psychology.

■ *Dr Peter Bull is at the University of York.*





Complexities of consumption

Why We Shop: Emotional Rewards and Retail Strategies

JIM POOLER

WESTPORT, CN: PRAEGER; 2003; Hb £25.80
(ISBN 0 275 98172 X)

REVIEWED BY **Jim Goudie**

But the public interest in consumer behaviour seems to be growing more and more, as is witnessed by its increasing coverage in the media. Therefore, while this book may frustrate the fastidious student seeking empirical support for an assignment, it could well appeal to a much wider readership than the academic psychologist.

■ *Jim Goudie is a senior lecturer in psychology at Northumbria University.*

HALF a century ago, going shopping to a young child typically meant following around a female adult who waited to be served by an assistant, and who bought mainly necessities and paid cash. Many girls were arguably socialised into their future housekeeping role and some boys are thought to have shown impatience. But those children also realised that shops contained toys, nice clothes and other non-essential items and, with time, shopping began to change its meaning for them.

Today shopping can range from family outings at large centres catering for every need, including entertainment, to acquiring rare antiques from the other side of the world via the internet. Necessities still have to be bought, but shopping is increasingly about psychological desires and rewards, self-expression and the feel-good factor, fuelled by social and economic changes, clever advertising and easy credit.

Why We Shop argues that shopping should be understood as fulfilling a variety of needs at different levels. It may come as little surprise, therefore, that the author devotes some space to Maslow's hierarchy in his explanations. Impulse buying, shopaholic behaviour, brand loyalty and the rise of designer labels are just a few of the topics touched on in the book, which also has a section pointing out how and why retailers must change to take full advantage of the complexity of consumers' motives.

Written in an observational and anecdotal style, the book contains a fund of comment, explanations and illustrative examples to back up the numerous topics it addresses. Perhaps because the author is a professor of urban and population geography, and not of psychology, the book does not follow the usual conventions of

psychology texts; one major consideration has to be that statements are not referenced and no bibliography is included at the end.

Standing the test of time

Human Resilience: A Fifty Year Quest

ANN CLARKE & ALAN CLARKE

LONDON: JESSICA KINGSLEY; 2003; Pb £19.95 (ISBN 1 84310 139 4)

REVIEWED BY **Erika Borkoles**

CLARKE and Clarke have been the pioneers of a systematic study of human resilience since the early 1950s, and their work undoubtedly shaped the history of developmental psychology in this country. This book is a collection of well-rehearsed papers that tell the story of human resilience.

Throughout their lives the authors have challenged the idea of developmental constancy, instead promoting the principle of developmental uncertainty. One of the key concepts that they explore in the book is the notion of critical periods of psychological development. The Clarkes' research shows that human development is potentially open-ended; however, they acknowledge that there might be sensitive periods in childhood and even in adulthood. Therefore, their work is invaluable when trying to understand the well-documented but still inconclusive nurture–nature debate.

Another interesting idea explored is that intelligence was 'well buffered against mild or moderated adversity', whilst they found that emotions were more 'labile'. This finding has major implications for the development of future intervention strategies when considering foster care. Additionally, the authors are keen to point out that despite having strong evidence-based research that informs intervention strategies, there is still a long way to go to overcome the lack of resources, 'both human and financial', to implement them (e.g. social and educational solutions).

If you are familiar with the Clarkes' work, you will find the updated commentaries linking the chapters interesting. They also spend a great deal of time discussing methodological and statistical flaws in published studies that is a very useful reading for anyone who wants to refresh their understanding of statistical regression towards the mean, and so on. Through this, they have settled a few scores with other researchers who still rigidly cling to the concept of developmental constancy. The book could have benefited from better organisation throughout to combat repetitiveness. However, overall if you work as a developmental psychologist or you are interested in the nature–nurture debate, I would suggest you to read this book.

■ *Erika Borkoles is a senior lecturer at Leeds Metropolitan University.*