

## Book Reviews

Welcome to the second round of book reviews for the *International Journal of Emotional Education*. In this edition we cover six very diverse texts, which include topics such as self-esteem, infant mental health, and child and youth well-being. Also in this edition we have been able to include our first set of reviews from ENSEC volunteers – many thanks to Mine, John, Geoff, Kathy, (and of course Michael and Sarah from the University of Manchester) for their contributions. I am in the process of collecting a new set of texts for review in the next edition, and as usual will email ENSEC members requesting volunteers to perform the reviews (don't forget, you get to keep the book by way of thanks for your help) in the near future. In the meantime, please enjoy the six excellent reviews below.

**Neil Humphrey, book reviews editor**

## ***1. Self Esteem - Across the Lifespan. Issues and Interventions***

**Author:** Mary Guidon  
**Publisher:** Routledge  
**Year of Publication:** 2010  
**ISBN: 978-0-415-99699-0**

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When reading, researching, teaching, working with, listening to children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties it is not very long before the term self esteem appears. Usually it is accompanied by injunctions such as the child's self-esteem needs to be enhanced, developed, increased or protected. Often the 'esteem' part is replaced by 'concept' and I've lost count of the times professionals from all agencies have written or remarked about a child that his or her self-esteem is low. Sadly all too often in the past knowing something of the child concerned I have nodded sagely and agreed! And therein lies the problem, we all think we know what we mean when we make and concur with that judgement but do we have an understanding of what self-esteem actually is?

Mary Guidon's edited volume sets out to explore the notion of self-esteem and describes intervention strategies which have been successful across the lifespan. Though all the authors write from an 'American' perspective there is a wealth of information which crosses cultural barriers. The bulk of the book covers childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Each chapter is separately referenced and there is a useful appendix on further resources. Each chapter in the central sections ends with a case study relevant to theme of the chapter. I found these particularly useful as they illuminated issues raised within the chapter.

Guidon's opening chapter on 'what is self esteem' and her second contribution. 'what do we know about self-esteem interventions' should become seminal reading for any one who believes that self esteem is important and wishes both to understand the concept and the controversies it engenders.

The chapters which follow are somewhat eclectic in coverage and though written by experts within each area, are only loosely associated with each other. The reader is left wondering why the different subjects are there; no coherent argument is found for example for the juxtaposition of 'Young Women and Self Esteem' with 'Self-esteem and Sexuality' with Alcohol and Other Drug Use' to make up a section entitled Young Adulthood. Is this all that troubles young adults?

My recommendation would be to share and use this book as a reference volume and make it available in a professional library. Sadly except for the first two chapters I cannot see that it will be of much use unless you are particularly interested in one of the areas in the other eighteen chapters.

***John Visser***

*Associate Professor  
University of Birmingham*

## **2. Assessing Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Research and Application (The Springer Series on Human Exceptionality)**

**Editors:** Con Stough, Donald Saklofske & James Parker  
**Publisher:** Springer  
**ISBN 978-0-387-88369-4**

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One may argue that writing a text about Emotional Intelligence (EI) is ultimately an exercise in compromise. Given the diverse and often controversial nature of the field, there must be a decision as to the intended audience (academic, practitioner or public), as well as the need to address the increasingly substantial writings in regards to EI theory, measurement, and arena of application (e.g. education, business, everyday life)

In the case of “Assessing Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Research and Application”, it is evident from the title that the authors have, in part, rejected the notion of compromise, and have attempted an ambitious text with the aim of providing an overview of relevant writing in the field. The extent to which the authors have achieved this goal is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The text is split into sections, namely “*Theoretical Thoughts on EI*”, “*Research Measures of EI*”, “*Applying EI Research*” and “*New Direction and Conclusions*”. As is typical with books aimed an exclusively academic market, each chapter represents an individual paper and each contribution is treated as a separate entity. The disadvantage this brings is that there is substantial repetition in the opening paragraphs of each – e.g. the origins of EI, the introduction of Goleman’s text, subsequent proliferation and diversification of models and so on.

That said, there are several recommendations in regards to the individual contributions. The second chapter of the text, “*Research Measures of EI*” is an excellent review of the individual tools currently available, and is framed nicely by an article discussing the details of psychometrics. Although more details on individual tools can be found in published papers, this section of the book reviews the major tools with proficient detail, including the MSCEIT, EQi and EQi-YV, the TEIQue, and the Assessing Emotions Scale. There appears a missed opportunity to review the overall field, perhaps providing a list of the lesser known or related tools, but these chapters are a strength of the overall text.

As indicated in the introduction of the review, there is a compromise to pay for when dealing which such an expansive topic and it appears the detail provided in the first third of the book is at the expense of providing a similar united theme in the other sections. The research applications individually are engaging papers, but provide a snapshot or case-basis for discussing EI, rather than offering detail in one particular area, and at times feel like an introduction the topic rather than getting to the critical detail. Details in regard to the theory(s) of EI are incomplete, and serve as an introduction rather than a significant component to the text. It should be noted that this is not a criticism of the various authors, rather a limitation of books of this nature.

In summary, the technical detail (especially in regards to tool construction) and lack of detail in some current controversies in this field (e.g. Goleman’s contributions) limits this text to academics with a particular interest in this field who will supplement this text with similar readings. There is enough engaging material with some interesting additions to the field (e.g. EI in basketball) to interest academics, and the measurement section is particularly pleasing. However, the discreet nature of the papers and the scope this text attempts to cover means this book is not as comprehensive as the title may suggest.

*Michael Wigelsworth*

*SEAL Researcher*

*University of Manchester*

### **3. Key Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being: Completing the Picture**

**Editor:** Brett Brown  
**Publisher:** Lawrence Erlbaum Associates  
**Year of Publication:** 2008  
**ISBN-13 978 0 8058 6313 0**

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The 'measurement' of well-being in children and young people through social indicators across a range of domains has been developing and growing in sophistication since the 1960s. 'Key Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being' presents a collection of updated papers from a 2001 conference focusing on the development, dissemination and application of key social indicators of child and youth well-being, that Land et al (in chapter 14) argue are increasingly used to describe the conditions for children, monitor child outcomes and set goals for children's well-being.

In Parts I and II the contributors critically evaluate key indicators in the areas of health and education. In Part III the chapters that discuss social and emotional development indicators would be of particular interest to IJEE readers, focusing respectively on middle childhood, adolescence and young adult years. Part IV contextualizes development indicators through analysis of the family environment, the peer environment and school and community. Part V discusses the practical applications of social indicators as tools to inspire change and promote policy development; and Part VI looks at the complexities of developing composite index of child well-being, focusing particularly on the development of the Child Well-Being Index (CWI).

Each chapter, representing as they do individual contributions to what must have been a highly motivating conference, are designed to 'stand alone' mostly including their own conceptual definitions of key indicators, identification where possible of reliable and valid measurement tools and suggestions as to how further research in the area. The contributors are exclusively researchers in the field of child and youth well-being located in American Universities and Organizations; so colleagues working outside of the United States of America would find the theoretical base of great interest but would have to in many instances locate equivalent studies and indicators in their own national settings.

Aimed at policy makers, practitioners, researchers and academics in the social indicators field and associated disciplines; this book is accessible, logically presented and it is easy to navigate around the relevant sections. A clear introductory section by the editor introduces some of the key themes that run through the book; the need to develop more commonality across disciplines, the need for more culturally sensitive indicators and a greater emphasis on the development of indicators of positive well-being.

*Kathy Evans*

*Lecturer in Education*

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## ***4. Behavioural, Social, and Emotional Assessment of Children and Adolescents (Third Edition)***

**Author:** Kenneth W Merrell  
**Publisher:** Laurence Erlbaum Associates  
**Year of Publication:** 2008  
**ISBN:** 978-0-8058-5370-4 (Hardcover)

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The third edition of this already highly acclaimed book further establishes Merrell's text as a seminal reference work pertaining to the behavioural, social and emotional assessment of children and adolescents. Despite its ambitious scope, this is an accomplished text; writing in a succinct, accessible manner Merrell presents a critical overview of both method and process, whilst emphasising key issues and current trends, to expertly guide the reader through this evolving arena. The narrative is further enhanced through the organisational structure of the book; each section is presented in an engaging yet logical format to facilitate quick and easy access to guidance concerning specific topics of interest. Consequently, this book will have continued wide appeal to students, researchers and practitioners working within clinical, educational and allied fields.

The book is demarcated into two major sections. Part one comprises eight chapters and provides the reader with a general grounding in 'global' assessment issues. For instance, the first chapter 'foundations of assessment' outlines key concepts, issues and proposals for 'best practice' in assessment whilst emphasising the importance of theoretical orientation in guiding the overall process. The philosophical underpinnings of assessment are considered before Merrell introduces the reader to a data-orientated problem solving model for assessment (multi-method, multi-source, multi-setting) alongside a health focussed approach to population-based screening and intervention (triangle of support model). The chapter closes with discussion of various legal and ethical issues relevant to assessment, which, despite being tailored to a US audience (reflecting US policy developments), nevertheless highlights important generalised issues relating to informed consent, confidentiality and test validity. Chapter two is concerned with the role of classification in the assessment process; here description of current approaches (the universally used DSM & behavioural dimensions approach) is included and also commentary concerning recent developments in linking classification to assessment (multiple-gating approach). These initial chapters lay the foundations for the remainder of the book and should be considered essential reading to appreciate the theoretical perspectives adopted by Merrell which permeate later discussion of disorder and associated empirical research.

The remaining six chapters within this preliminary section provide a coherent overview of the major approaches to assessment: direct behavioural observation; behavioural rating scales; interviews; sociometrics; self-report; projective-expressive techniques. Each chapter includes an introduction to the method (with reference to exemplar general purpose tests), identifies current challenges and closes with a useful summary section incorporating 'review questions' to self-check current understanding & consolidate learning. Part two sees a move away from general issues to the assessment of specific problems, competencies and populations (e.g. externalising/internalising problems, social skills/peer relations). As the core focus is on assessment, disorder-based aetiological discussion is relatively superficial, but is still sufficient to give the reader a flavour of the main points of contention & current perspectives within each field of research.

Presented with critical clarity and encapsulated within a structurally appealing, 'digestible' framework, Merrell's text represents an excellent balance between theory, method and practical guidance. With this revised edition providing enhanced and additive material in light of updates to the assessment tools reviewed, empirical sources and advice regarding cultural diversity, this book is essential reading for anyone with an interest in exploring the behavioural, social and emotional functioning of young people.

***Sarah Davis***

*Teaching Fellow in Psychology of Education  
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## **5. Keeping the Baby in Mind: Infant Mental Health in Practice**

**Author:** Jane Barlow & P.O. Svanberg

**Publisher:** Routledge

**Year of Publication:** 2009

**ISBN: 978 0 415 44298 5**

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Infant mental health has not been considered as a topic until relatively recently. In this sense, “Keeping the Baby in Mind: Infant Mental Health in Practice” is a good addition to the research and practice area that has limited resources at present. The editors of the book, Jane Barlow and P.O. Svanberg, present a good range of programs in the area of infant mental health. The book is divided to three main parts: universal, targeted and indicated approaches, which give a good map to the reader to understand which programs are for everyone and which ones are specific to a group of families.

There are two key terms that have been brought up in different places in the book: (a) relationships, (b) evidence-based practice. The authors of the chapters have given a message to the reader that the relationships among the partners in the system (i.e., mother-father, kinships, infant, the person who carries the program) are important. Related to this, the program by itself may not be the only factor to create good results. Families need to be supported by the whole system. This view probably will help the reader to consider the fact that application of the programs is not the aim but the medium to reach the outcome: creating good relationships in the system that everyone trusts in each other. In relation to evidence-based practice, a good balance has been achieved between research, case studies, and quotes of the participants who have attended the various programs. Also, it seems that authors paid special attention to theoretically ground their practice. In the beginning of each chapter some theoretical backgrounds on which their practice or program have been built were stated.

Every chapter has ‘internet links/websites’ at the end and some have training sites that help the reader obtain more information about the programs. The chapters are concise and laid out in an organized and systematic manner.. The language used in the book was very clear and easy to follow, with very little jargon used. All these features made the book suitable for the target group of the book, who are mainly practitioners.

Although on the first chapter’s first page, the editors stated that they will examine the topic internationally, the opening sentence of the chapter is “it is not easy being a baby in the hurried, post-industrial world of twenty-first century in Britain” (p.1). It is understandable that the focus of the book is to present the practices in Britain but the living conditions of the world’s babies might have been introduced in the beginning. But still, the book accomplishes the task of providing cases and practical examples of UK’s programs. And this book will hopefully help practitioners and policy makers as a guide to improve their services in other countries.

*Mine Gol-Guven*

*Bogazici University,*

*Istanbul, Turkey*

## **6. Promoting Emotional Education: Engaging Children and Young People with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.**

**Editors:** Carmel Cefai and Paul Cooper

**Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

**Year of Publication:** 2009

**ISBN: 978 1 84310 996 9**

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This is an important book which brings together a range of research, principally from the UK and Malta, in helping the reader to understand the nature of SEBD, what youngsters deemed to have SEBD have to say about their experiences in school and elsewhere, and approaches which have been taken in working with such youngsters.

The first half of the book reports from various projects looking to uncover the voice of youngsters deemed to have SEBD. As the authors are keen to point out, this does not mean necessarily that everything they have to say must be acted upon, but their insights certainly give pause for thought and are not at all necessarily what one might have expected. Whilst evidence is given that some boys in exclusion units would have preferred to stay in mainstream, a number of the studies uncovered a level of resentment about the way they are treated, including the perception that the curriculum offered is disjointed and not addressed at their interests or needs.

A range of programmes are considered, including training youngsters to act as peer helpers, the implementation of personal and social development lessons in Maltese schools, circle time and nurture group. Perhaps somewhat predictably, the associated research is almost entirely positive about the impact of such programmes, although there are some caveats, including incidences of trained peer helpers, particularly boys, themselves being bullied, and the sense that time spent in nurture groups is time spent away from the conventional curriculum.

The authors are keen to emphasise the importance of emotional security as a necessity for meaningful learning to take place, with a tension in both the UK and Malta in devoting the time and effort required in ensuring this against demands for youngsters to be achieving higher and higher examination grades. I very much hope that all stakeholders in education engage with the issues this book presents, particularly in emphasizing the need to listen to youngsters themselves and to work constructively and respectfully with youngsters deemed to have SEBD.

*Geoff Tennant*

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