

Cognition in Close Relationships (Book Review).

By: Mark A. Fine

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Abstract:

Cognition in Close Relationships. Garth J. O. Fletcher & Frank D. Fincham (Eds.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. 1991. 364 pp. Hardcover ISBN 0--8058-0568-0. \$59.95.

This edited volume attempts to integrate the rapidly growing literatures on social cognition and close relationships. The editors are leading authorities in these areas and have accumulated an impressive international list of contributors. The volume contains a wealth of both theoretical and empirical information. The material is presented in a manner that assumes that readers have at least some familiarity with social cognition.

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Article:

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The book is divided into three sections. The first part contains five theoretical chapters. The highlight is a chapter by Thomas Bradbury and Frank Fincham which, in a clear and readable fashion, describes their contextual model of marital interaction and how it may aid in the interpretation of research findings. A chapter by Garth Fletcher and Fincham provides an interesting theoretical account of research findings on attribution. Although all of the chapters are useful, as is often the case with edited volumes, they would have benefitted from some integration.

The five chapters in the second part of the book address relations between affect and cognition. The chapters are heterogeneous in format and a bit overlapping in content. In particular, the

chapters that present data are technical and detailed. In a chapter that will be especially valuable for researchers, Fletcher and Leah Kininmonth discuss methodological problems encountered in studying the interface between cognition and behavioral interaction. All of the chapters are interesting and useful.

The two chapters in the third section address applications and extensions. Catherine Surra and Thomas Bohman present a theoretical account of the relation between cognition and relationship development. Their analysis is particularly interesting because they consider this relation to vary depending on whether the relationship is stable or unstable. Steven Beach, in an attempt to further our understanding of treatment failures in marital therapy, proposes that compliance is a moderator of marital treatment effectiveness and presents several intriguing examples from the social psychological literature to illustrate how compliance might be therapeutically enhanced.

An especially helpful feature of this volume is that it contains a concluding chapter by John Harvey and Terri Orbuch that successfully integrates and critiques the remaining chapters in the book. In addition, some important topics that were not addressed are highlighted. These include possible cultural, societal, and sociobiological influences on the relation between cognition and close relationships.

This book contains a great deal of valuable information about cognition and close relationships from theoretical, empirical, and, to some extent, applied perspectives. For readers interested in social cognition, this book would be a valuable reference.