

### **Affect Dysregulation and Disorders of the Self.**

Allan N. Schore. New York: W. W. Norton & Company ([www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com)). 2003, 300 pp., \$45.00 (hardcover).

The first two chapters of this compilation of scholarly essays were gripping for me. Dr. Allan Schore, a psychotherapist and neuroscientist with a particular interest in attachment and brain development, provides the reader with a coherent explanation of the current understanding of the neurobiology of brain development during the first two years of life, and his theory of how attachment produces structural changes in the brain that ultimately lead to the capacity to regulate affect. Dr. Schore presents a substantial amount of interesting evidence from contemporary neuroscience to further a model that expands upon Bowlby's original theories of attachment, and provides structural evidence for developmental changes occurring in infant brains.

Dr. Schore's initial volume, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self*, proposed a model for self and affect regulation. This companion volume reviews this model and expands it into the origin of psychopathology, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder, and the potential for violence. It includes eight previously published essays and some new material.

The first half of the book focuses on developmental affective neuroscience, and was, for me, the most valuable reading. I found myself watching mothers and infants with a new eye, and thought frequently about the experience of parenting my daughter (and worrying, just a little) as a result of the finely detailed descriptions of the neural development that accompanies attachment and how, specifically, adequate affect regulation develops from right orbitofrontal cortical maturity elicited via a healthy attachment bond. It was thrilling to me to catch up with how much we **do** know about how brains develop and how many of the prior theories about infant psychological development which were developed by direct observation have now been furthered by imaging and neuroscience. Dr. Schore focuses on the early origins of personality disorders and the risk for future post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly as regards the effects of trauma and neglect, but does not address the development of other severe psychopathological states.

The book raised some questions for me. First, many of the models evidenced by the author are theories built on theories. It is easy for the reader, given the evidence presented and the strength of Dr. Schore's writing to assume that we have facts on our hands. There are very clear explanations of changes in brain architecture that arise from neurochemical changes – but whether defects in the attachment bond with a caregiver actually produce these changes and subsequent psychopathology is still a question to be resolved. The book provides a compelling review of infant brain development as it relates to the socialization of the infant, but repeatedly states that the models advanced are “heuristic proposals that can be evaluated by experimental and clinical research”.

As a clinician who has an interest in dialectical behavior therapy, I found the chapters on borderline disorders and affect dysregulation particularly interesting. My reservations about the second half of the book are that it is extremely repetitive, with entire sections repeated several times. In addition, nearly 100 pages of the book are devoted to permissions, references, and the index. Although I appreciate the depth of scholarship, the cost of the book, given the repetition and the exhaustive references and the availability of many of the essays elsewhere may give some clinicians pause. Those individuals interested in neuroscientific correlates of early life

experience and the development of psychopathological states, will find this valuable and interesting reading.

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