

# Leadership and followership

We are all fascinated with leadership. We buy biographies written by influential leaders in the hope we can learn from them. In our admiration we put effective leaders on a pedestal, because it is clear there is something special about them: they appear to be able to do things that others cannot do. This has led to a large body of research dealing with questions such as What makes a good leader? What type of leader is needed for a particular

challenge? and How can leaders lead more effectively? The answers to these questions have changed little over the last decades. To be an effective leader, so the classic argument typically goes, one must be made of 'the right stuff': have vision, be decisive, charismatic and persuasive.

The authors of *The New Psychology of Leadership* start their book by arguing that this traditional 'heroic view' of leadership is limited in a number of ways. Most notably, the classic view, with its focus on the leader easily leads to the impression that leadership is all about the person. It suggests that if we just understand the leader's personality and their motivation, we should be able to predict whether they will fail or succeed as a leader.

The central argument put forward in this book is that famous leaders such

as Mandela and Gandhi were able to achieve remarkable things, not because they were born special or made of the 'right stuff', but because they were able to harness people's social identities for particular causes. They were able to turn personal vision into a vision that was shared by others in a group. Such a transformation whereby 'my' agenda becomes 'our' agenda has the capacity to mobilise others, and this makes social change possible. As the authors point out, 'followership' is not an epiphenomenon of charismatic leadership; it is the most essential ingredient of leadership. Put simply: without followership, there is no leadership. By bestowing authority on leaders and by accepting the leader's influence, followers make leadership possible. It thus follows that, unlike traditional accounts that treat 'followership' as the outcome of effective leadership, to understand leadership, we need to ask how leaders get others to follow them.

*The New Psychology of Leadership* is written in an accessible style, and logical structure. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the 'old' or 'heroic' leadership view. Chapter 2 develops the

argument that the key to effective/charismatic leadership is the ability to foster 'followership'. Chapter 3 gives a comprehensive overview of the theoretical vantage point from which the authors study leadership: social identity and self-categorization theory. The following two chapters focus on different aspects of 'followership'. They show that successful leaders go to great lengths to become regarded as prototypical for the group they want to lead (chapter 4). They often do this by publicly putting collective interest before their personal self-interest (chapter 5). In short, effective leaders need to be seen as 'being one of us' and 'doing it for us'.

In chapter 6, the concept of 'identity entrepreneur' is introduced to explain that leaders do not just happen to be 'the right person at the right time', they position themselves in such a way that, in the eyes of others, they are the 'right person at the right time'. Chapter 7 expands this argument and shows that leaders who become regarded as heroes do more than that. They take on the role of *identity artist* or *impresario* whereby they embed identity in their agenda and vision in a way that matters to us. Good leaders creatively reinterpret social categories and make particular social identities relevant and meaningful. The book finishes with outlining the broader context in which leaders operate and draws attention to the politics and practical challenges when studying and dealing with leadership.

*The New Psychology of Leadership* provides a refreshing new perspective on leadership. It goes beyond social and organisational psychological accounts, which, so far, have fallen short of explaining leadership and followership comprehensively. For example, and rather ironically, contemporary research rarely examines what it is exactly that leaders *do* to be regarded as effective leaders and what it is that makes them become regarded as failures. This gap is filled in this book; by identifying key principles that provide insight in the ways leaders lead followers, the authors cover new territory for social and organisational psychologists. This sets an exiting and new research agenda for the years to come. *The New Psychology of Leadership* also provides food for thought for those interested in the politics of leadership scholarship. For example, the authors reflect on the question of why the 'heroic view' has become the orthodoxy, and argue that this is the case because, amongst other things, the heroic view suits those in powerful positions, as it enables them to underscore the uniqueness of their talents and achievements.

Rather than to critique the heroic view and to leave a void, *The New Psychology of Leadership* offers an excellent alternative approach, rooted in social identity theorising. By moving away from leadership as 'the great I' and developing theorising on why effective leadership is all about 'the great us', the book covers more ground than traditional books on leadership. It speaks directly to those issues that we find fascinating about leadership: the ability of effective leaders to bring about social change and to make a genuine difference. Without doubt, this book will become regarded as a landmark text, and it has the potential to dramatically change our understanding of leadership in the years to come.

| *Psychology Press*; 2011; Pb £17.50

Reviewed by Frank Mols and Jolanda Jetten who are at the University of Queensland, in the School of Political Sciences and School of Psychology, respectively

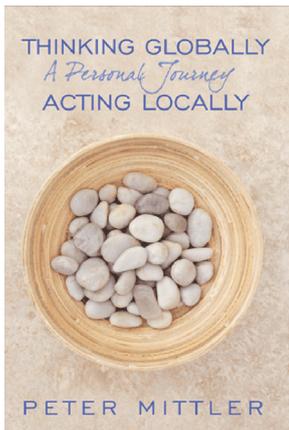
## THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

Identity, Influence and Power



S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher  
and Michael J. Platow

The New Psychology of Leadership:  
Identity, Influence and Power  
S. Alexander Haslam,  
Stephen D. Reicher &  
Michael J. Platow



### A scarce genre

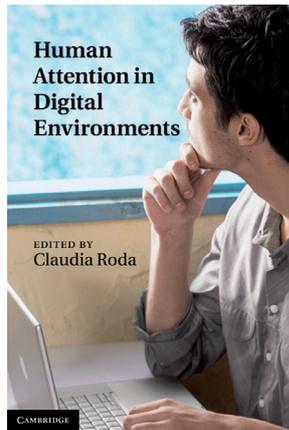
**Thinking Globally Acting Locally: A Personal Journey**  
Peter Mittler

Peter Mittler held a series of appointments from 1968 that placed him at the forefront of psychological research and policy implementation relating to learning disability. From his post in Manchester as Director of the Hester Adrian Research Centre he became Chairman of the National Development Group for the Mentally Handicapped. After his official retirement in 1995 a new phase in his career encompassed the development of training and services for people with profound and multiple disabilities in most continents of the world.

The title of this autobiography reflects the span of his career, from the development of sustainable local services, to engagement with policy at the highest national and international level. But it is more than that: he is a Kindertransport survivor; he talks of his own life with a son with physical impairments; he reveals the demands of difficult political and personal decisions.

Full-length autobiographies by major British psychologists are a scarce genre; this is a remarkable and frank account of the personal journey of a campaigning psychologist, relevant to advocacy today for disabled people.

! *AuthorHouse; 2010; Pb £15.49*  
**Reviewed by John Hall**  
*who is at the School of Health and Social Care, and the Centre for Health Medicine and Society, at Oxford Brookes University*



### Attention please!

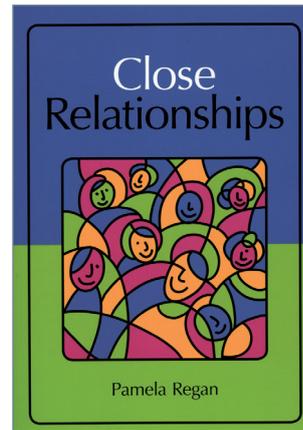
**Human Attention in Digital Environments**  
Claudia Roda (Ed.)

Computers and interactive systems are everywhere – homes, schools, work... This book offers a broad yet focused overview of the psychological concepts of attention. It further points out the key elements that interactive system design needs.

The book captures the reader's attention throughout, with essays, both technical and theoretical, from psychology and computing experts. It starts by revealing the psychological concepts behind human attention, moving gracefully to software tools and applications that employ human attention research to enhance human attention. Research that uses on-the-spot technology and tools – such as intelligent agents and eye-trackers – is also discussed. Furthermore, internet lovers will be intrigued by the introduction of attention-aware systems and how they can be used in practice for exploiting contextualised attention metadata.

Personally, I cannot complain, for this book provides a nice, neat and enjoyable journey to the fields of Psychology and Human Computer Interaction, and convinces the reader for the need to focus further on human attention research in relation to interactive systems design.

! *Cambridge University Press; 2011; Hb £61.75*  
**Reviewed by Genovefa Kefalidou**  
*who is a PhD student at Lancaster University*



### Excellent introduction

**Close Relationships**  
Pamela Regan

Given the social nature of humans, we can argue that all psychologists cannot get far without some knowledge of the processes involved in close personal relationships. A broad and complex area of study, one where an introductory textbook could easily provide a sketchy outline at best.

Well, not this one! Dr Regan skilfully pulls together up-to-date information on the most important work in this area, providing good basis and making it clear when the research has not been able to keep up with practitioners' growing interest in personal relationships.

The chapters are well structured, easy to read or dip into, and lend themselves well for the use of a scientist-practitioner, with clear examples of real-life relevance and relationship-specific psychometric tools used by researchers but equally useful for practitioners.

The book addresses the science, development and processes of close relationships and has a section on relationship challenges, including basic therapeutic interventions. It looks mainly at romantic relationships with some but infrequent reference to familial relationships and friendships.

As a textbook for multidisciplinary audience, psychology students may find the material in chapter 1 already familiar; skip this one if you want but do go on to other chapters! With a multitude of theories, models, research, assessment tools and study guides this book makes an excellent introduction to the study of close personal relationships for all undergraduate and postgraduate psychology students.

! *Routledge; 2011; Pb £39.95*  
**Reviewed by Ewa Krempleska**  
*who is a counselling psychologist in Gloucestershire*

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