

## A revolutionary lens

These (roughly) 250 pages of subversion were long overdue, like red graffiti on the pristine white walls of the psy-professions (and I am not referring to or judging the book by its cover!). There is no respite from Parker's revolutionary

fervour, and, interestingly, its targets include but go beyond the predictable – like the experimental paradigm, or psychology's anxiety to be accepted as a 'proper' science or, just to name a few more 'usual suspects', the psychiatric machinery tout court, and the classist assumptions underlying the 'talking cures'.

The genealogy of how collective action (unless

initiated and sanitised by psychologists) has been constructed as deviant so that psychology could help shore up instead of changing the status quo is one of the high points of the book. The individual who, Parker argues, 'might be tempted into striking up a relationship with others' is discouraged by mainstream psychology, always on hand to point out the dangers by means of pathologising labels, such as 'group think', 'deindividuation', 'diffusion of responsibility' – and to help define what appropriate, 'normal' behaviour should be. Thus, Milgram's experiments on obedience and Zimbardo's prison experiment are linked in textbooks and in the popular imagination 'precisely because one gives sense to the other, the sense that social behaviour is bad for you and for others'. The documented fact that many participants in the obedience experiments refused to comply is usually downplayed, while Zimbardo's study

did not allow for the pocket of leeway to organise collective action people would have in the real world, 'in order to drum home the miserable message about the power of social roles over the individual'.

Critical psychology does not escape the revolutionary lens (or mill, if you prefer): Parker acknowledges that some radical perspectives have been introduced into psychology, but 'critical psychology' has also meant, at best, merely a new 'subdiscipline', with the danger of creating a new orthodoxy; and, at worst, a race to the latest and trendiest 'theory' to cause ripples in mainstream psychology, but in the manner of 'academic parlour games' of possibly little use to people. He is equally vociferous about the unwarranted equivalence of qualitative psychology with 'critical' and progressive, and about a 'reflexivity' that has moved away from its *raison d'être* – an acknowledgement of the researcher's position and values, to become a box-ticking exercise, a perfunctory nod to the confessional-box.

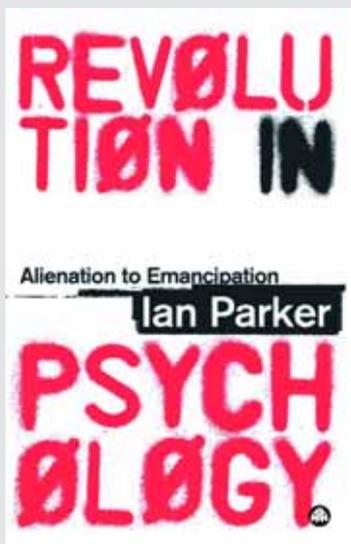
Some of these arguments are not new or are an extension of concerns put forward elsewhere by others, including Parker himself (e.g. in his 1989 book *The Crisis in Modern Social Psychology and How to End It*) – and, in line with the genealogical endeavour of the volume, Parker duly acknowledges in a series of scholarly and impressive footnotes the origins of these arguments and sometimes counterarguments and tributaries and offshoots, providing the reader with the opportunity to explore those avenues.

While his 1989 book, a predecessor in spirit, featured recommendations (however debatable and arguably amenable to deconstruction themselves), the reader may feel somewhat dismayed that here, when Parker has finished with the whole discipline of

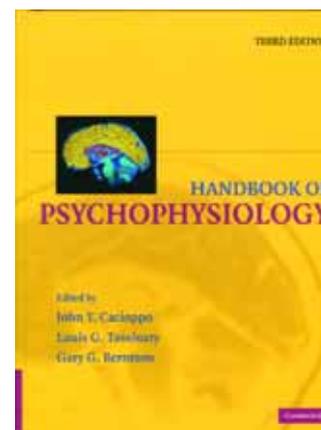
psychology, there is nothing but rubble and an angst-ridden 'whither now?' left, but just as well – a revolution can be instigated, not prescribed, and the same goes for its aftermath. So, school's out – (revolution-informed) reconstruction starts here!

Pluto Press; 2007; Pb £15.99

Reviewed by Toni Brennan  
who is in the Department of Psychology,  
University of Surrey



Revolution in Psychology  
Ian Parker



### Invaluable reference

Handbook of Psychophysiology (3rd edn)  
John T. Cacioppo, Louis G. Tassinary & Gary G. Berntson (Eds.)

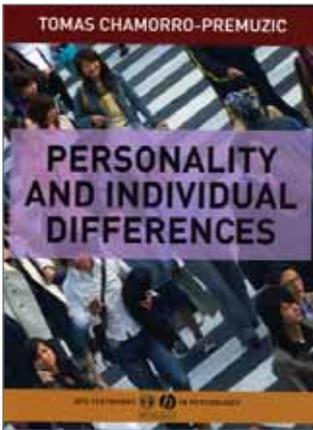
My cardiovascular physiology professor in graduate school used to put his own spin on a classic adage: 'A picture is worth a 1000 words, but a graph is worth 10,000 words.' When trying to convey psychophysiology, a publisher should adhere to this quote in that visual aids greatly enhance comprehension of biological concepts. Most of the authored chapters are well presented in both the writing and graphics. However, Cambridge only offers four pages in full colour out of 866 pages of text, which may disappoint those seeking a fully-featured reference.

A majority of the chapters are well referenced and balanced without excessive self-referencing. The book is quite comprehensive and dense with information that first presents systemic psychophysiology, organised by underlying systems, followed by thematic psychophysiology which is guided by research topics. Another strength is the final section that serves as a DIY of psychophysiology, which covers experimental design and data analysis.

Overall, the book is an essential, invaluable reference for psychophysiology researchers.

Cambridge University Press;  
2007; Hb £95.00

Reviewed by Andrew J. Wawrzyniak



### A welcome newcomer

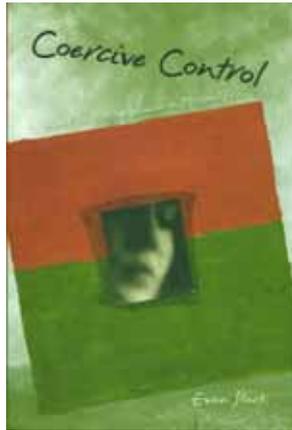
Personality and Individual Differences  
Tomás Chamorro-Premuzic

This book offers a wealth of up-to-date literature from the field of differential psychology. The textbook has a clear structure, combining rich detail with an easy-going style. Personality, intelligence, psychopathology, motivation and mood states, creativity, leadership and interests are all covered in detail within the book's 12 chapters, and each chapter is a self-contained learning framework.

The textbook is arranged in such a way as to aid the reader's learning at every opportunity. Each chapter is organised around core ideas outlined at the start, leading through to a detailed analysis of these ideas, using relevant and contemporary literature, and ending with a detailed summary. Furthermore, key readings are suggested for each topic to enthuse the reader to branch out and widen their knowledge base.

Chamorro-Premuzic's continued use of real-world issues and problems in order to highlight individual differences offers a fresh approach to the topic area. Thoughts and concepts are therefore grounded in reality and ultimately more accessible to the reader. A well-written informative text, this book is a welcome newcomer to the field of individual differences.

! BPS Blackwell; 2007; Pb £19.99  
Reviewed by Helen Henshaw



### Violence isn't the worst part

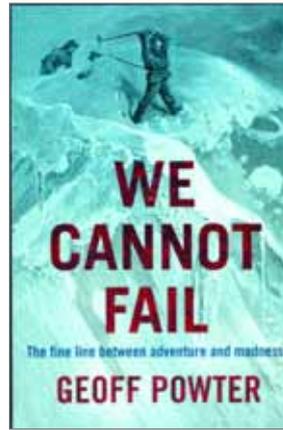
Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life  
Evan Stark

I was keen to review this book, having recently had to consider how best to address the risk of future domestic violence in men who are characteristically violent. I am glad that I have. The book claims that, despite the 'domestic violence revolution', owing to a focus on physical violence, interventions have failed to improve women's long-term safety in relationships. The central premise is that what men do to women is less important than what they prevent women from doing for themselves.

The emphasis on the processes that underpin coercive behaviours rather than the behaviour itself is appealing. The mix of research, case material and the author's compelling perspective make the book very readable and engaging. The book encapsulates core themes and provides a model that facilitates a greater understanding of the interpersonal processes involved.

*Coercive Control* would be relevant to anyone working therapeutically with adults, but particularly those working with the sorts of relationship situation the book so eloquently describes. It will certainly be influential in modifying my own clinical practice.

! Oxford University Press; 2007;  
Hb £19.99  
Reviewed by Kerry Beckley



### Fantastic failures

We Cannot Fail: The Fine Line Between Adventure and Madness  
Geoff Power

This book is a great read about fanatical mountaineers and explorers, all of whom died in their attempts or came to a sad end. Power gives detailed and sympathetic accounts of the lives and exploits of various ill-fated heroes or daredevils, including: Solomon Andr ee, who starved on a failed polar balloon trip; Donald Crowhurst who jumped overboard instead of facing up to his deceit; Jean Batten, the solo aviatrix who later died of a neglected wound; Claudio Corti, who led his companions to their death on the north face of the Eiger; and Guy Waterman and his sons, driven and disturbed climbers with unsatisfactory lives.

Power is a climber who writes engagingly about the mountains, and the pull of outdoor adventures. He is also a clinical psychologist, and discusses the drive to succeed that consumes some people. The level of that discussion is

aimed at the layperson, and psychologists would probably want some more detailed analysis of the personality defects or psychiatric disorders of his chosen characters. He tells us that Crowhurst was bipolar, and Wilson cyclothymic (low-grade bipolar); that the Watsonsons inherited mood swings and a self-destructive streak, and Johnny was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder.

Almost all the characters suffered the loss or absence of a father in childhood, and Power wonders whether they were searching for the lost male presence in their lives through their macho expeditions. The parental loss may also have caused chronic depression – though he states that the Watsonsons' moods were inherited. Some of the characters were just unlucky or eccentric, and others clearly mad, but at the end of the day 'the fine line between adventure and madness' remains undefined.

! Robinson; 2007; Pb £8.99  
Reviewed by Helen Ross

just in

**Safety at the Sharp End** Flin, R. et al.  
**The Psychology of Female Violence** Motz, A.  
**Music, Language and the Brain** Patel, A.D.  
**Imaginative Minds** Roth, I. (Ed.)  
**Children's Learning in a Digital World** Willoughby, T. & Wood, E. (Eds.)

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