

Fragmented reflections on the self

In *The Self-Illusion*, Bruce Hood alludes to a 'self-illusion', and then does something wry with it. The illusion is that we each possess a core self that travels through time and space in a coherent narrative, a singular protagonist experiencing a story of acting on the world and being acted upon by that world. But, really, that experience of a singular entity is a fiction created by the brain.

Instead, we are all simply a collection of innumerable micro-processes and experiences crawling over our neurons that have little or nothing to do with one another.

The wry twist is that although Hood occasionally refers to this self-illusion, the bulk of the book comprises innumerable short stories about psychological research or phenomena that have little to do with either the self or each other. Thus, if expecting a closely reasoned argument of how an illusory impression of a unified and coherent self arises in each individual out of a million flashings in the brain, this is not the book for you.

Instead, if one wants instead a broad survey of psychological ideas and findings that have percolated near or just above public consciousness over the past 50 years, they are almost all here. Hood describes the basic functions of the brain and beginning building blocks of social skills in the child. He covers the interplay between conscious experience and non-conscious brain activity related to it. He discusses quirks in the decision-making process that led people toward systematic irrationality. He recounts how virtual life within the internet may suck people away from life in the flesh-and-blood. The scope of coverage is breathtaking. Golden nuggets such as Harlow's monkeys, Milgram's obedient subjects, and Gazzaniga's split-brain patients make an appearance. And newer topics get their turn on the stage, such as how enmeshed we are in our personal social networks, how mirror neurons may provide us with crucial insight into the intentions of other people, and how ego depletion means that self-control is a precious resource we can easily exhaust. Each topic gets the equivalent of its own blog entry, noting in brief the central notion making that topic worthwhile.

Thus, the book may not be suitable for those already well read in psychological science (except for those who feel so far-removed from their college classes that they want to make sure they have not missed any emerging insights). Such aficionados will already be familiar with the material.

Instead, the book may just be the thing for someone new to the science who wants a broad overview of what the field can contribute to intellectual life. The span of topics touched upon is far-ranging, but Hood does a good job identifying the interesting core of each topic he brings up. Readers new to psychology may want to read this book to identify the topics that intrigue them most, and then consult the notes in the back to find further sources that dig into those topics in more detail.

Making such a broad and speedy tour of psychological research a delight, the book is accessible and engagingly written. Hood is a good story-teller, never straying far from what makes an episode particularly pertinent. Thus, while naming an illusion and then straying far from any discussion of it, Hood accomplishes something just as useful. This book comprises a good road-map for the types of ideas that psychology can discover or provide. No matter how fragmented, I bet each reader will find one if not more of the stories to be arresting to the self that Hood ultimately suggests we do not have.

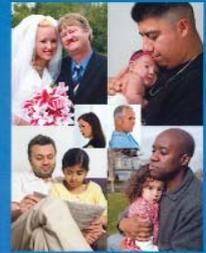
| Constable; 2012; Pb £12.99

Reviewed by David Dunning who is Professor of Psychology, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Coming soon: An interview with Bruce Hood

Father–Daughter Relationships

Contemporary Research and Issues



Linda Nielsen

Relatively informed

Father–Daughter Relationships: Contemporary Research and Issues
Linda Nielsen

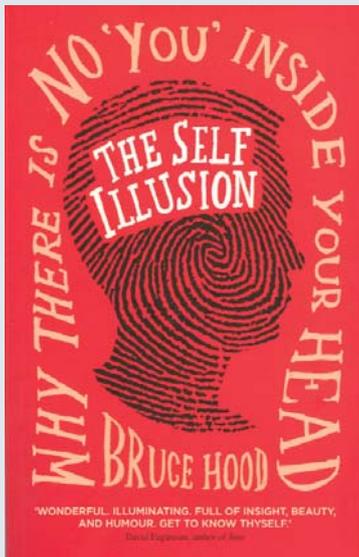
The mother–daughter relationship has been researched and discussed endlessly. The father–daughter relationship less so. Following Nielsen's previous book advising daughters on how to improve their paternal relationship, this effort takes a more objective stance. Compiled of not only a wealth of current research, but also personal stories and questionnaires, the book is a comprehensive summary of the important issues around this topic. These include how mental health problems are related to the quality of these relationships and how daughters influence their fathers' well-being.

The highlight is undoubtedly the questions closing each chapter, which are thought-provoking and engaging. They guide the reader through chapters from the importance of the father–daughter relationship, into more unusual relationships and their effects, to a concluding encouragement to apply the findings to their own families or work. The only drawback is that information regarding laws and some ethnic relationships apply more to the USA than the UK.

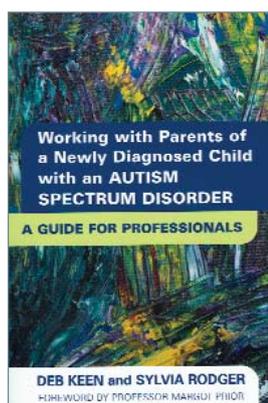
I would recommend this book to anyone interested in their own father–daughter relationship, and to professionals working in family therapy.

| Routledge; 2012; Pb £24.95

Reviewed by Elly McGrath who is at the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research, Lancaster University



The Self-illusion: Why There Is No 'You' Inside Your Head
Bruce Hood



A helpful resource

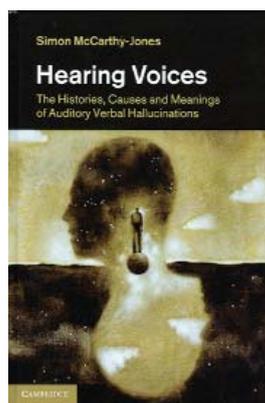
Working with Parents of a Newly Diagnosed Child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder
Deb Keen & Sylvia Rodger

In my experience one of the most significant issues for families following their child being diagnosed with an autism spectrum condition is limited follow-up. When I asked to review this book I was looking forward to how it considered this issue. As it turns out, the authors have provided a good guide for practitioners.

The main thrust of the book is about basing intervention work on a family centred model in which the family rather than the child is the point of referral. This allows the authors to cover support for parents and siblings as part of the work. Overall, this seems a sensible way to direct intervention work – particularly as families are usually expected to implement interventions. The text primarily covers helping families with home-based intervention strategies, so that so that appropriate learning needs are addressed. However, the chapters are quite brief and tend to highlight key techniques, rather than cover them in any great depth.

This book is a very helpful, interesting and informative resource which would make a relevant addition to practitioners' bookshelves.

| Jessica Kingsley; 2012;
Pb £19.99
Reviewed by Mark Wylie who is Clinical Psychologist, Autism Spectrum Team



Demystifying AVH

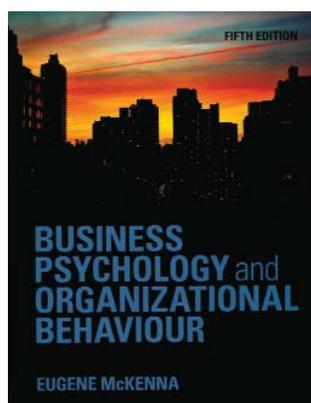
Hearing Voices: The Histories, Causes and Meanings of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations
Simon McCarthy-Jones

Those who hear voices have over the centuries been celebrated as seers or feared and dismissed as psychiatric patients. Voice-hearing is a complex phenomenon, which this multidisciplinary book attempts to demystify.

Critiquing a wide range of topics, from historical writings on voice-hearing and the development of the medical model of auditory verbal hallucinations (AVH) to the phenomenological experiences of hearing voices and the development of the Hearing Voices Movement, McCarthy-Jones highlights the limitations of current 'interventions', arguing that the meanings of AVH are often lost when antipsychotic medication seeks to minimise the severity and volume of voices. The book also traces the role of traumatic events on the onset of AVH from Freud to the contemporary research. The concluding chapter provides areas for further research and practice development.

This is a well-structured book enhanced by the author's engaging and informative prose. It should prove intriguing and informative for researchers and healthcare professionals, as well as voice-hearers themselves.

| Cambridge University Press; 2012; Hb £65.00
Reviewed by Iain McGowan who is a mental health nurse at the University of Ulster, School of Nursing



A comprehensive core undergraduate text

Business Psychology and Organizational Behaviour
Eugene McKenna

The objective of this book is to introduce the basic concepts and principles of business psychology and organisational behaviour and its applications, without over-popularising the subject. Does McKenna achieve this?

The book is structured in a way that makes the subject accessible. Each chapter starts with a statement of learning outcomes, and the main text is enhanced by the use of boxes with case examples, newspaper extracts and quotations from published literature that bring the subject to life. Chapters are rounded off by a list of questions to guide reflection and discussion.

McKenna's writing style is clear and in my view the level of this text would be of interest to undergraduates. The book contains a comprehensive bibliography that could be useful for experienced practitioners

who want to dip into the latest research. The earliest reference I noticed was for an 1899 publication, but there are many references to work carried out in recent years.

The content of the book covers all the usual areas of business psychology, and it was useful to see a section on research methodology along with the difficulties of applying the scientific method to people. McKenna's approach is scholarly, presenting research evidence for and against controversial topics before arriving at well-considered conclusions.

That McKenna achieves his objective is not surprising, considering that this is the fifth edition. A text such as this will never inspire tabloid headlines, but it earns its place on the bookshelf of psychology undergraduates as a comprehensive core text.

| Psychology Press; 2012;
Pb £42.99
Reviewed by Anne Kearns who was previously a Chartered Occupational Psychologist in Jobcentre Plus, now retired

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