Split-second persuasion : the ancient art and new science of changing minds (/review/10.5860/CHOICE.48-6593)

Dutton, Kevin. (/search?exactauthor=Dutton, Kevin) Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010

296p, 9780151012794 \$26.00

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This is a well-researched, wide-ranging treatise on the psychology of persuasion. The first section reviews research from an impressive variety of disciplines, from neuroscience to the biological and social sciences. The second section focuses on the author's main theme--split-second persuasion--a powerful "superstrain" of persuasion that occurs quickly. Written for a less-experienced audience, the book is clear and nontechnical; however, the author seems to go overboard in his attempt to reach a popular audience, and the narrative takes on an ironically salesperson-like and exaggerated tone. For example, Dutton suggests that split-second persuasion "is a kind of persuasion that can get you anything you want." This overreaching style clashes with the author's scholarly credentials (he has a PhD in psychology and is a research fellow at St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, UK). Given the wide range of the material, the book would have profited from tighter organization. This is especially the case in the first section, in which the author labels subsections with clever subtitles that unfortunately lack clarity and do not serve the material well. Overall, however, the book is an intelligent, insightful, and to some extent unique source of information on the psychology of the persuasion process.

Summing Up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-division undergraduates; general readers.

Reviewer: R. Levine (/search?reviewer=R. Levine), California State University--Fresno

Recommendation: Recommended

Readership Level: General Readers, Lower-division Undergraduates, Upper-division Undergraduates

Interdisciplinary Subjects:

Subject: Social & Behavioral Sciences - Psychology (/search?q=&sbj[]=psy)

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