BOOK REVIEW

The Social Net: Human Behaviour in Cyberspace

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Yair Amchal-Hamburger
The Social Net: Human Behaviour in Cyberspace
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The Social Net examines the social psychology of the Internet. The challenge outlined in the book is “to demonstrate the wealth of the Internet as a multifaceted medium in the social arena.” Over ten chapters, numerous authors discuss and debate the social advantages and disadvantages of Internet use related to personality, social cognition, persuasion, attachment, aggression, prosocial behaviour, interpersonal processes, leadership, and prejudice.

The potential audience for this book would be non-specialists or students interested in this area. For psychologists who specialise or work within the field of human computer interaction (HCI), it is unlikely to alert them to new research.

The majority of chapters are well developed and note some interesting observations. However, the coverage in other chapters appears superficial and misleading, in particular when discussing findings from previous research. Certain chapters lack a clear explanation of why this type of research is important and exactly who the population of interest is. For example, in chapter five, the author discusses online relationships, however, the lack of contextual information makes it difficult for the reader to imagine the users at the heart of this research.

Although it might not be possible to consider all social psychological topics (e.g., social and moral values) related to use of the Internet, reference to this in the preface would have been advantageous. A positive aspect of several chapters is the effective use of current research papers in comparison to other chapters that rely on outdated references.

I would recommend this book if the person is interested in the social and psychological aspect of Internet use. However, a word of caution: unless you are an expert in any one of the area’s discussed, tread carefully and do your own homework as you might be misled.

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