Natural-born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence

ANDY CLARK
NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2003;
HB US$26.00 (ISBN 0 19514 866 5)

REVIEWED BY **Tom Stafford**

CLARK'S thesis has three parts. Firstly, that it is a basic, characteristic and natural part of human nature for mind to be a synthesis of biology and technology. Secondly, that the illusion that thinking is inside the head is damaging to our sciences, our morals and our sense of self. And thirdly, that visions of our post-human future need not be frightening, because they are based on something which has been fundamentally human all along – we have always been cyborgs, from the very first time our species offloaded cognitive functions into language.

Natural-born Cyborgs makes a convincing case and presents an exciting and useful framework for cognitive science. It covers the same principles as his earlier *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*, but extends them to a discussion of technology and its future social implications. Clark's vision is fundamentally an optimistic one, not that he doesn't admit problems with the coming explosion of intelligent wireless computing technologies, rather he sees the augmenting of human cognition with technology as natural rather than alienating.

This discussion of embodiment is an overdue antidote to the long-standing mentalist bias of cognitive science. The idea of an essential inner mind situated only in the brain is replaced with a distributed, 'leaky', mind that functions across our conventional brain, body and world divides.

DEALING WITH THE THRILLS AND SPILLS

Parent Power: Bringing Up Responsible Children and Teenagers

JOHN SHARRY
CHICHESTER: WILEY; 2002; PB £8.99 (ISBN 0 470 85023 X)

REVIEWED BY **Helen Street**

THIS book is aimed at anyone involved in parenting children from three years to teenagers, with Sharry using the labels 'parent' and 'family' broadly. Sharry begins the book with an analogy of parenting as being like a rollercoaster, a ride that you cannot get off with loads of ups and downs, highs and lows. This analogy is a useful way of engaging parents since it frames parenting as being a continually changing journey with a multitude of challenges. Sharry takes a brief solution focused approach to parenting with a strong emphasis on parents finding solutions to problems and using their strengths rather than examining causes. This stance might appeal more to parents than existing books that aim to offer expert advice, which can leave some parents feeling disempowered. Throughout the book, parents are encouraged to reflect upon difficulties and discover what works for their family.

The book is broadly split into two parts: parenting children aged three to eleven years and parenting teenagers. It is easy to read, and numerous comic illustrations appear throughout the book adding a light-hearted note.

The section about young children goes through the basic principles of behaviour

It's better on the internet

Internet Research Methods: A Practical Guide for the Social and Behavioural Sciences

CLAIRE HEWSON, PETER YULE, DIANNA LAURENT & CARL VOGEL
LONDON: SAGE; 2003; PB £18.99 (ISBN 0 76195 920 3)

REVIEWED BY **Delia Wakelin**

FINDING participants for psychological research is often a difficulty, and the people who you use may be unrepresentative (mostly non-volunteer, predominantly female, psychology undergraduates). Is there a solution? This book suggests that using the internet has benefits and can extend the typical sample.

The chapters are a little uneven, not surprising with four authors. The initial chapters on the general outline of the internet is perhaps too obvious and threatened by being passé, but the chapter on the internet as a viable research tool gets to the nub of the sampling problem and makes a reasonable argument for using the internet as a research tool as well as pointing out its limitations. The description of the tools for internet research risks appearing prehistoric (e.g. the use of telnet and ftp, which are described in the book, is now deprecated, and more secure transfer protocols are recommended such as ssh or scp). There is an excellent chapter on designing and implementing an internet survey, which any researcher could use as a template for running their own research. It is pleasant to find the authors are not simply advocates of Microsoft, and that they provide information on using alternative software to carry out studies using the internet.

The final chapter on case studies also gives a flavour of the research possibilities with some critical comment. There are some omissions, for instance using active servers with PHP and the use of SQL databases could have usefully been described.

Overall a welcome text, but given the problems of sections of the book becoming out of date rather rapidly, maybe it would be better for the material to be provided by a website that could be regularly updated rather than in book form. It *is* better on the internet after all.

■ *Dr Delia Wakelin is in the Division of Psychology, Northumbria University.*
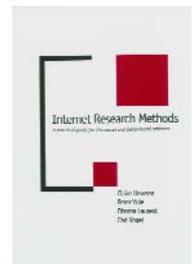
management (including giving positive attention, using rewards, setting rules, ignoring misbehaviour, time out), which has been written about extensively for parents elsewhere. However, the overriding emphasis on parents' reflecting and problem-solving difficulties gives this book a useful place within the parenting literature.

The section on teenagers is particularly useful in helping parents to understand and connect with their teenager, which is an essential foundation to negotiating rules and solving conficts. Within my work as a child clinical psychologist I would recommend this book to parents. It will also appeal to psychology graduates who are involved in working with children and teenagers.

■ *Dr Helen Street works at the Hemel Hempstead Child & Family Clinic.*
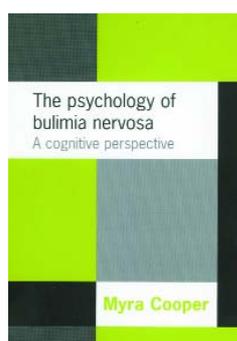
Cutting through the misunderstanding

The Psychology of Bulimia Nervosa: A Cognitive Perspective

MYRA COOPER

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2003; PB £29.50 (ISBN 0 192 63265 5)

REVIEWED BY **Lucy Serpell**

THIS excellent introduction to the challenging eating disorder of bulimia nervosa will also have much to offer those familiar with the condition.

Cooper's book contains not only a refreshing new approach, consisting of a new cognitive model with associated treatment recommendations, but also grounds this within extremely comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the condition.

As a clinical psychologist with a great deal of experience working with eating-disordered people, Cooper explores many of the 'hot issues' in the field, including the impact of society and culture on the condition and the use of categorical versus dimensional classification systems. She even tackles the thorny question of whether bulimia is increasing in Western cultures.

Scholarly and thorough, but always clear and approachable, this book will make an excellent addition to the literature about this important but often misunderstood condition.

■ *Dr Lucy Serpell is at the Institute of Psychiatry and University College London.*

Surrounded by narratives

Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life

JEROME S. BRUNER

CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2003; PB £8.95 (ISBN 0 674 01099 X)

REVIEWED BY **Khadj Rouf**

THIS is a slim but scholarly series of essays exploring the vitality of stories in everyday life. On first reading, it seemed unusual to make connections between the legal field, literature and autobiography. However, Bruner pulls these threads together well, weaving them into a coherent embroidery.

His main thesis is that we are surrounded by narratives. Stories are a key part of life, serving two functions. Firstly, we use narratives in life as a way of making conflicts more manageable. This can happen in law, where established knowledge helps to make sense of current disputes, and seeks solutions based around past cases. It can happen in therapy, where clients tell their stories to help make sense of them, and to ease distress. In life, autobiography is an important way of building self-identity. In turn, these stories can have social and cultural implications. Hence, the personal is political.

Bruner argues that the second main function of narrative is to create fiction. Fiction provides prototypes for the world, which help us to cope with the unexpected in life. Fiction allows us a unique window into a character's psyche, which can help us to connect with others. It can also create empathy for those who may seem alien to us. Thus, such apparent fictions have a crucial interface with real life. He reflects on how fiction has gone further, and has acted as a catalyst for social change. He cites examples, such as Harriett Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which helped to shift attitudes to slavery in America. Such works have led to changing perceptions, so that yesterday's norm is labelled as today's oppression.

This book is written in a lively style, though its language is sometimes too academic. It is not a clinical guide, but provides a thought-provoking and helpful overview of the importance of narrative in everyday life. A small gem, it is a good read for anyone interested in writing, therapy or social history.

■ *Khadj Rouf is a clinical psychologist working in primary care in Oxford.*