A key theme that recurs throughout much of this impressive volume is that developmental psychology should embrace a developmental systems approach. But there is much more than this, and vastly more than I could hope to convey in a brief review. In all senses, this is a very substantial book. It comprises 19 heavyweight chapters in a formidable 1274 pages. The contributors (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, Cairns, Fischer, Gardner, Goodnow, Gottlieb, Keil, Lerner, Overton, Shweder, Spele, Thelen, Wapner), all leaders in their fields, have written for their academic peers—by which I mean that the chapters are densely and technically written. The range of theoretical approaches represented is considerable: neo-Piagetian, neo-Vygotskian, cognitive science, cultural psychology, ecological perspectives, life-span approaches, behaviour genetics, action theories, and systems (and dynamic systems) approaches.

Despite diversity in the theories that feature, approximately half of the chapters argue for some form of developmental systems approach. The systems approach is not so much a unified theory as a general framework that seeks the synthesis of multiple levels of analysis, from the biological to the cultural and historical. To quote from Lerner, systems approaches: stress that the bases for change, and for both plasticity and constraints in development, lie in the relations that exist among the multiple levels of organization that comprise the substance of human life. These levels range from the interior biological (through the individual, psychological and the proximal social relational (e.g. involving dyads, peer groups, and nuclear families), to the sociocultural level (including key macro institutions …) and the natural and designed physical ecologies of human development.

… These tiers are structurally and functionally integrated. Such a developmental systems perspective promotes a relational unit of analysis. Variables associated with any level of organization exist (are structured) in relation to variables from other levels (p. 7)

From this perspective, what is wrong with developmental psychology’s myriad short-range, uni-level theories is that, at best, “they focus essentially on what are main effects embedded in higher-order interactions” (p. 7). Indeed, based on this line of reasoning, Lerner rejects a broad swath of contemporary theories as “non-veridical”. It is hard to argue with Lerner: at some level nearly all developmentalists would accept the need to acknowledge the “bigger picture”. However, there are inevitable obstacles in the pursuit of what might ultimately be identified as a sort of scientific Holy Grail. For example, one cannot know, a priori, the range of factors that might be implicated in any aspect of human development (not so long ago, after all, we didn’t know of the existence of DNA), thus one can never really know how far one has got at a “veridical” grip on the “higher order interactions”. At a more mundane level it also concerns me that the requirements of adequate science set many in this volume, suggests innovative programmes of new research based on “action theory”.

Several contributors (e.g. Gottlieb, Wahlsten, & Lickliter; Overton; Valser) tackle the issue of what is meant by development—not a practice, curiously, to which developmentalists are much inclined. Elder addresses the challenge of how to conceptualise development post-childhood. Valser, in a particularly good chapter, begins by discussing the three major conceptualisations of development that have dominated the discipline: development as differentiation (e.g. Werner), as equilibration (e.g. Piaget) and as the outcome of teaching/learning processes (e.g. Vygotsky). Valser argues that none of these positions represent profound improvements on their ancient predecessors. Amongst other trenchant claims, he asserts that this lack of theoretical progress is due to the adoption of developmental psychology by general experimental psychology (a “metatheoretically distant” foster parent). This adoption, he argues, has resulted in attempts at objectivity founded upon the measurement ideals of physics. Influence from a different science, for example chemistry, “might have provided these models with a more persistent intellectual focus … and thereby furthered their elaboration. Thus, the focus on structure and its conditional transformation would be far better aligned with the conceptual sphere of chemistry than with the physics of psychology’s construction” (p. 219). Such critiques underline the need for developmental psychology explicitly to address the concept of development.

An issue that emerges in many chapters is that of individual variability in human development. For the most part, develop-
mentals have neglected variability, focusing instead upon age norms or normative trajectories for different aspects of behaviour and cognition. However, as Thelen and Smith argue, “variability is data and not just noise” (p. 626). Lerner accords the exploration of variability a central significance on the grounds that “Diversity is the exemplary illustration of the presence of relative plasticity in development” (p. 13). Fischer and Biddell make the interesting observation that one type of variability we have come to take for granted is variability over domains. However, importantly, they make the point that we lack an adequate understanding of why particular patterns of variability exist. Fischer sees this as a reflection of a wider malaise in psychology, viz. reductionism. Like many other contributors, they assert the value of systems approaches in this respect.

Although this is unquestionably a superb book, and one that, as I hope to have emphasised, poses fundamental questions, there is nonetheless a sense in which it is conservative. The flavour of the criticism, even when profound, mostly reflects there is a need for new approaches, not necessarily for new ways of looking at old problems. The chapters raise but cannot yet meet is to integrate knowledge and theory at the many levels covered, from brain through cognition to behaviour. It will be extremely interesting to see whether these mappings will have been established by the 6th edition of this valuable and rightly respected handbook.

Francesca Happé


This book is the successor of the widely referenced book *Assessment and Diagnosis in Child Psychopathology* edited by Michael Rutter, A. Hussain Tuma, and Irma S. Lann and published in 1988. Like its predecessor, the present volume provides a very useful overview of assessment procedures, and of a number of principles underlying assessment of child and adolescent psychopathology.

This volume contains the following four sections: measures for assessing general psychopathology; measures for assessing specific syndromes; special aspects of assessing psychiatric disorders; and biological measures. In the first two chapters a useful distinction between “interviewer-based” and “respondent based” interviews is made in addition to the distinction between structured and unstructured interviews. Most modern interviews are structured, and Angold and Fisher give a summary of why this should be the case, but the strategies for structuring information and for defining ways to collect information varies across different interviews. The first chapter by Shaffer, Fisher, and Lucas describes what can be called the prototype of a respondent based interview: the DISC. The chapter gives a historical overview of the development of the DISC, and provides a number of psychometric characteristics of this instrument. It is somewhat sobering to see how low the reliabilities are for the diagnoses based on the child interview, and it would have been interesting to read the authors’ evaluation of this and the consequences they drew for future versions of the DISC.

The authors also pointed at the rather universal phenomenon that subjects tend to score fewer symptoms on retesting than on the first occasion. This phenomenon called attenuation is poorly understood, and is especially inconvenient if we want to measure true changes in the level of symptoms over time.

The chapter by Angold and Fisher on interviewer-based interviews is helpful because it provides, in addition to a broad overview of existing interviews, a number of guidelines that can be used when choosing an interview, without giving a single “best buy”.

One extensive and complete chapter is the one by Volkmar and Marans on measures for assessing pervasive developmental and communication disorders.

The chapters on rating scales for general and for specific types of psychopathology provide what they should: a concise overview of these kinds of measurements. This brings me to a weak aspect of the book. I missed a chapter on general aspects concerning the assessment and classification of child and adolescent psychopathology that would introduce the clinician to a number of fundamental psychometric principles in a nontechnical way. The chapter by Hinshaw and Nigg on most behaviour rating scales for disruptive disorders nicely covered a number of general issues relevant for the assessment of child and adolescent psychopathology such as: the use of generic versus narrow rating scales, ratings versus observations, bias and distortion, and interinformant agreement. However, this may have been done in a more detailed and systematic way in the beginning of the book. These issues may have guided the reader in evaluating which types of assessment procedures they should choose for their particular purpose.

The present volume lacks a number of subjects that the Rutter et al. predecessor contained, such as the assessment of the 21st century. As such, it will undoubtedly be useful for undergraduates, graduates, and established researchers. A challenge the chapters mentioned cannot yet meet is to integrate knowledge and theory at the many levels covered, from brain through cognition to behaviour. It will be extremely interesting to see whether these mappings will have been established by the 6th edition of this valuable and rightly respected handbook.

Mark Bennett

**References**


This book is the successor of the widely referenced book *Assessment and Diagnosis in Child Psychopathology* edited by Michael Rutter, A. Hussain Tuma, and Irma S. Lann and published in 1988. Like its predecessor, the present volume provides a very useful overview of assessment procedures, and of a number of principles underlying assessment of child and adolescent psychopathology.

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The present volume lacks a number of subjects that the Rutter et al. predecessor contained, such as the assessment of
family functioning, observations, the integration of information derived from a variety of sources, and issues concerning diagnosis. However, the present volume does contain a number of chapters on new and interesting topics. The assessment of functional impairment, for instance, written by Bird, is an increasingly important topic since we are aware of the very high prevalences of individuals who meet criteria for diagnoses in community samples. In addition to obtaining information on whether or not an individual meets the criteria for a certain disorder, it is important to determine the degree to which the individual shows impairment by the symptoms or condition. Other interesting topics in the book that connect the worth of child/adolescent and adult psychopathology are the assessment of family history of psychiatric disorder (important for those involved in family studies), and the retrospective adult assessment of childhood psychopathology.

With increasing insight of the importance of bundling research efforts and clinical knowledge across nations, and with increasing mass movements of populations seeking integration into other cultures, it is important that assessment instruments in one language are translated into different languages. The chapter by Canino and Bravo provides a number of guidelines for the translation of assessment instruments. Even with very accurate translations, the meaning of certain words can vary across cultures. Therefore, the authors stress the need for adaptation of assessment instruments for certain purposes. The chapter by Cohen and Kasen addresses the issue of how race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and culture may influence the assessment of psychopathology.

The last two chapters pertain to biological measures that may especially interest researchers because there is still little need for the application of biological measures in everyday clinical practice. However, the chapters on leep and neuroendocrine measures and on neurochemical measures provide the reader with a concise overview of what can be measured that is relevant to child and adolescent psychopathology, and how this can be measured.

What I missed in the book was an integrative view on measurement issues, on what information is needed and how information from different sources should be combined. Overall this book provides useful information and should be read by anyone interested in the assessment of child and adolescent psychopathology.

Frank C. Verhulst


The new structure and completely new set of chapters in this second edition reflects just how far the field has advanced in the 8 or so years since the publication of the first edition. Many outsiders predicted that the mass of “theory of mind” literature in the first edition would disappear due to the apparent strength and consistency of the initial findings. However, this recent collection shows that the debate is still strong, and has been added to by the inclusion of disciplines such as anthropology and evolutionary theory providing rich additions to the growing body of psychological research.

Close examination of the new chapters reveals a shift in the focus of the literature from autism to broader, neuroscience perspectives on the theory of mind. This is reflected in a change in the subtitle, to Perspectives from Developmental Neuroscience, from the original Perspectives from Autism. This change is certainly reflected in the layout and structure of the new book. It is divided into four sections: Part 1—Theory of Mind (ToM) in Normal Development and Autism; Part 2—ToM, Neurobiological Aspects; Part 3—Clinical Aspects; and Part 4—Anthropological and Evolutionary Issues. These sections provide clear and neat distinctions between the various perspectives involved, while at the same time successfully linking the chapters around a coherent theme.

I came to the book with a greater familiarity of the research in developmental psychology than the neurobiological literature. I thus found the second part of the book very informative and I will summarise this section in some detail. I particularly liked the chapter by Hiram Brownell and his colleagues (Chapter 13), who look at cerebral lateralisation and theory of mind with reference to patients with damage to the right hemisphere. They provide a convincing argument that the prefrontal cortex is implicated in theory of mind, as one must use executive control to have adequate mentalising abilities.

Social decision-making, including ToM rests on conflicting information that must be maintained and evaluated; the most relevant information must be highlighted, and the less relevant information must be inhibited for successful interpretation to occur (p. 325).

This argument highlights the increasing focus on the links between ToM and executive functioning, and the possible direction of this relationship. Indeed Perner and Lang’s chapter summarises the possible relationship between the two issues nicely. They point out that there are a number of possible causal links between “executive functions” (the ability to inhibit a prepotent response in order to achieve a goal) which may underlie performance on the false belief task, but other causal explanations are possible. They opt for an explanation that understanding mental states as mental states is the driving force in the development of executive skills. While they argue this case very persuasively, a critical reading of this chapter might suggest that they are too ready to dismiss views which differ from their own. The contrast between Brownell and Perner highlights the critical tension in the contemporary literature.

Other chapters in the section on neurobiological issues might be hard going for developmental psychologists. In particular those by Stone (11) on how the frontal lobes are implicated in ToM and Emery and Perrett (12) on understanding ToM through studies on the monkey brain, are very technical.

The book is aimed at researchers in developmental and evolutionary psychology, and would certainly serve as useful reference for clinicians working in the field of autism. It may be used for advanced undergraduate courses, but students would need some help with the technical terms and complexity of theory. Nevertheless for researchers in the fields it covers this book is an essential addition to an already overstocked library.

Karen Shimmon


The advent of evidence-based practice has emphasised the need for acquainting practitioners with research findings. This has been recognised by the Department of Health (DoH) in commissioning the preparation of this short and concise book. The authors identified and summarised key research findings on intervening with sexually abused children and their families or carers. Intervention here extends from background factors, problems for sexually abused children, through the now well-documented stages of professional intervention to which the greater part is devoted, and ending with treatment outcomes. The intended readership is primarily social workers, but the book contains information of interest also to child mental health professionals, particularly the section on treatment outcomes.

The layout is exemplary in its clarity, each chapter commencing with questions posed, followed by a summary of research evidence, comments by the authors, and practice implications. The authors also highlight areas where no research is available, for instance how many earlier rejected referrals of child sexual abuse later transpire to have been justified. The book succeeds in demystifying research and its findings while constantly illustrating the complexity of the issues. Appropriate emphasis is given to the importance of the child’s developmental
stage and context in considering both predisposing factors and treatment needs. Both qualitative and quantitative findings are considered, with particular emphasis on DoH-commissioned research.

Some of the many findings include the belated recognition of the unmet needs of children who experienced extra-familial abuse, the importance of attending to the needs of the mother or nonabusive primary carers, and the need to actively look for mental health problems including PTSD and depression in the children which, while present, are often not recognised. Emphasis is also given to the dearth of specialist services for children with sensory impairments and learning difficulties. The section on treatment summaries 14 papers based on 7 randomised controlled trials and 4 controlled clinical trials. As the authors point out, this reflects the paucity of published studies, many papers on therapy being descriptive only. The conclusions show an overall benefit of therapy over time elapsing, and the merits of cognitive behavioural therapy addressing particular difficulties such as sexualised behaviour.

The authors have accomplished their intended aim and the book is well recommended.

Danya Glaser


This is an autism book with a difference: transactional and developmental are the key words. The two editors have an excellent track record in keeping these twin themes in central focus when thinking about the complex conditions on the autism spectrum. The authors’ own work, which centres on intervention in the area of communication, involving very young children with autism, is well described and by itself makes this book worth buying. This must be one of the most promising avenues for effecting change in autism—delivering intervention early, whilst the developing brain is plastic, and delivering it directly into the area that is most impaired: communication. Six chapters elaborate on this important theme by outlining contrasting intervention methods, using a range of techniques such as play (Schuler and Wolfberg) and working on literacy (Mirenda and Erickson). These intervention strategies are presented against the backdrop of well-grounded developmental theory, for example, in studies of joint attention (Mundy and Stella; or Carpenter and Tomasello). What a pleasure to read a sensible book that could actually make a difference to children’s lives. Although the style is academic, I expect that practitioners, such as speech therapists, will find the book of value too.

Simon Baron-Cohen


This book makes a very well-informed contribution to the debate about the benefits and detriments of psychological debriefing in various treatment contexts. It is well set out and easy to read with a clear and concise introduction and overview, summaries at the beginning of each chapter, and a concluding chapter that helps to synthesise the complicated and contradictory findings and the questions that remain to be answered. Although there are some positive outcome findings, most outcome research points to debriefing making no difference or, in some cases, actually doing harm. However, as many authors in their individual essays point out, the need to do something to help people involved in traumatic events is a very powerful human impulse and unless other models of crisis intervention emerge which have proven effectiveness and which harm nobody, many professionals will be drawn to the clarity of the debriefing model. The middle section of the book contains descriptions of different practitioners’ modifications of debriefing and applications across a wide range of traumatic circumstances, arguing for specificity and/or a more systemic, comprehensive perspective in which debriefing is merely one part. Some of the difficulties in evaluating the outcome research is that debriefing means different things to different people and is applied variably (at different times after the trauma, in individual and in group setting, sometimes as part of a treatment package and sometimes as a one-off intervention opportunity, applied indiscriminately to primary and secondary victims of trauma and with different outcomes of expectation). There are interesting theoretical expositions to help to explain differences in outcome or to argue for a modification of the approach (for example, is it better to push people beyond an arousal threshold in a situation of safety to allow for gradual desensitisation, or is it better to help people to achieve low arousal as quickly as possible to reduce imprinting?). Unfortunately, as one goes through the book, the same arguments and general points are made by different authors in a way that becomes repetitive. The chapter on children and debriefing by Ruth Wraith and on debriefing adolescents by Paul Stallard are perhaps over-inclusive in the context of this book and read more like annotations. Both are useful chapters, but I would have preferred more depth and less breadth in a book presumably written for specialists in the field.

Tony Kaplan


The prevalence of divorce and its effects on family members have received very considerable attention, in the form of research papers, policy documents, and numerous research volumes as well as accessible and popular books. Given the amount of attention focused on family transitions, it would be easy to greet another volume on the topic with some scepticism. However, far from being just another book on divorce, Thompson and Amato’s edited volume, which includes a collection of papers from a symposium, begins to fill an important arena for research, intervention, and policy. It does this by beginning from a comparative perspective on divorce and the postdivorce family. This is not the first systematic treatment of the postdivorce family, but it does include a number of important features. Among these are contributions from psychology, sociology, and law, and more generally, an emphasis on closer communication among disciplines and professionals concerned with the postdivorce family. In addition, the eight chapters provide a synthesis of diverse research programmes, thereby providing an overview of the key findings and questions, concerning, for example, custody arrangements and non-residential parenting. Third, there are, thankfully, some specific recommendations for policy—or at least for policy research.

Readers outside the U.S. will recognise the core issues associated with postdivorce family and benefit from the research reviewed, but the extent to which the findings on U.S. samples extend to non-U.S. populations remains to be seen. The U.S. focus may be a limitation that may be especially marked in the context of legal arrangements and social expectations (which of course also vary within the U.S.).

Although not all of the basic questions about the effects of divorce have been adequately answered, there is a pressing need to bring into sharper focus the special circumstances and challenges faced by the postdivorce family. This book helps to do that.

Thomas G. O’Connor