

## Book Review

### Review of *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles* (2nd ed.)

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*Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles* (2nd ed.), by Arie W. Kruglanski and E. Tory Higgins. New York: Guilford Press, 2007. 1034 pp., ISBN 978-1-57230-918-0. \$160, hardcover.

GIVEN THE HODGEPODGE OF TOPICS, theories, and methods associated with social psychology, an organized volume of basic principles has an irresistible appeal. Yet, the earlier edition of this handbook (Higgins & Kruglanski, 1996) and other comprehensive works may have already satisfied such needs. Thus, the question at hand is how well the editors and contributors of this edition have achieved the identification and articulation of basic principles.

The editors have selected a highly competent, well-accomplished group of authors who focus on almost all of the major material that graduate students and professional researchers would hope to find in a single handbook. Packed in this edition are 41 review chapters on theory, process, and evidence divided into six different principle areas, including five systems (biological, cognitive, personal–motivational, interpersonal, group–cultural) and applications of social psychology. This edition functions somewhat more as a companion volume to

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the first edition by adding to principles described in the first edition. In fact, 25 of the chapters directly address principle topics that were not of primary focus in the first edition. Among these important additions are entire chapters devoted to values, basic human needs, social power, attitude change, and leadership; there are also 7 chapters on social psychological applications. In addition, 14 of the chapters focus on principle topics covered in the first edition but include entirely different authors who have expanded on their respective areas by elaborating on more recent developments. For instance, Shafir's chapter on decision making focuses primarily on principles of locally constructed decisions, whereas Ajzen's decision-making chapter in the first edition focuses more on the basic contributions to decision making made by multiple areas (e.g., subjective utility theory, expectancy-value theory, group decision making). The other 2 chapters (on expectancies and on feelings and phenomenal experiences) overlap with the first edition in that they have the same authors, but they also expand substantially on more recent developments. A quick glance at the post-1996 citations of these 2 chapters supports this notion ( $M$  number of citations = 270, with 37% being post-1996 citations).

An improvement of the overall comprehensiveness is evidenced by the number of major terms listed in the subject index (1,125), compared with the previous edition (870). Among the more useful contributions is the inclusion of seven chapters devoted to the applications of social psychology in law, health behavior, clinical practice, marketing, politics, organizational behavior, and social action. With respect to continuing trends found in external funding for social psychology, these principle topic chapters are likely to be an extremely useful resource.

Advanced students and researchers desire a source that covers the major subfields, is written at the graduate level, identifies the essential issues and resources associated with each subfield, and has a strong degree of organization (Shaver & Schutte, 1997). Although this edition accomplishes many of these goals, there are some marks that it has missed. First, many of the chapters inadequately identify the major problems and limitations. For instance, multiple chapters describe implicit attitude measures (e.g., Implicit Association Test) and findings, but readers will be hard pressed to discover any discussions on the potential problems or limitations of this burgeoning research area. Thus, readers may be uncertain as to which problems are greatest and how they may be solved. Second, in addition to the basic principles, many readers may look to the handbook for information regarding basic methods and statistical applications relevant to social psychological research, but they will be disappointed. Although there are certainly several other outlets available in this domain, the use of future editions of this handbook may be enhanced with the inclusion of a methods chapter. In addition, although a focus on cognitive biases and cognitive errors shows up in several of the chapters, a chapter devoted to such principles and their limitations would have been ideal. Last, the handbook varies in its historical focus from chapter to chapter, giving a sometimes-disjointed presentation.

This handbook has some similarities to and differences from the larger handbook sets, such as the *Blackwell Handbooks of Social Psychology* (Brown & Gaertner, 2001; Fletcher & Clark, 2001; Hogg & Tindale, 2001; Tesser & Schwarz, 2001) and the two-volume set edited by Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey (1998). With regard to the encyclopedia-like coverage of summarized definitions, this handbook is similar in style to the Gilbert et al. volumes but diverges to the extent that it is more up-to-date. Rather than providing a relatively brief but targeted analysis, as the Blackwell volumes do, this handbook provides a more cohesive story of the underlying principles in each chapter. Especially useful to readers are the eight chapters that clearly state well-confirmed principles (or propositions) of their respective areas (i.e., chapters on prediction, metacognition, mental representation, social interaction, interpersonal trust, negotiation, dynamical social psychology, and cultural processes). Yet, cohesiveness between the chapters is lacking. A concise overview of each of the six sections would have remedied this problem. Taken together, the two editions of this handbook achieve their goal of identifying and synthesizing a majority of the basic principles in social psychology.

#### AUTHOR NOTE

**John V. Petrocelli** is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Wake Forest University. His primary research interests include counterfactual thinking, attitude strength, and reactions to general and specific cases.

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