

This article was downloaded by: [University of Haifa]

On: 3 March 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 910922630]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Technology in Human Services

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t792306975>

A Review of: "Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace: Theory, Research, Applications By A. Barak (Ed.)."

Jerry Finn

To cite this Article Finn, Jerry(2009) 'A Review of: "Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace: Theory, Research, Applications By A. Barak (Ed.)."', Journal of Technology in Human Services, 27: 3, 249 – 251

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/15228830903093411

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228830903093411>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CYBERSPACE: THEORY, RESEARCH, APPLICATIONS. A. Barak (Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 298 pp. ISBN: 978-0-521-87301-7 (hardcover) and ISBN: 987-0-521-69464-3 (paperback).

The field of psychology seeks to understand and/or influence aspects of human behavior through theory development and empirical research. A great deal of human behavior, especially in first world nations, is now occurring in a “psychological space” through the medium of the Internet. As described in *Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace*, cyberspace is “a virtual social environment characterized by computer-mediated communication.” It is experienced as an “intermediate zone between self and other,” a psychological space that reflects aspects of a person’s personality while at the same time influencing the self through what many describe as a “mind to mind” connection with others. This book presents a series of related articles focused on “cyberpsychology,” a relatively new subfield of social science that examines the unique characteristics of cyberspace and the ways that cyberspace influences many aspects of human behavior that take place within the online world, including work, play, peak experiences, trust and privacy, romance, sexuality, psychotherapy, mutual support, knowledge building, and the scientific enterprise itself.

This book consists of 12 chapters by internationally known leading researchers in the new field of cyberpsychology. The chapters include examination of traditional social science theories as they apply to cyberspace as well as new conceptual models for understanding the unique behavior and interactions engendered in cyberspace. Where appropriate, the chapters also describe new applications that promote the evolution of the cyberspace experience and provide the infrastructure for cyberspace interactions. The focus is not, however, on the technology that creates the Internet or online applications but rather on the psychological and interactional forces engendered through them.

Chapter 1 defines cyberspace, provides a brief history of its growth, and shows the connection between cyberspace and cyberpsychology. Research is reviewed that highlights some unique aspects of cyberspace, such as a greater likelihood for people to engage in faster and more in-depth self-disclosure when online. The chapter ends with the rationale and need for the new field of cyberpsychology and points to future directions for research.

Chapter 2 discusses the research related to privacy, trust, and disclosure online. The terms are defined and research describing their measurement is presented. Trust, privacy, and disclosure online are contrasted with face-to-face interactions. Implications for online business and social interactions are discussed.

Chapter 3 focuses on Internet abuse. The authors review diagnostic controversies as well as research related to the concept of “Internet

addiction.” Research is also presented on specific types of Internet abuse, including sexual compulsion, problematic use of online pornography, and problematic use of online social interactive games. Theoretical explanations for Internet abuse from a cognitive behavioral and psychoanalytic perspective are presented along with implications for therapeutic intervention of Internet abuse.

Chapter 4 discusses the humanistic construct “flow,” a state similar to peak experience in which a person is deeply involved in an activity, experiences a sense of optimal functioning and enjoyment, and experiences little distinction between self and his or her environment in the here and now. Theory and research is presented that relates “flow” to the online experience.

Chapter 5 presents six communication dimensions from which to consider online therapeutic interactions. Examples of therapeutic techniques within each dimension are considered. For example, one dimension is “Imaginary/Realistic” in which use of online role-playing games and communities might be used for learning and testing new behaviors. A number of cybertherapeutic activities and programs made possible by the online environment are described. The chapter does not focus on the effectiveness of cybertherapy or the legal, professional, and ethical issues involved, although literature is suggested for exploration of these areas.

Chapter 6 focuses on issues related to online psychological assessment. The authors suggest that aspects of cyberspace such as relative anonymity, asynchronous communication, and disinhibition may promote better, more accurate, and more comprehensive assessment than face-to-face assessment in spite of lacking some sensory dimensions (e.g., visual cues or smell). Research and applications related to online interviewing and testing are presented. Problems in online assessment are also discussed.

Chapter 7 discusses the role of “place” in development of online relationships and includes patterns and problems in relationship development. The author notes that in the online world, romantic or friendship relationships are not initially based on physical attraction, status cues, and propinquity as they are in the physical world. Research related to the development of online relationships is presented, including both dating sites and online communities. Research about the relationship between online and face-to-face relationships is also discussed.

Chapter 8 provides a review of the “sexy side of the Internet.” Research is presented about online activities such as cybersex, Internet infidelity, online pedophilia, and Internet pornography. In addition, specific examples of the use of the Internet for sex and reproductive health education and HIV/AIDS education are described. The use of the Internet by sexual minorities is also discussed.

Chapter 9 discusses the use of the Internet to mediate and improve intergroup conflict. The author reviews the “Contact Hypothesis,” describing the

conditions under which contact between conflicted groups (e.g., different racial groups) will lead to better understanding and alleviation of conflict. The implication of the Internet for promoting conflict resolution is discussed and a new application, the Net Intergroup Contact (NIC) platform, is described.

Chapter 10 reviews research related to the nature and functioning of online groups, including electronic communities, social groups, and online self-help/support groups. Group dynamics such as recruitment, organization, leadership, power, and cohesion are discussed as impacted by cyberspace.

Chapter 11 discusses motivational factors related to participation in Wikipedia. Theory and research about the growth and development of Wikipedia as well as factors related to the motivation of individual participants are presented. Implications for the development of other online open-source project communities are discussed.

Chapter 12 discusses the use of the Internet for the scientific enterprise and the impact of the Internet on aspects of science itself. Research on the growth of scientific information is presented. In addition, research about the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the Internet for research through web-based surveys, tests, and experiments is discussed. Issues related to other Internet-based changes in the scientific enterprise such as online publication, open access publishing, citation analysis, and massive online data sets are presented.

This book presents an excellent introduction to the burgeoning field of cyberpsychology. While different authors write each, the chapters are quite consistent in their writing style and quality. Each provides theoretical models, clear explanations of concepts, and a strategic review of the latest research. I believe it would be an excellent text for a course on cyberpsychology or a supplemental text to courses that wish to integrate information technology into the curriculum of various social sciences or helping professions. The book is very useful in presenting the current state of the research in the field and in helping to formulate many ideas for future research projects. As such, it would also be an excellent text in a master's level or doctoral seminar focusing on cyberpsychology research. It will be of interest to social scientists as well as to practitioners as they seek to understand and perhaps utilize cyberspace to promote personal and social change.

*Jerry Finn, PhD
Social Work Program
University of Washington Tacoma
1900 Commerce St.
Tacoma, WA 98402
253-692-4771
finnj@u.washington.edu*