

Inventing an enemy

Keith Stanovich has written a brilliant book. But it's not this one. His brilliant book is *How to Think Straight About Psychology*, now in its ninth edition. It is probably the best book about rational thinking in psychology (and elsewhere) I have ever read. It had me nodding with agreement constantly, and occasionally

punching the air in response to such well-made points. I turn down the top corners of pages when there's something especially I want to note down later. *How to Think Straight About Psychology* almost has more pages with folded corners than not.

This new book by Stanovich is also good. It has a lot of interesting material about rational thinking and how it is important in human life. Along the way there are very nice and novel examples and illustrations of rational thinking, and how badly supposedly intelligent people do in this field. Eventually, the book builds to a taxonomy of thinking errors that are mapped to a box-and-arrow model of mind. Readers will also find some fairly usual suspects – how our evolutionary history still has an influence over us; the fact that we don't do formal reasoning very well; the usual Kahneman and Tversky stuff; 'myside' bias; Wittgenstein's

cute puzzle about the string round the equator; and President Bush, who continues to do service in providing examples of lapses from rationality. Overall, then, the reader will be entertained and well informed about human rationality – and its failures in the intelligent – in a book that doesn't exactly do what it says on the cover.

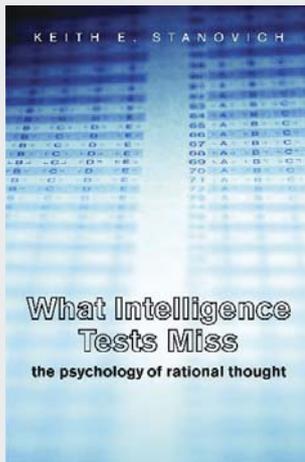
The writing is very good; somewhere between a cognitive psychology textbook and *Freakonomics*. The book does a good job of showing that rationality is important; it also, to something of a lesser extent, shows that rationality is not always strongly associated with conventionally measured intelligence. However, the titling of the book as a sort of anti-IQ tract that does it a disservice. For fairly long periods we don't hear anything about intelligence tests; nor do we need to. And it would be tiresome for the writer to recount the correlation between intelligence and the assessment of rational thinking that is being discussed. Some things about intelligence don't quite emerge; for example, the fact that fluid and crystallised intelligence are so highly correlated, and the many important things in life with which measured intelligence is associated: education, occupation, health, and so forth.

On the cover the subtitle 'the psychology of rational thought' is small and lower case, whereas 'What Intelligence Tests Miss' is far larger and with capitalised first letters. It's unfortunate: this is not an IQ-bashing book. It's a good read on human thinking that needn't have invented an enemy in order to get noticed.

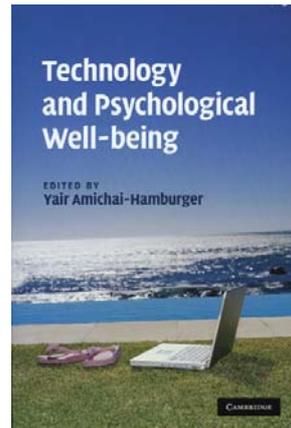
Yale University Press; 2009; Hb £20.00

Reviewed by Ian J. Deary

who is Professor of Differential Psychology, University of Edinburgh



What Intelligence Tests Miss: The Psychology of Rational Thought
Keith E. Stanovich



A click too far?

Technology and Psychological Well-Being
Yair Amichai-Hamburger (Ed.)

A mix of international contributors have united for what is claimed as the first wide-ranging appraisal of technology's impact on our psychological well-being. Taking cues from the field of hedonomics, the book suggests ways to ensure that technology enhances our lives and psychological well-being.

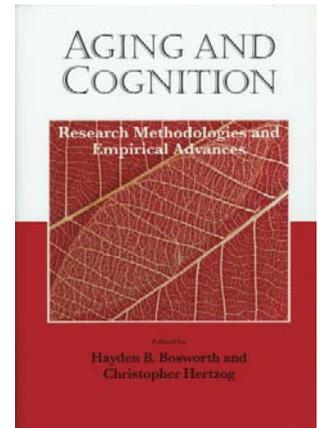
There is a limit to the psychological benefits technology can bring, and then negative effects can appear. This is most pertinent at work, where technology affects a worker's locus of control and relationships. The effects of teleworking on well-being aren't always positive. At home, the modern telecommuter can 'meet' others online, with the advantages of anonymity and irrelevance of physicality. If ill, medical technology can help, and even hinder, her recovery. The incongruous penultimate chapter argues against the view that women play a secondary role in technology and that women's contribution is greater.

The internet, mobiles, social networking, laptops: Are they life-enhancing tools or is information overload turning us all into stressed, but well-connected, workaholics? It's a serious topic and the book carries a serious price tag. Ironically, the book is also available in e-book format.

Cambridge University Press; 2009; Hb £50.00

Reviewed by Fidelma Butler

who is an occupational psychologist in training



Clear and accessible

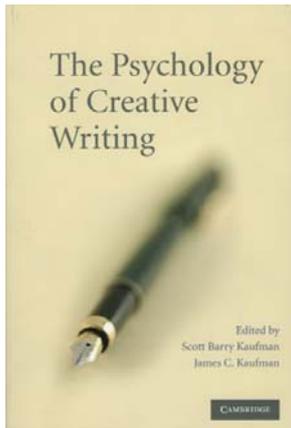
Aging and Cognition
Hayden B. Bosworth & Christopher Hertzog (Eds.)

Aging and Cognition offers a series of chapters collated in homage to K. Warner Schaie, whose famous Seattle Longitudinal Study (originally founded from his PhD work in 1956) continues to yield important findings into cognitive changes over time. This book forms one volume in a series entitled the 'APA Decade of Behaviour', which aims to showcase some of the most important topics in psychological science. Given the background to this publication, it is not surprising that the book offers readers with a comprehensive overview of the effects of ageing on cognition in a variety of social and psychological contexts.

In line with Schaie's longitudinal research findings, this book offers contemporary insights into the malleability of cognitive ability in old age, turning away from the stereotypical view of cognitive decline in old age. In an ageing society, the importance of gerontology research is paramount. The way in which this book draws together key research findings and the applications of these findings offers a clear and accessible read for both researchers and students concerned with ageing and cognition.

APA Books; 2009; Hb £56.50

Reviewed by Helen Henshaw
who is a Research Fellow, at the National Biomedical Research Unit in Hearing, University of Nottingham



Companion to an under-researched area

The Psychology of Creative Writing
 Scott Barry Kaufman & James C. Kaufman (Eds.)

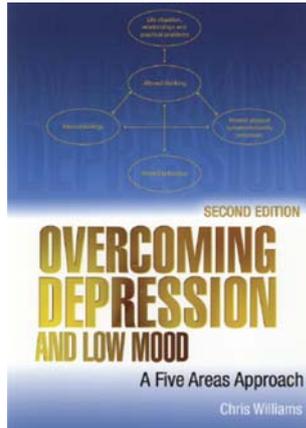
This eclectic survey is aimed at scholars, authors and teachers of creative writing. Its goal is to explore the psychological nature and development of writers and the work they produce.

The strongest contributions discuss empirical data, such as Singer and Barrios' interesting intervention for writer's block. Sexton and Pennebaker's review of the health benefits of writing balances an emphasis in other chapters on the high incidence of mental illness among writers.

Words matter to writers and to readers, so it is surprising that this book seems to falter when contributors engage directly with texts. Too often, its authors use simplistic or naive textual analysis to support their arguments. There are welcome exceptions with more depth, such as Perry's use of author interviews to delve into the 'flow' of writing, or Sawyer's lucid chapter on collaborative creation.

As well as a more critical approach to literary theory, a neuropsychological perspective might have enriched the book. Despite its flaws, though, it manages to be a wide-ranging companion to an under-researched area.

Cambridge University Press; 2009; Pb £25.99
 Reviewed by Joe Hickey who is with the Suffolk Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust



Useful workbooks

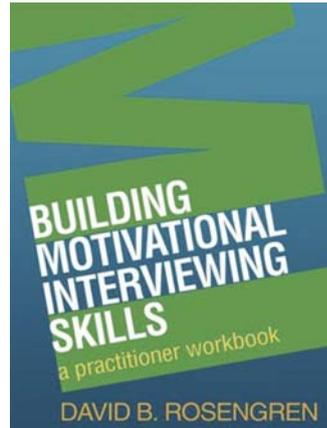
Overcoming Depression and Low Mood: A Five Areas Approach
 Chris Williams

This is a useful resource for people experiencing low mood and for practitioners who work with them. It comprises a series of self-help workbooks addressing situational, social, behavioural, cognitive and biological issues. These include permission to make copies for clinical or teaching use and can be used as a whole or separately, offering scope to tailor interventions to the individual's needs and goals.

Written in simple language, the style is friendly and compassionate and on the whole manages to avoid seeming patronising, with the structure of short chunks of text, examples, and spaces for notes being unthreatening and easy to read.

From the beginning the workbooks are motivational and include suggestions for overcoming barriers to completing tasks. Important themes, such as realistic goal setting and practical problem solving, are revisited throughout. Users of earlier editions will notice the increased emphasis on helpful behaviour change, while the cognitive aspects of intervention are covered rather briefly – the workbooks are designed for use with practitioner guidance, and this is an area where supplementary work might be helpful.

Hodder Arnold; 2009; Pb £22.99
 Reviewed by Jennifer Kelly who is a Primary Care Therapist (low intensity) with Trent CBT



A rich resource

Building Motivational Interviewing Skills: A Practitioner Workbook
 David B. Rosengren

This is a skilfully written text, born out of the author's wealth of practitioner training experience that provides a tried and tested set of materials for practising and further developing skills for motivational interviewing. It is like having the trainer's detailed notes and exercises as well as expertly annotated transcripts of the training exercises all in one book. It provides clearly structured and succinct evidence-based summaries of theory underpinning key skills, followed by extensive exercises and practice suggestions. It is this workbook element that is the outstanding aspect of this book. Through carefully crafted follow-up exercises that reflect a range of learning styles, Rosengren provides opportunities to try out techniques and practise skills

that will be applicable to a wide range of practitioners, settings and clients.

Somewhat surprisingly, the transtheoretical (stages for change) model, which many would regard as integral to motivational interviewing, is barely mentioned, and the text fails to provide an adequate rationale for this.

Nevertheless, Rosengren succeeds in isolating and explaining the key decisions, questions and prompts of motivational interviewing that develop discrepancy and momentum and that enable conversations to lead to effective, self-owned and sustained behaviour change even in the most difficult of circumstances. It is an immensely rich resource that succeeds in providing a real insight into motivational interviewing in practice.

Guilford Press; 2009; Pb £25.95
 Reviewed by Paul Riddick who is a Senior Educational Psychologist in Leicester

just in

- Sample titles just in:
The Age of Absurdity: Why Modern Life Makes It Hard to Be Happy Michael Foley
The Mindfulness Solution Ronald Siegel
Handbook of Rehabilitation Psychology Robert G. Frank et al. (Eds.)
Mindsight: Change Your Brain and Your Life Daniel Siegel
Michelangelo's Finger Raymond Tallis
The Perception of Speech Brian C.J. Moore et al. (Eds.)
Benign Bigotry Kristin J. Anderson
Why We Kill Nancy Loucks et al. (Eds.)

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