Book Reviews


This is an excellent overview volume that I would commend to all practitioners working with the children of women suffering postpartum depression. It is the first systematic text devoted to the area and, as such, deserves considered attention. It is usefully complemented in coverage by certain fairly recent journal special issues (see Appleby, Kumar, & Warner, 1996; Cicchetti, Nurcombe, & Garber, 1992).

We are experiencing a steadily increasing specialisation within, and thus an unfortunate, but perhaps inevitable Balkanisation of, both clinical psychology and psychiatry. The days of the generalist clinician who is seen as being able to address most problems competently seem all but gone. This process clarifies roles but has uncomfortable bedfellows. Specialism often led to provision of less optimal treatment where the presenting problem spans divergent areas of expertise, or crosses demarcation lines of apparent clinical remit. Families coping with the effects of postpartum problems are sadly often a case in point.

In child practice, although postpartum depression is a commonly associated problem, it is often inadequately addressed in situations where the clinical presentation is of the index child. Equally, in adult practice, once postpartum depression is identified, the impact on the mother–infant relationship and on infant development is often given scant consideration.

The advent of Murray and Cooper’s text, assuming of course that it reaches the appropriate clinician audience, should lead to overfocused omissions in our provision of care becoming less excusable. This is not a text on the clinical treatment of postpartum depression but on the developmental sequelae of such depression that typically feed back and reinforce the primary problem. The book is written by the foremost current researchers on postnatal depression, its concomitants and sequelae. It is in 11 chapters, with a brief foreword by E. S. Paykel and a more extensive “afterword” by Sir Michael Rutter. It should at present be considered the authoritative text in this area.

The book is in five sections. The first section is a single chapter by O’Hara dealing with the nature of postnatal mental disorders. The second section covers early interaction, with chapters by the Papouseks on early fragility of social interaction and by Tronick and Weinberg on the interactional effects of maternal depression. In the third section, Hay reviews the evidence that cognitive outcome is mediated by early social interaction and that developmental outcome is therefore affected by maternal depression. Murray and Cooper overview their research suggesting a strong link between the infant’s early maternal environment and subsequent behavioural problems and an association between observed interaction and later cognitive development. Teti and Gelfand argue for a central role of maternal cognitions in affecting a range of processes such as attribution of child behaviour and thus ultimately affecting early cognitive development in the infant and young child. Campbell and Cohn provide a useful introduction to considering factors such as the timing, chronicity, and heterogenous presentations of postnatal depressive disorders and thus the importance of adequate assessment of these before any ascertaining of developmental risk to the infant can be made.

Section four covers “the treatment of postpartum depression and associated mother–infant disturbances”. This section is in three chapters. Cooper and Murray begin by remarking on the paucity of work on treatment of nonpsychotic postnatal depression and go on to focus on their own recent Cambridge treatment trial comparing cognitive-behavioural treatment with counselling and psychodynamic approaches and a non-intervention control with 40 or more mothers in each group. Results reflected positive treatment effects in all mothers and on maternal reports of relationship problems compared to the controls but no impact on infant outcomes as none of the groups showed infant problems. This lack of effect largely reflects the nature of the population sampled. Field provides a useful introduction to the work of her group in Miami, which has focused on a range of physiological and biochemical changes in the infants of depressed mothers and on the effects of a range of “cost-effective interventions” such as musical mood induction and massage therapy (used by the mother on the infant) in impacting on early interaction. This is a useful and succinct chapter. If I were to single out any areas of omission, I would note the lack of reference to the work of Geraldine Dawson and colleagues on infant EEG in postnatal depression (e.g. Dawson, Grofer Klinger, Panagiotides, Spieker, & Frey, 1992), and to Field’s own interesting observations on certain limitations on the application of the Beck Depression Inventory with this population (Field et al., 1991). The final chapter in this section by Cramer provides a sketch of one psychoanalytic approach to working with these families, using Beck Depression Inventory changes to illustrate effects and also some brief illustrative clinical vignettes.

The final section of the book is a single thorough chapter by Hipwell and Kumar. This covers affective postpartum psychosis, a much rarer and more extreme disorder. In this chapter, the authors cover a range of aspects but highlight the paucity of clinical and research data in the area and the difficulties in generalising from the published literature due to confounding variables and sample generalisation. Professor Rutter, in his conclusions, gives a considered review of the material presented and makes a number of useful general points concerning the current status of the evidence in this rapidly developing field. This is an important book, which should be on the shelves of every unit working with postnatally depressed women and in the units that work with their children. It is affordable, accessible, and provides clinically relevant information not easily found elsewhere. Not to be missed.

Ken Aitken

References


This is the second edition of Russell Barkley’s book, which first came out in 1987. Like many who approach middle age, it has expanded in girth and is heavier. The book is really a core manual of parent training, surrounded by three other parts: a literature review of parent training, a collection of assessment materials, and a set of handouts for parents. The core manual is about 70 pages long, the literature review 65, the assessment materials 50 pages long, with the parent handouts a further 50 pages.

The literature review is very up-to-date and thorough and it espouses a straight down-the-line behavioural approach. The assessment materials are useful for those not familiar with comprehensive mental health assessments, but will not be needed by those who are used to them. The parent handouts are a very useful addition, and in my experience generally are a greatly under-used resource in the U.K. The core of the book is still the actual manual for professionals on how to carry out a parent training programme. This is basically a very thorough and lucid exposition of the fundamentals of parent training as originally developed during the 1960s by Constance Hanf in Portland, Oregon and as taken up by a number of others including Rex Forehand and Robert McMahon, and Carolyn Webster-Stratton. It starts off with play and the technique of descriptive commenting, moves on to praise for acceptable behaviours and ignoring for unacceptable behaviours, and then explains reward systems. How to give clear commands is then set out, with the ultimate sanction of time-out being explained well, together with a specification of how long it should be given for, and what to do if the child comes out of time-out. There is an additional section on anticipation of problems and handling children in public places. All this is very soundly set out and will be immensely useful to clinicians, and it is one of the expositions of classic individual parent training. However, it would be nice to see a further edition taking forward the other developments that have been made in the field.

First, to expand the use of cognitive behavioural techniques to address the wider problems that get in the way of parents employing the specific techniques for interaction with their children. This can include the problem-solving approach to their relationship with their partner, to relationships with people at work, and in sorting out their living conditions and so on. Second, more can be said about how to get the best from the child at school. This includes how to tackle teachers in a firm but constructive way, how to set up cooperation schemes between teachers and parents to monitor and improve the child’s behaviour, and how to go about deciding if special education provision is necessary. Third, it would be very useful to have a manual that clearly delineates differences in handling children with ADHD/hyperactivity compared with those who are oppositional and conduct disordered. Russell Barkley would be supremely positioned to write such a book, but this is not it! There are many important differences, and yet the two conditions are often managed in a very similar way by those who favour a behavioural approach. Fourth, the emotional aspect of defiance could be brought out, including the exploration of information about attachment disorders. It would be helpful to incorporate the more recent understanding about children’s need to get secure attachment from their parents by behaving in an attention-seeking way; and how defiant behaviour can be part of this process rather than simple “naughtiness”. Fifth, and related to this, it would be nice to see the process underpinned by a model of parent–child relationships that acknowledges that both parties have minds as well as simply behaving. Thus in practice, in parent training practitioners spend a great deal of time going through how the parent thinks and feels about the child, the part played by their own upbringing, and how their own depression and negative feelings get in the way of being sensitive to the child’s needs. Then parents can be encouraged to understand the world from their child’s point of view, and comment not just on their behaviour, but on what the child might be thinking and feeling, and to make connections with this and show that they are appreciated as individuals, rather than just as organisms who conform. Sixth, recent research is clear that for a given quality of parenting and for a given level of defiant behaviour, the future is nonetheless further influenced by a third factor, namely the ability of the child to get on with his or her peers. There are now one or two excellent programmes available for improving children’s peer relationships, and it would be useful to at least have these drawn attention to, if not actively incorporated in a programme for treating defiant children. Finally, the role of direct work with the child could have been included. Thus, many clinicians find that having a short number of sessions where the child is listened to and given quite brief therapy can often be helpful. In terms of assessment, this is often informative and sometimes frank abuse may be revealed; in terms of helping the child come to terms with often harsh parenting practices, it may be useful; additionally the child can be helped to try out more adaptive strategies. There are also now a number of group programmes for children that work in conjunction with groups for parents, and these have been demonstrated to have greater effect in reducing childhood defiance on a number of measures than parenting groups alone.

In summary, I would recommend this book strongly as a thorough and clear exposition of fundamentals of behavioural parent training. I look forward to the day when a book is written that incorporates all the other developments in the understanding and treatment of these children that have occurred since the behavioural approach was first made to work over 30 years ago.

Stephen Scott


Against all predictions the “theory of mind” debate continues, but in recent years analyses of children’s mental state understanding have become both inaccessible to all but a few and focused upon hairs that seem impossible to split any further. Russell’s book is an attempt to revitalise the debate by steering us away from discussion about the nature of folk psychology, most notably the conflict between those who believe that mental state understanding is theoretical in nature (the so-called “theory theory”) and those who claim special powers for the imagination (“simulation theory”). In contrast, Russell argues that we cannot understand the mental world unless first we experience our own agency—ourselves as beings who can identify, and reflect upon, what we intend.

In order to make his case the book divides into three parts, each long and detailed enough to be a book in its own right and none divided into chapters. Part I is an analysis of three theories of mental representation—Fodor’s Language of Thought (LoT)
doctrine, positing mental symbols which *sui generis* have form and semantics, the Mental Models approach, and Connectionism. This part serves two functions. The first is to criticise the two former theories because they assume that mental images constitute thinking and that the only aim of cognitive science is to depict the way mental symbols represent the world. Russell rehearses criticisms that (1) the LoT doctrine cannot account for the holism of belief (that representations of one type, like dogs, imply the ability to think of pets, animals and other related categories); and (2) strong Mental Models approaches do not escape the homunculus problem—that if representations map onto the world there must be a device that does the mapping. He sees connectionism as a means of avoiding these two types of problem as neural nets generate representation as a result of subsymbolic activity. Nets themselves do not actively produce thought, but they can describe learning. Russell, like others, fills the gap by suggesting that connectionist models are endowed with some minimal innate biases, particularly an ability to alter perceptual inputs at will. It is such an ability that forms the basis of the notion of agency and the backbone of the book.

In its analysis of infants’ knowledge of objects, Part 2 serves two functions. The first is to elaborate upon the notion of agency. For Russell “Being an agent... means being something that has a control over what, from the manifold sensory input, one centres upon” (p. 75). He capitalises upon Schopenhauer’s analysis of the will: “willing” something is the experience of trying to reach an end. This is complemented by and our privileged first-person access to that action, which is the basis of our subjectivity and allows us to reflect upon the world. The distinction between “doing” or willing on the one hand and reflection upon such activity on the other forms the basis of Russell’s second aim in this part—agency bridges the gap between Piaget’s theory and early competence data, which appear to undermine it. Newborns might have the ability to react in particular ways, for example to maintain attention when witnessing an impossible event, but such skill does not imply that infants have a knowledge of objects and a reflection upon that knowledge.

Part 3 argues that being an agent and perceiving others as agents are essential for having a “theory of mind”: “any account of what it takes to have a mind that ignores the unity of experience, the self ascription of experiences to this unitary self and the central contribution of agency is just false” (p. 180). The part then divides into three. The first subsection is a masterly critique of five perspectives that do not acknowledge agency but which appear to be popular in current theory. These five encompass idealised versions of Theory Theory, Simulation Theory, and the nativist accounts he discussed in Part 1. In the second section, Russell shifts tack and claims that the apparent changes in children’s understanding of mind at age 4 are not caused by a theoretical shift, but by changes in executive competence—their ability to regulate attention to mental states rather than the biases of reality. The third section takes the familiar turn of applying Russell’s analysis to individuals with autism, suggesting that they lack an ability to understand themselves as agents.

It is in its depth that Russell leaves most of us standing. Agency both links previously unrelated topics like the object concept and theory of mind within the same theoretical analysis and founds the concept in a rich philosophical vein. Yet the book does have its drawbacks. For a start its dense theoretical machinations will put off all but the determined reader. Second, the ambitions of the three sections are so far-reaching that none really will be sufficient to convince the sceptic. In Part 1, for example, much of the discussion of the Language of Thought and Mental Models reworks previous analyses. Third, some of the pieces of argument that Russell constructs do not hang together very convincingly. In Part 3 links like that between agency and executive function could have been explored further. Nevertheless, the book is memorable both because it provides sound reasons for accepting a neo-Piagetian case against the more fashionable child-as-theoretician accounts of development and because it is exemplary in its criticism of so much of the work within the theory of mind tradition.

Charlie Lewis


This useful little book spans a range of issues in the study of early infancy. Although not exhaustive, it could readily form part of a group of core readings for an undergraduate level course in Developmental Psychology.

The text grew out of two meetings of the British Infancy Research Group held in 1992 and 1993. Two of the chapters deal with predominantly American research, the rest cover mainly British work (albeit with a review emphasis on recent work from the U.S.A. focusing on Thelen, Baillargeon, and others). As a means of acquainting non-U.K. readers with recent foci of research interest in Britain, it provides a simple and accessible guide.

The book is in three parts, which deal respectively with perceptual and motor development (four chapters), cognitive development (four chapters), and social and language development (five chapters). Each section is prefaced by a precis from the editors.

The first part begins with a brief chapter by Gillian Harris, covering the development of taste perception and regulation of appetite in infancy. The second chapter, by Slater, deals with aspects of the organisation and development of visual function in infancy. In the third chapter, by Bremner, an argument is made for the importance of dynamic systems theory as a model for interpretation of vision. The fourth chapter, by Hopkins and Butterworth, pursues further (albeit largely from a theoretical basis) the idea of dynamic systems theory as a model for the development of action.

In the second part of the book the focus shifts to cognitive development. The first chapter, by Willatts, covers research on infant knowledge about causal mechanisms, dealing in particular with the well-known work of Baillargeon. Here the concept of the infant as an active interpreter of events as opposed to a passive observer, within a limited sphere of reference, is well illustrated and argued. In an interesting chapter, Rutkowska provides a cognitive science reanalysis of Piaget’s idea of sensorimotor development, concluding in part that we should come to see “non-conceptual action as the core of infant intelligence”. This idea provides a useful backdrop to the chapter on infant communication in the final part of the book. A fascinating chapter, by Mandler, is devoted to the development of infant categorisation and the developmental differences and similarities across conceptual and perceptual categorisation in infancy. This part of the book concludes with a chapter by Bornstein, Slater, Brown, Roberts, and Barrett, addressing the evidence for stability of development over time. I strongly recommend this chapter as a succinct precis of the topic for honours level students. Many of the points that are made concerning our abilities to predict development, our failure to replicate results (and difficulties in publication thereof), on the effects of sample size, and on our capabilities in the detection of “high-risk” infants are worthy of serious contemplation by the budding and also, perhaps, the fully flowered clinician and/or researcher, as they pore over the published literature.

The concluding part of the text deals with social and language development. The first chapter, by Slater and Butterworth,
addresses the topics of face perception and facial imitation. This provides a pithy treatment of these areas which should, however, be adequate for use at an introductory level. A chapter dealing with interactive attunement of affect and attention, by Reddy, Hay, Murray, and Trevarthen, gives a useful introduction to this complex topic. Peter Hobson gives a clear defence of his perception of a need to retain a psychoanalytic perspective on infancy, which gains some degree of scientific credence from the recognition that many aspects of developmental process can be seen as stemming from what Rutkowski earlier calls “non-conceptual action”. David Messer provides a thorough discussion of the importance of shared interest/joint attention in the development of our understanding of the world and our development of interactive language, a research topic that has assumed recent prominence in several areas of developmental psychopathology such as autism. The final chapter, by Margaret Harris, deals usefully with the development of language comprehension and parallel communicative functions such as pointing, together with brief consideration of language “pathology”, dealing here only with the effects of focal traumatic brain injury.

Overall, this is a book that provides an amuse gueule in various areas of developmental psychology. It is well written and referenced and is likely to enthuse the casual reader to explore further. It does not contain sufficient material of relevance to be of direct interest to the clinical practitioner audience at a practice level. It is a useful introduction to a number of different avenues of infancy research, and as such can be recommended as a text for introductory courses in both developmental psychology and psychopathology.

Ken Aitken


This review marks the appearance in paperback of a book first published in 1995. The years have not diminished its importance and have, if anything, increased it. One reason for its being an important book is that it explores one of the major tensions in cognitive developmental research: that between naturalistic data and laboratory data. In this area—children’s understanding of the mind—the naturalistic data suggest precocity and the laboratory data suggest slow and perhaps stagewise change. The book not only illustrates this tension but even goes some way towards resolving it.

The authors have trawled the CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System) computerised database for early mental state utterances by 10 children—1 or 2 of them heroes of the syntax development literature. The main body of the book is taken up with a lucid and elegantly argued account of their findings, followed by placement of the data within the context of preschool children’s performance on formal tests for “theory of mind” and then finally in relation to psychological theories of the development of mental concepts.

On the surface, the tension between the naturalistic data and the laboratory data is striking. Why is it, for example, that children who can make explicit contrasts between thought and reality in speech (e.g. “I thought so ‘cept they weren’t”) at 3, fail the well-known false belief task in which they have to judge that an ignorant protagonist will search in the wrong place for an object whose transfer he did not witness? The main answer the authors give is that the temporal lag is more apparent than real. For while children begin to talk about thinking around the time of their third birthday or before, 3-year-olds fail to link belief-talk to action talk. They have far more to say about desires than about beliefs and when they come to explain human action they do so mainly by reference to desires. It is an understanding of the belief–action link that appears to develop within the third year of life.

Here are some ways in which the naturalistic data bear upon theories of development. Simulation theory, which claims that children understand mental states from their own case first and thereafter understand others via mental simulation, has to explain why mental state references to self and other appear at much the same time. Nativist theories, which claim that the essential elements of mental understanding are in place before the end of the second year of life, have to explain what is happening between 2 and 4 years and why it has a seemingly stage-like character. Finally, the view that under-4s fail theory-of-mind tests because they have no conception at all of what it means for a belief to represent a state of affairs falsely are faced with the awkward fact the children studied by Bartsch and Wellman used false belief contrasts shortly after their third birthday.

This book not only makes a substantial and provocative contribution to the research literature but it is ideal for undergraduate teaching and can profitably be read by preschool teachers and interested parents. For the transparent presentation of data and the judicious discussion of competing theories it can hardly be bettered.

James Russell


One goal of the editors of The diversity of human relationships was to bring together, in one place, research on human relationships across the age span and in a variety of settings. Family research is well presented in this book, with examinations of parent–child relationships, including those with children living within the family and those when the children are adults. Also covered are sibling relationships during childhood and adult sibling relationships, as well as relationships across extended families. This review of the variety of relationships within the family is valuable enough to justify the book as a resource for those interested in relationships.

However, there is much more to the book. There are two chapters on intimate relationships of heterosexual and same-sex couples. Both go beyond the usual research seen in reviews of research on married couples and provide a nice overview of this literature.

The editors state in the introduction that they want to cover the diversity of human relationships and the next four chapters give proof of the statement. Auhagen has a very complete chapter presenting results on adult friendships and the chapter by Melbeck on “Neighbours and Acquaintances” brings together material that has not been presented within a psychological context. This chapter is particularly informative for those who feel that all sense of community has been lost in the modern world.

The final two chapters review research on relationships at work. As these data are most often published within the field of Industrial Relations, rather than more traditional psychology journals, a great deal of information is presented that is likely to be unfamiliar to most psychologists. The content chapters contain excellent research and bring together a diversity of viewpoints that should be helpful to anyone trying to understand human relationships.

A second goal was also put forth by the editors: present diverse theoretical approaches in the field of human relationships and see if there are some unifying themes across the field. There is an excellent first chapter by Robert Hinde entitled...
“Describing Relationships”. Hinde discusses dimensions on which relationships can be defined and evaluated. The chapter provides a framework to examine the very diverse research findings that follow. In the epilogue, Mikula examines the current state of research in this field and suggests that at this point there is no totally convincing theory. Instead each area appears to have developed theoretical approaches, some of which overlap, but most of which are simply discussing different aspects of relationships. Mikula calls for better definitions of terms and categories across the areas and hopes that by bringing together the research across diverse fields, this book will help move toward the development of broader theories.

Diversity of human relationships is a worthwhile attempt and contains a good deal of material important to anyone working within the area of human relationships. By including neighbourhood and workplace data, it should help broaden the way that psychologists think about relationships. This is a book that should serve as a good, broad reference text for the next few years.

Beverly Fagot


I must confess my initial disappointment, on receiving this book, to discover that it is not the comprehensive text I was expecting from the title.

The book is written from a psychoanalytic perspective. Its main strength is in providing an erudite critique of psychodynamic theories of adolescent development, in the light of contemporary research in developmental psychology. The author offers his own alternative, integrated theory of adolescent development, which is appealing by way of its deliberate attempt to avoid abstraction and speculation in favour of logic, common sense, and clinical utility.

The sections that follow deal with psychopathology, assessment, and treatment, and are generously illustrated with case examples, all serving to support his premise that “when adolescents experience conflict between their strivings to complete development and their wishes to retain a positive relationship with their parents, they typically experience emancipatory guilt”. Although Bloch states that these precepts might not apply to every patient, he expresses a great deal of confidence in the general application of his model to a “spectrum” of problems from delinquency to psychoses.

I think this book suffers something of its own emancipatory crisis. Whereas the first section should make stimulating (one might argue, essential) reading for even the most die-hard “empiricist”, the latter half is most useful as a practical guide to the application of this particular model of psychotherapy with adolescents. But the author attempts to go further by debating the value of medication versus psychotherapy in treatment. I found myself in absolute agreement about the need to provide therapeutic opportunities to promote recovery of a sense of self-control that is not just about reliance on pills, especially for young people derailed by psychosis. However, I was left ultimately disappointed that in choosing to address this issue in a cursory and polarised manner, an important discussion about the relative and integrated roles of different therapeutic approaches has been left partly exposed but largely unaddressed, in favour of “one size fits all”.

Roderic Pipe


This is a welcome volume covering the study of developmental disorders and their implications for models of normal and abnormal development. The material is divided in traditional style into chapters on disorders of language, memory, perceptual and spatial development, reading, spelling, and arithmetic. A section on executive disorders gathers up many of the “strays” missed in this neat partitioning (e.g. autism, ADHD, Tourette syndrome). Introductory and concluding chapters raise a number of important questions concerning, for example, modularity, individual differences, and plasticity. Inclusion of case histories enlivens the text, and the easy-to-read style is suited to undergraduate readers. Overall this book is a comprehensive and interesting introduction to a rapidly expanding field.

Francesca Happé