

Making machines work for people

Designing for Humans

JAN NOYES

HOVE: PSYCHOLOGY PRESS; 2001; Pb £24.95 (ISBN 0 415 22722 4)

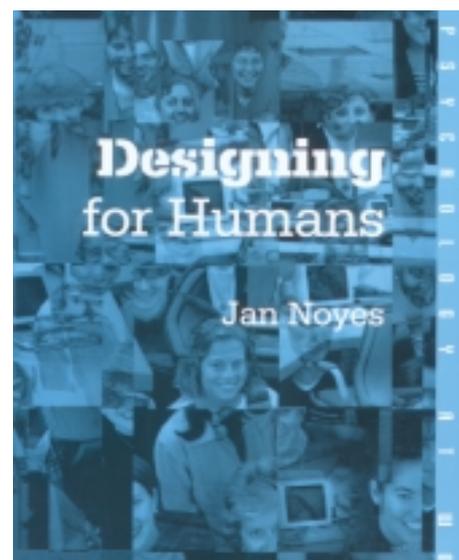
REVIEWED BY Lynda Holyoak

THIS book is one of a series designed to cover occupational psychology syllabus requirements set out by the BPS. This particular volume deals with an aspect that is sometimes treated quite dismissively by courses and texts: human factors. (Whether we should actually be calling it ergonomics is a debate that is touched on in the first chapter.) What the author has succeeded in doing is to produce a relatively slim text that covers most of the basics, and refers readers to classic works where necessary.

The chapters on the physical and psychological capabilities of humans and

how they interact with machines are particularly good. The information presented is logically structured and offers a very good coverage of material. Where this is not possible, readers are referred to other works in the area. The bias is definitely towards the psychological aspects of human factors, though this is not unexpected given the intended readership of this book. Whilst the text is logically structured, it does have a noticeable lack of figures; this is a disadvantage when discussing aspects such as display design. The same pros and cons apply to the chapter on working environments.

The final chapters on occupational health and safety are a disappointing finale: the coverage is patchy and does not do justice to the wealth of material on these topics. Since it is promised that these topics are to be covered in a separate volume in the same series, I assume they are dealt with here to try to emphasise the negative outcomes of poor attention to the issues



raised earlier. Still, much of what is presented (e.g. long descriptions of regulations) seems irrelevant.

On the whole, I did enjoy this book. The structure is good, with summaries and case studies for all chapters; and in the main it does fulfil its aim of providing an introduction to this area particularly for those on occupational psychology courses. I doubt it will be seen as a replacement for classic ergonomics texts for those on specialist courses in this area; but if it brings to the foreground an aspect of the workplace sometime neglected by psychologists, then it has done its job.

■ Lynda Holyoak is with the Department of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire, Preston.

Critical Social Psychology: An Introduction

BRENDAN GOUGH & MAJELLA McFADDEN

BASINGSTOKE: PALGRAVE; 2001; Pb £16.99

(ISBN 0 333 77646 1)

REVIEWED BY Cath Sullivan

THIS is a useful introductory text that explains key concepts clearly. Gough and McFadden usefully provide explicit comparisons between mainstream and critical psychology in relation to a number of key topics – for example, 'conformity'. The discussion of some concepts – particularly relativism – might be unclear to a reader with no previous knowledge of them, although generally this is not the case. The description of discourse analysis is particularly clear. This would be a useful textbook for an introductory critical psychology course and would also be of interest to any student or academic with no previous knowledge of this field.

■ Cath Sullivan is with the Department of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire.

International Handbook of Social Anxiety: Concepts, Research and Interventions Relating to the Self and Shyness

W. R. CROZIER & L. E. ALDEN (Eds)

CHICHESTER: WILEY; 2001; Hb £90.00

(ISBN 0 471 49129 2)

REVIEWED BY Carol A. Ireland

THE editors, W. Ray Crozier and Lynn E. Alden, should be congratulated for such a comprehensive and thorough compilation of the various theories relating to social anxiety. Each theory is explored in detail, with an active attempt to integrate perspectives in a clear and concise way. There is some excellent critical evaluation of the

presented studies and concepts, particularly Crozier and Alden's opening chapter. All too often authors can find themselves in the trap of simply referring to findings in studies, with little appropriate evaluation of the methodology from which these findings derive. It was refreshing to see such appropriate evaluation, and only a shame that not all of the authors in the handbook followed the editors' lead.

This handbook makes for an interesting and comprehensive read for both practitioners and theorists.

■ Dr Carol A. Ireland is with the Psychological Services, Ashworth Hospital Authority.

Developmental research – For whom?

Becoming Parents: Exploring the Bonds Between Mothers, Fathers, and Their Infants

JUDITH A. FEENEY, LYDIA HOHAUS, PATRICIA NOLLER & RICHARD P. ALEXANDER
CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2001; Pb £13.95 (ISBN 0 521 77591 4)

Supporting the Literacy Needs of Children in the Early Years.

DOROTHY SMITH.

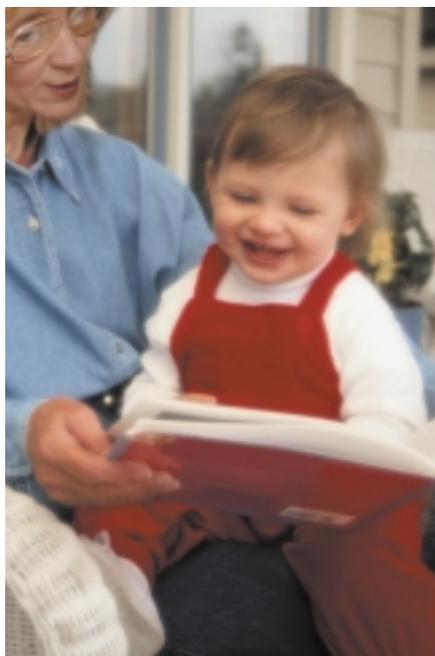
LICHFIELD: QED; 2001; Pb £8.00 (ISBN 1 898 87322 4)

REVIEWED BY Alison Garton

WHAT is developmental psychology? Is it a branch of psychology devoted to research designed to explain and predict the thoughts, behaviours and feelings of humans throughout the lifespan? Or should developmental psychology be advising parents about their children or adults about how to manage their lives and their relationships? Or should developmental psychology be directed at informing educational and health practices? These, and related questions, were those that went through my mind as I read these two books over the space of one weekend. They are an interesting juxtaposition in styles and potential audiences.

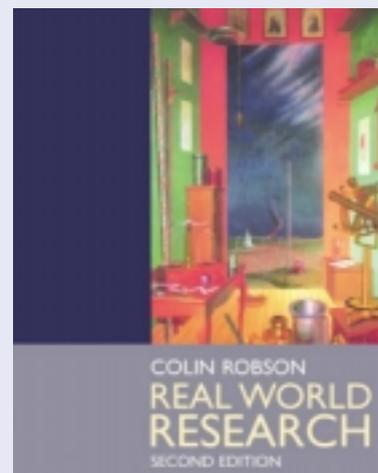
I was struck by the fact that neither book stated to whom it was directed. *Becoming Parents* is an elegant and well-written, if academic, text and would appear to be directed at psychologists. However the content would be intrinsically interesting for would-be parents and anyone concerned about the changing nature of family relationships before and after the birth of a child. It offers a snapshot of what to be aware of in the changing relationships with partner, friends and family when a child comes along. This is a well-thought-through research study that has important implications for how families can manage their own relationships and how the helping professions (such as psychologists) can assist when required.

The slim volume *Supporting the Literacy Needs of Children in the Early Years* would appear, on the other hand, to be directed at teachers in the early childhood years, since it offers a wealth of practical suggestions about how to improve literacy experiences (listening, speaking, reading and writing). However, this audience is not specified, and even worse, in my view, is the highly specific linking of



the content to the reception year in the English school system. The improvement of literacy is so important, its practical applications can be generalised to the early years in any school system. Some of the theoretical background is stated unquestioningly and is unsubstantiated (claims are not referenced in the usual way, even for texts directed at teachers and not developmental psychologists). For example, some of the language milestones are presented as 'fact' rather than given the status of our current knowledge and understanding about how language and literacy develop. This book could show how theory can influence education practice, if only it were explicitly stated and the audience specified.

■ Professor Alison Garton is at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia.



Pointing in the right direction

Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers (2nd edition)

COLIN ROBSON

OXFORD: BLACKWELL; 2002; Pb £18.99 (ISBN 0 631 21305 8); Hb £60.00 (ISBN 0 631 21304 X)

REVIEWED BY Cath Sullivan

HERE is a comprehensive and well-written book, which has a useful structure – with clear 'signposts' at the start of each chapter and summary boxes throughout. The contents are wide-ranging, covering both epistemology and practical issues, such as writing up research and generating research questions. This is a relatively progressive text – for example, it attempts to overcome a simplistic dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methods. In the chapter dealing with epistemology, a specific conceptualisation of critical realism is presented under the general heading of realism – which could lead to some confusion. Overall, this text would be useful for students completing undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, social science researchers and those doing practitioner research. This book will be especially appropriate for students or researchers who are going beyond experimental methods.

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