

sidedness is considered. The emphasis is on manual preference as this aspect comprises the bulk of the research carried out over the years. The major genetic, biological and environmental theories are discussed. A developmental perspective is emphasized. In Chapter 3 the review of the literature initially considers the absence of developmental models in which an understanding of emerging brain and behaviour relationships can take place. It is emphasized that a neuropsychological-neurodevelopmental model does not imply brain damage but rather a framework in which normal brain structure /function development can be understood. A number of assumptions have been made regarding brain and behaviour relationships in children and these have been largely based on studies with adult samples. Although it must be conceded that research with adults has been useful in that a number of hypotheses concerning neurodevelopment have been generated, these assumptions have obscured primary differences not least of which is the process of change in children (Hynd & Willis, 1988). In particular the three most influential sources of theory are highlighted, Luria's hierarchical theory of functional systems, Information Processing theory (which has as a basis the Luria-Das brain anterior-posterior processing hypothesis) and Cerebral Lateralization theory. It is the latter two frameworks that will form the focus of theoretical discussion in this research. Although both theories are based in neuropsychological theory, the assessment tools and approaches emanating from both perspectives differ. The discussion focuses on the major differences, the strengths and weaknesses and the appropriateness of each instrument for the area explored in the current study.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the methods and design of the study. The tasks employed, the categories of lateral and mental behaviours and the proposed analysis of the data are explained. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the results of the lateral preferences and mental processing tasks. Each of these chapters contains separate discussions related to the respective findings.

There is also the need to identify and understand the effects of background issues and environmental factors which may contribute to risks in neurodevelopment. Indeed as Goldstein (1981) has pointed out where problems arise the benefits of intervention are highest where identification has been swift and early. With this aspect in mind, Chapter 7 explores these factors. The chapter contains a literature review and includes detailed background information. This information is linked to and highly pertinent to the findings in Chapters 5 and 6.

In Chapter 8, the results are considered and reflected on. The discussion reviews the findings within the conceptual framework adopted. In addition the integration of cognitive and socioeconomic findings are discussed in the light of the children's performance and developmental trends.

Longitudinal studies of developmental processes generate large amounts of data. Manageability of such a project can only be achieved by staying within the stated areas. It is thus tempting for any researcher to increase the amount of information contained in a project such as the current one by, for example, following up peripheral aspects of the data collected or even by increasing the period of follow-up. In the case of the current sample the first year of schooling might have elicited more information. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the focus on the period before school may provide a glimpse into an important slice of development within a crucial period. The collection of data is ongoing and will continue after the children's first years at school.

Author: Jansen, Carmel Patricia.

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