



BOOK REVIEWS

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CELEBRATION - BUT LITTLE ELUCIDATION

Psychology in Human and Social Development: Lessons from Diverse Cultures

JOHN W. BERRY, R.C. MISHRA & R.C. TRIPATHI (Eds)

NEW DELHI: SAGE PUBLICATIONS INDIA; 2003; Pp £29.95 (ISBN 0 76199 535 8)

REVIEWED BY **Rebecca Horn**

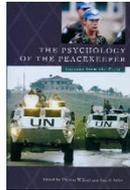
I've spent the last six months working in a refugee camp, and have been on a very steep learning curve. So I was keen to learn from the 'lessons' promised in the title of this book. Some of the things I learnt were very interesting, especially from Girishwar Misra's chapter, in which the similarities and differences between Western and Indian culture are used to illustrate the importance of culture to psychology. I would have liked more of this, but the rest of the book was a disappointment.

The empirical chapters were far too detailed, and it was left to the reader to work out for themselves the lessons to be learnt from these studies. There were more interesting 'discussion' chapters, which introduced and explored some of the ideas fundamental to doing psychology in diverse cultures.

Overall, I struggled to identify the link between chapters, and what purpose the book was meant to serve or who it was aimed at. It read more like the proceedings of a rather unfocused conference. All chapters were written by 'old friends... associates and students of Durganand Sinha', a psychologist who worked in the field of development for many years. Whilst the aim of celebrating the life and work of Professor Sinha is laudable, it appears to have prevented the editors from producing a focused book in which the 'lessons from diverse cultures' are elucidated.

■ *Dr Rebecca Horn is with the Jesuit Refugee Service, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.*

Armed for peace?



The Psychology of the Peacekeeper: Lessons from the Field

THOMAS W. BRITT & AMY B. ADLER (Eds)

WESTPORT, CT: PRAEGER; 2003; Hb £38.75 (ISBN 0 27597 596 7)

REVIEWED BY **John Sloboda**

AMERICAN soldiers don't like being sent on peacekeeping missions and find peacekeeping roles problematic. They would prefer to fight wars. This is the primary, and unsurprising, finding from this multi-author collection. The chapters report the outcomes of survey and interview research conducted on soldiers (mainly from the USA) deployed on UN peacekeeping missions during the 1990s (up to and including Kosovo).

The 26 contributors are predominantly based in the USA, although a significant minority of the authors are Israeli. Much of the work reported here has been commissioned directly by the US military, to address questions such as 'What challenges affect the peacekeeper and the accomplishment of the mission?' and 'What can be done to facilitate peacekeeping adaptation in the face of these challenges?'

Chapters are organised into five central sections, examining social psychological, industrial-organisational, health, clinical, and cross-cultural perspectives on the problem. The research highlights a range of factors that limit the effectiveness of military peacekeepers, including rapid switching between war-fighting and peacekeeping roles; deficiencies of understanding of, commitment to, and training for, the role of peacekeeper; and mental health problems brought about by the frustrations and contradictions of the role. Data are integrated within a variety of well-established theoretical frameworks, from social identity theory to stress-based theories of coping.

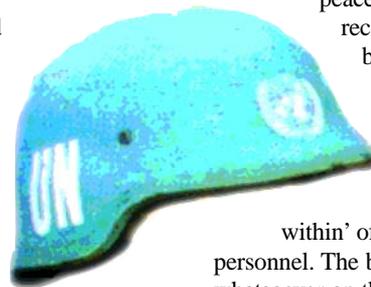
The collection provides some telling

insights into the mindset of the typical soldier. The harsh and humiliating 'socialisation' that army recruits receive forces them to internalise a rigid 'warrior' identity, where their pride and self-respect is entirely identified with their capacity to fight and kill. One respondent said: 'In peacekeeping, the trouble is that you don't have any enemy, and this means you don't have any dignity as a soldier.' Many soldiers have simplistic negative stereotypes of the people among whom they are working, most rigid amongst white male personnel.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this research is that the same people cannot both fight wars and be peacekeepers. None of the authors explicitly draw this conclusion; they focus their attention instead on 'fixes' to assist war-fighting soldiers to become better peacekeepers. In the light of recent events in Iraq, this book could appear dated and politically naive to many current readers.

Whilst technically proficient, this volume reflects 'the view from within' of serving US military personnel. The book presents no data whatsoever on the psychological impact of US peacekeepers on the populations they are deployed to serve, or on their long-term effectiveness in securing peace among these populations. One sad signal of the latent ethnocentricity of this volume is the chapter on benefits of peacekeeping. This is not about the benefits to the civilian populations in war-torn regions, but about benefits to the serving soldiers in peacekeeping forces. Need one say more?

■ *Professor John Sloboda is at Keele University and is Executive Director of the Oxford Research Group.*

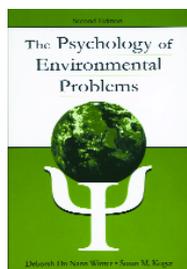


Saving the planet with psychology?

THERE really are no 'environmental problems', but a mismatch between how humans meet their needs and wants, and the natural order of things. So say Deborah and Sue. And in case you think I'm being over-familiar with the authors, Deborah and Sue have asked us to call them that, and to share their personal worries about the environment through their own experiences.

The authors continually ask themselves: 'What does psychology have to say about the fact that we can't continue to sustain human life on the planet unless we change a lot of what we are doing?' Indeed, they sometimes ask: 'Given that our culture is unsustainable, why are we even teaching psychology?'

But instead of concluding, as they might, that the answer is to get into politics and change the American way of life, our authors feel that psychology is central to the solution: 'Because environmental problems have



The Psychology of Environmental Problems

DEBORAH DU NANN WINTER
& SUSAN M. KOGER

MAHWAH, NJ: LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES;
2004; Pb US\$36.00 (ISBN 0 8058 4631 X)

REVIEWED BY **Christopher Spencer**

been caused by human behaviours, beliefs, decisions and values, psychology is crucial to finding a solution to them'.

The first substantive chapter outlines the nature of the problem; and the subsequent ones makes links with six areas of psychology: Freudian, social,

behavioural, physiological and health (an interesting pairing, this), cognitive, and gestalt and ecopsychology. (Not, you will note, environmental psychology, that field you might think would have been central to their consideration.) Given that the book is designed to be accessible to non-specialists, each chapter has to canter through the basics of each area.

Would I start from here? Would I recommend a text that starts from thumbnails of nearly the whole of psychology (and inevitably has some areas where the authors are less familiar), applying them to 'environmental problems'? Or would I start with this now

huge literature of environmental psychology, and then work back to its broader theoretical underpinnings.

I would strongly recommend the latter, because, despite its title, environmental 'psychology' comfortably embraces a much wider disciplinary background: its researchers come from across the social sciences, environmental sciences, and the architectural and planning disciplines, and many with 'real-world' responsibilities for the environment. Against this, sticking just to traditional, mainstream psychology looks like a very narrow base from which to examine 'environmental problems'.

No, I wouldn't start out with Deborah and Sue as my guides, however obviously sincere and well intentioned are their concerns for saving the planet.

■ *Christopher Spencer is an environmental psychologist at the University of Sheffield.*

THE STRENGTH OF THE LAW

ADRIAN Needs and Graham Towl are successful in bringing together a wide range of topics in what proves to be an excellent resource for academics, students and practitioners alike. The range of topics explored goes a long way in dispelling the long-held perception that all forensic psychologists do is 'Cracker-style' offender profiling. The book is comprehensive and steers well clear of a 'pop psychology' approach by devoting considerable space to theory and its application to practice.

I did find it very difficult to

Applying Psychology to Forensic Practice

ADRIAN NEEDS & GRAHAM TOWL (Eds)

OXFORD: BPS BLACKWELL; 2004; Pb £24.99 (ISBN 1 40510 542 9)

REVIEWED BY **Jane L. Ireland**

criticise the book. If I had to make a negative reflection, I would note that a couple of the chapters needed to be stronger in depth (particularly later on in the book). There were occasions where recent developments in the forensic field were not, in my view, fully reflected, particularly in terms of forensic risk assessment.

Having said this, one of the main strengths of the book is the 'Working with criminal

justice personnel' section, which highlights how broad the application of forensic practice can be. I particularly liked the chapter by Aldert Vrij and Jo Barton on the impact of environmental stressors on the use of lethal force by officers, that by Jennifer Brown on occupational stress and the criminal justice practitioner, and Adrian Needs and Jo Capelin's chapter on facilitating multidisciplinary teams.

In summary, *Applying Psychology to Forensic Practice* will prove an invaluable resource for those working, or aiming to work, in the broad field of forensic practice. Some chapters may prove a little hard going for readers unfamiliar with forensic practice, nonetheless they should add some timely accuracy to the role of psychology in applied forensic settings.

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