

Psychology from a positive perspective

Handbook of Positive Psychology

C.R. SNYDER & SHANE J. LOPEZ (Eds)

NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2002; Hb £75.00 (ISBN 0 195 13533 4)

REVIEWED BY P. Alex Linley

It is not often, if ever, that one is able to witness a scientific revolution. However, that privilege may have been allowed readers of the *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. With its publication, positive psychology has arrived, and the landscape of our discipline may have changed for ever.

Human strengths, happiness, positive emotions, wisdom, creativity, love, forgiveness, optimism, personal growth, humour (to name but a few) were traditionally distinct

research domains – far from central to psychological endeavours, if not viewed through the lens of psychopathology. However, with the advent of the *Handbook*, they have found themselves a new home. Within its 55 chapters, the *Handbook* has integrated an array of research traditions and taken the thing they all hold in common, but that traditionally they might have missed: their focus on the good things in life. With sections covering human strengths, general approaches

to psychology – cognitive-focused, self-based, interpersonal and biological – and specific approaches concerned with coping or particular populations and practice settings, there is little that the *Handbook* has not brought within its remit. One might suggest that more could have been made of European traditions in these areas, but this would increase the size and perhaps cost of a book already destined to be acquired mostly by libraries. Nevertheless, the *Handbook* should be considered essential reading for all those interested in positive psychology.

In my view the best is saved

till last. In discussing the future of the field, we are presented with an alluring view of the contributions that positive psychology can make to the promotion of human flourishing. As Snyder quotes a fellow passenger on a plane once saying to him: 'Positive psychology, that's a good way to spend your time.' Having read the *Handbook*, I can only agree, and urge others to do the same. The *Handbook* should be the primary reference for anyone who takes a positive approach to psychology.

■ P. Alex Linley is a doctoral student at the University of Warwick.

Towards inter-agency collaboration

The Solihull Approach: Open Learning Resource Pack

SOLIHULL PRIMARY CARE TRUST AND UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ENGLAND BIRMINGHAM: SCHOOL OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ENGLAND; 2001; RING BOUND £39.99

REVIEWED BY Shirley Sievwright

THIS is a very well-presented pack developed by and for health visitors and other professionals working in primary care settings with families who have children with sleeping, feeding, toileting and behavioural difficulties. The seven-section pack provides a nice overview of theory that underpins the Solihull Approach's holistic theoretical model that combines behaviour management with a psychotherapeutic techniques aimed at the family unit.

There is useful information on childhood emotional, physical and general development. The pack uses a combination of expert knowledge and real-life scenarios to inform and guide the user. Also included is a resource and assessment section, which also offers guidelines for professionals.

Questions, hints and reading references are dotted throughout, offering the reader the opportunity to reflect on their experience and read in more depth. Not only is this a very user-friendly resource but also offers the user the opportunity to gain academic credits at Level 3.

Solihull has managed to pull together a wide range of knowledge and expertise and structure it in such a way that facilitates a consistent method of intervention that will be useful in inter-agency collaboration.

■ Shirley Sievwright is a training officer at Ashworth Hospital.

Tracing the roots of personality disorder

Personality and Dangerousness: Genealogies of Antisocial Personality Disorder

DAVID McCALLUM

CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2001; Pb £14.95 (ISBN 0 521 00875 1)

REVIEWED BY Jane L. Ireland

WRITTEN by an Australian sociologist, *Personality and Dangerousness* meticulously outlines the development of antisocial personality disorder from its origins in the 1800s to the present day, making reference (although fleeting) to the more recent concept of 'dangerous and severe personality disorder'. Focusing primarily on the Australian legal system and psychiatric profession, the author argues that the development of this concept parallels psychiatric and psychological views of illness and treatment.

The main drawback of this book is its tendency to confuse concepts; for example,

'antisocial personality disorder' is often used synonymously with 'psychopathy'. Although related, these terms are not the same – not everyone with an antisocial personality disorder is psychopathic, making this an important distinction to make.

Overall, *Personality and Dangerousness* will be a compelling read for those interested in a detailed history of legal and psychiatric responses to such disorders.

■ Dr Jane L. Ireland is with Psychological Services, Ashworth Hospital Authority, and the Department of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire.

Talk about boys

Young Masculinities

STEPHEN FROSH, ANN PHOENIX & ROB PATTMAN

BASINGSTOKE: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2001;

Pb £16.99 (ISBN 0 333 77923 1)

REVIEWED BY Nigel Edley

THERE can be little doubt that this is a highly topical book. It has been well documented that there is something of a 'moral panic' going on regarding the state of young men in Britain – what with reports of rising levels of delinquency, suicide and educational underachievement. In the midst of this furore *Young Masculinities* appears as a calm and considered voice. By examining the ways that young men talk about themselves and their lives, it provides us with some valuable insights into the masculine condition. As if that

understood as something political rather than essential; it is a way of doing masculinity, not a failure of it.

For those interested in matters of theory, the book attempts a combination of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis – and it is here that I think it runs into trouble. Whilst they share a common interest in language and interpretation, these two theoretical approaches treat talk quite differently. Discourse analysts look directly at language to see what is being done or accomplished. Psychoanalysts, on the other hand, take a much more traditional line; they are not interested in language *per se*, but in what it can tell us about the mind behind the mouth. Consequently, when the authors understand the pervasiveness of homophobia in boys' discourse as reflecting its deep psychic roots, they are siding with psychoanalysis but against a discursive interpretation, which would see such talk more as a routine method of performing heterosexuality.

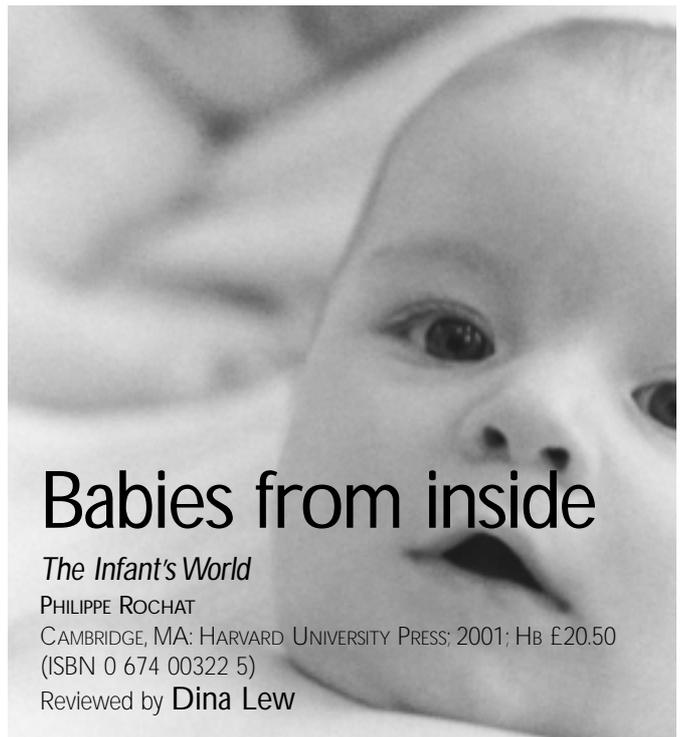
As it is, this problem hardly spoils the book (partly because it refrains from attempting a detailed theoretical synthesis). Instead, what one comes away with is a tremendously strong sense of the subtleties and complexities involved in the day-to-day maintenance of a gender identity. For that alone, it is well worth the price.

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■ *Dr Nigel Edley is a senior lecturer in social psychology at Nottingham Trent University.*

wasn't enough, along the way it also puts to bed one or two of the more popular (and pernicious) myths about men and boys.

One of its main challenges is to the idea that men cannot talk sensibly and sensitively about relationships. In no uncertain terms, this book demonstrates that they can (it's just that it depends on the circumstances). The authors point out that one of the things about 'relationships talk' is that it is readily coded as feminine (i.e. stuff women do). Hence, avoiding such talk can be a way of demonstrating (or, more properly, constructing) one's masculinity. Looked at this way, men's 'inability' to talk about their feelings becomes



Babies from inside

The Infant's World

PHILIPPE ROCHAT

CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2001; Hb £20.50

(ISBN 0 674 00322 5)

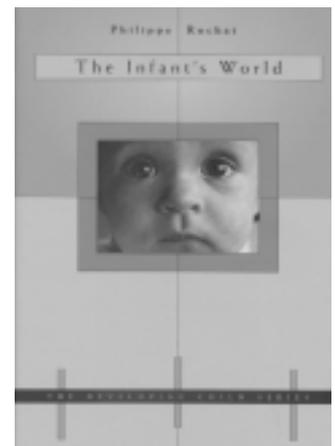
Reviewed by Dina Lew

IS there anybody who has not looked at a baby and wondered what the world was like from their point of view? Rochat has been brave enough to carry out the necessary exercise of the imagination, informed by over 15 years of experience in experimental infant research. I think he does so successfully.

These visits into the infant's head are one of the features I most liked about the book. To give one of many examples: 'In a world that oscillates between slow motion in a calm state and tense agitation in a crying state, newborns perceive and act directly, with no room for reflection and conscious simulation of what is going to happen next'.

This is a well-written, well-argued book, with a novel structure. The three big review sections forming the main body of the book are divided into the categories of self, objects and people. These areas cut across more conventional headings such as perceptual, cognitive and social development.

As Rochat warns in the preface, this book cannot be



used as a conventional textbook. It is too focused on the author's own (albeit ingenious) experiments. He does want the book to inspire and be thought-provoking, and in this he succeeds.

And what of the world of the infant? It is not the blooming, buzzing confusion of James, but neither is it our narratively structured, past- and future-focused internal experience. It is something we can only guess at, but Rochat guesses better than most.

■ *Dina Lew is at the Psychology Department, Lancaster University.*