

# Psychology in the information age

Although the internet has its roots in the early 1960s, it only emerged as a powerful, popular, user-friendly communications system in the 1990s when it became more available to individuals not affiliated with military, government, research or academic organisations. The internet provides a wealth of resources and an immense amount of information on almost any subject imaginable. Yet, to date, relatively little is known about how people behave in cyberspace, despite the fact that over one billion people use the internet globally. Since the advent of the internet revolution, we have witnessed alarming demonstrations of its power, scope and accessibility, particularly when used by those with darker motives such as terrorists, sexual offenders and criminals.



Adam Joinson, Katelyn McKenna, Tom Postmes & Ulf-Dietrich Reips (Eds.)

*The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology* brings together the findings of individuals with specific

expertise in the field of internet psychology. The text begins to tackle what is it about the unique cyberspace environment that might cause people to behave in ways they might never have considered in the outside world. The various chapters seek to establish how the internet environment changes the way we think, behave and take responsibility. This pivotal work questions our existing assumptions about what it means to be a social being. For instance, if we can talk, flirt, meet people and fall in love online, this challenges many of psychology's theories that intimacy or understanding requires physical co-presence.

Although still in its infancy, the area of internet psychology is growing at an unparalleled pace. The 31 chapters encompassed in this seminal text cover well-studied areas of investigation, such as social identity theory, computer-mediated communication and virtual communities. There are also chapters on wider topics, such as deception and misrepresentation, attitude change and persuasion online, internet addiction, online relationships, privacy and trust, health and leisure use of the internet, and the nature of interactivity. There is also an entire section covering the use of the internet as a research tool, including qualitative and quantitative methods, online survey design, personality testing, ethics and technological and design issues.

This book is a clear, concise, comprehensive and well-written text. It will surely be an essential resource for anyone interested in the psychological aspects of internet use, or planning to conduct research using the internet.

Oxford University Press; 2007; Hb £49.95

Reviewed by Dr Alison White

who is a clinical psychologist working at Llanarth Court Hospital, Monmouthshire



## Kick starting a new renaissance?

*Creative Intelligence and Self-Liberation*  
Ted Falconar

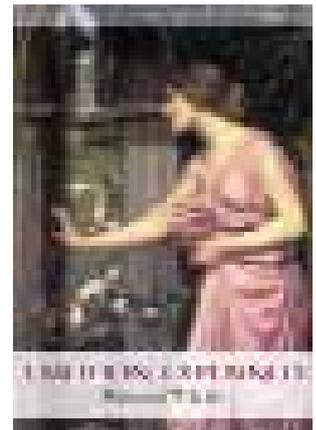
This book aims to look at how individuals can tap into their creative energy and how they can make it part of their everyday lives rather than being an occasional experience. It promises a lot – from the outset the front cover boasts that the ideas inside it are so earth-shatteringly new and revolutionary that it can help us all become Einsteins and kick start a second renaissance (which would be a re-renaissance?)

Big claims to make, but did it deliver?... Sadly no, and although it did have a few interesting ideas, these are repeated endlessly throughout the book. Sometimes it seemed that entire pages repeated themselves word for word from one chapter to the next and that arguments that should really have been taken deeper were only given a cursory glance. So, unfortunately, the subject material is let down by the writing style.

On the whole I feel that the most useful part of the book for anyone interested in this area would be the bibliography, which hopefully can lead to some slightly more interesting and coherent reading matter.

Crown House; 2007; Pb £12.99

Reviewed by Daniel Holmes



## The how and why

*Emotion Explained*  
Edmund T. Rolls

Professor Rolls has provided us with a detailed account of both the 'how' and the 'why' of emotions. I found the book had a fairly technical approach, appearing to be aimed at readers who are studying or working in neuroscience or cognitive psychology.

Rolls proposes a theory of emotion in which an emotional response is experienced as a result of an encounter with a rewarding or punishing stimulus. The theory is refined, and more complex emotions, such as guilt, are explained within its framework. Rolls also links motivation into the theory, by talking about the drive to do work to achieve a goal that will result in a particular emotion being felt or avoided (e.g. fear).

The book goes a step further in explaining the functions of emotion, including why we have evolved to feel emotion in the way we do; arguing that emotions guide behaviour and the goals of behaviour are defined by our genes. This allows for individual differences as there are different learned associations in different people, but the ultimate goals (e.g. health, fitness, social attachments) are common to all.

I would have liked more on when emotion and its underlying mechanisms are less adaptive, such as in disorders like depression. However, overall it was an interesting and detailed book.

Oxford University Press; 2007; Pb £24.95

Reviewed by Jess Chiappella



### Reflections on mental health care

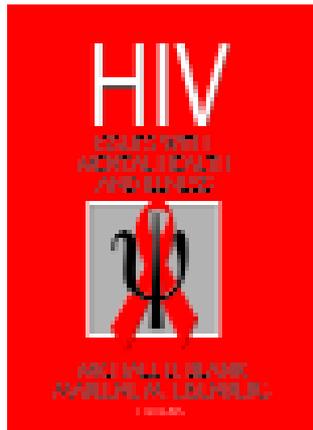
**Experiences of Mental Health In-patient Care**  
Mark Hardcastle, David Kennard, Sheila Grandison & Leonard Fagin (Eds.)

Service user/carer involvement in mental health care and research is a growing presence in today's NHS. This book makes a valuable contribution by providing a skilfully edited collection of individual perspectives without repackaging them into a prescriptive set of dos and don'ts, and without complicating or distorting the main focus. I found it sufficiently engaging to read continuously through, but one could also 'dip into' it for reference.

A wide range of issues – including ward boredom, physical restraint and negotiating sexual relationships – are addressed in frank accounts by service users, and commented upon by professionals. Professionals also reveal their own apprehensions, which in turn are countered by service users and carers. A chapter on the general history of UK inpatient mental health care also supplies a useful context to existing policies.

The book demonstrates successful collaboration and reflective practice among its contributors. It does not solely reflect a clinical agenda, but highlights other non-clinical contexts that are equally important to patients and professionals alike.

! Routledge; 2007; Pb £18.99  
Reviewed by Dr Sally Sargeant



### One for researchers

**HIV: Issues with Mental Health and Illness**  
Michael B. Blank & Marlene M. Eisenberg (Eds.)

The title and the glowing comments from various reviewers on the back cover led me to believe this would be a useful, up-to-date review of psychological issues in HIV/AIDS – just what I needed as a clinician starting work in sexual health. In fact, this book is essentially a special issue of the *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, particularly focusing on the increased risk of HIV infection among people with serious mental illness, and associated community prevention issues.

The book comprises a collection of research articles, firmly in the tradition of empirical, quantitative psychology – lashings of multivariate statistics establishing numerical relationships between data drawn largely from self-report questionnaires bearing little relation to the real world. It may be of use to those researching similar topics in similar ways, but was of little use to me.

Style and methodology notwithstanding, however, this book is to be commended for its sentiments – increased HIV rates among people with serious mental illness are of course a concern, and closer links between mental and sexual health services are to be encouraged.

! Haworth Press; 2007; Pb £9.75  
Reviewed by Rob Whittaker



### A timely guide

**The Anxious Brain: The Neurobiological Basis of Anxiety Disorder and How to Effectively Treat Them**  
Margaret Wehrenberg & Steven M. Prinz

There is a singularly important point about this book, that in the last decade, research into the complexity of the brain has provided extensive information that mental disorders develop from the complex interaction of neurobiology and life's experiences.

As advances in understanding brain structure and functions has changed how we look at behaviour, the question arises, how do we educate ourselves about such sophisticated work, without being directly involved in neurophysiology; and apply it with clients? Therapists must benefit from understanding how anxiety is generated in the brain, how it becomes panic, or excessive worry, and ultimately how the brain re-establishes the

neurochemical balance that is the beginning of recovery.

*The Anxious Brain* is a timely clinical guide. The Office for National Statistics estimates that 4.7 per cent of adults experience generalised anxiety disorders. Medication, once considered the first line of treatment, is losing public favour as clients realise their symptoms return when they stop using the drugs. Increasing understanding of the brain offers clinicians a new and expanding set of resources that go well beyond pharmacological treatments.

The authors make a convincing case that knowledge of the neurological basis of anxiety disorders can greatly improve the effectiveness of treatment. Any practitioner who works with anxious clients will want to have this comprehensive book.

! W. W. Norton & Co.; 2007;  
Hb £19.99

Reviewed by Ian Clancy

just in

**Stalking** Pinals, D.A. (Ed.)  
**Cognition and Emotion (2nd edn)** Power, M. & Dalgleish, T.  
**The Psychology of Physical Attraction** Swami, V. & Furnham, A.  
**Psychology and Crime** Pakes, F. & Winstone, J.  
**Freud's Art: Psychoanalysis Retold** Sayers, J.  
**The Handbook of Clinical Adult Psychology (3rd edn)** Lindsay, S. & Powell, G. (Eds.)  
**The Expert Witness (3rd edn)** Bond, C. et al.  
**Women and Leadership** Chin, J.L. et al. (Eds.)  
**Assessing Sex Offenders (2nd edn)** Campbell, T.W.  
**In Order to Learn: How the Sequence of Topics Influences Learning** Anderson, J.R.

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