
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Sperling, M. B. & Berman, W. H. (1994). *Attachment in adults: clinical and developmental perspectives*. New York: The Guilford Press. 360 pp.

Reviewed by: John J. Mitchell, University of Alberta.

A nearly universal feature of books of readings is their uneven quality; their mixture of the contemporary and the historical, the theoretical and the empirical, the frightfully broad and the paralyzingly narrow. What we often end up with in a book of readings are a few excellent articles to which we refer time and again, and a larger collection of mundane meanderings we never bother with again. Happily, *Attachment in Adults* does not seem to fit this trend. The articles in this book are well-written and briskly paced; the research is current and methodologically sound, and the theory is readable and practical. The cast of contributors Michael Sperling (Farleigh Dickinson University) and William Berman (Fordham University) have assembled is first-rate. In sum, high marks for Sperling, Berman and Guilford Press.

Flow and direction. This book is divided into three segments: (1) conceptual and methodological perspectives, with an emphasis on the measurement and assessment of attachment behaviours; (2) life-span developmental perspectives (which contains a superb chapter on adolescent attachment by Joanna Batgos and Bonnie Leadbeater); and, (3) clinical perspectives, which links pathological outcomes to failures in the attachment process. These segments are well-structured and each of them contains a solid cadre of articles. For the reader seeking an introduction to the field of attachment theory and research, Berman and Sperling's opening essay is worth the price of the book.

Strengths. Each of the articles demonstrate a richness of scholarship and a tightness of writing which could serve as a high standard for compendiums, anthologies and, collected essays. The experienced scholar and the curious neophyte will both be enriched by this collection of essays and research reports. The chapters, however, are not easy reading; none of the authors pander to mental habits eroded by, or to attention spans diluted by, the fast-food mentality of pop psychology. This, unto itself, elicited my applause.

Each of the authors apply the concept of attachment to different human connections across the life span. Some of them focus on theoretical issues, others on empirical verification, others on definitional constructs; but all of the contributors are connected by a cluster of shared assumptions about how we humans attach to one another. The intellectual mystery they are chipping away at is fundamental to the entirety of human psychology, and as such is completely worthy of their commitment and our concern.

Weaknesses. Like all theoretical formulations grounded in unverifiable starting points, it takes a bit of forgiveness for the conclusions of attachment

theory to be completely taken to heart. I, for one, find their assumptions defensible and, in most instances, believable; so forgiveness is a bit easier for me than for the real doubting Thomases. But, as Steve Duck of the University of Iowa pointed out: "Attachment theory is a very hot topic," and in today's academic market this heat encourages even the most scholarly to exaggerate the power (and the coherence) of their pet theories. Consider what Robert Weiss reports in the Foreword: "*The ability of children . . . to display initiative and independence, is largely dependent on the children's having learned to value themselves as the deserving recipients of their parent's caring attentiveness.*" He seems completely impervious to an opposite, but equally valid, fact of childhood survival: some children display considerable initiative and heroic independence without having experienced anything in their formative years that even minimally resembles "caring attentiveness" from their parent(s).

The tendency of these investigators to over-estimate the role of early childhood attachments is a bit unnerving, yet, at the same time, they have the intellectual candor to admit that empirical verification for their claims remains, at the moment, rather minimal. In this collection of articles the drift toward the glitzy and spectacular is not a dominant trend, but, nevertheless, it is there. The use of attachment theory to explain how "people establish and maintain the primary emotional partnerships in adult life"; how attachment style "affects not only anticipations of success in courtship, but also tendencies toward jealousy and tendencies toward romantic obsession" can tax the patience of anyone endowed with even a morsel of healthy skepticism. Everyone knows (or should know) that attachment theory is, in all likelihood, no better and no worse than most of its competitors when it comes to predicting the behaviour of *healthy* people. Individuals whose attachments and relationships are so damaged that they need clinical assistance, are, of course, a different story. Upliftingly, the contributors to this volume are working diligently on both theoretical and empirical support for the vital premises of attachment theory. For believers and skeptics alike, this is good news.

Wilkes, T. C. R., Belsher, Gayle, Rush, A. John, Frank, Ellen & Associates. (1994). *Cognitive Therapy for Depressed Adolescents*. New York and London: The Guilford Press. 396 pp., \$55.95 CDN.

Reviewed by: Alan Kenworthy, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Offered as a manual for the use of cognitive therapy in the treatment of depressed adolescents, based on Aaron Beck's cognitive therapy for depression in adults, this book is intended for qualified psychotherapists, experienced in cognitive therapy. It is oriented to the out-patient treatment of depressed adolescents but not those with psychotic or bipolar depression.

The book has fifteen chapters, organized in six parts, which were written by nine authors, either singly or in teams of two or three. The first two parts deal with the theoretical and practical issues involved in therapy with