

A COMPENDIUM OF INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY TEXTS 2003 - 2006

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OVERVIEW

Considering the large number of introductory psychology texts available, it is difficult for you, the instructor, to be familiar with the full range of options. To assist in your textbook selection process, we have developed this compendium of individualized and comparative information for all 39 psychology texts and the 19 briefer versions of some of these texts with copyright dates between 2003 and 2006. We used this period of time because almost all introductory textbooks are on a three-year revision cycle. A few are on two- or four-year cycles. The one exception to this is the Gray (2002) textbook, which was included because a new edition will be published with a copyright date of 2007. Thus, this compendium should include all of the texts that are presently viable for your adoption consideration. Additional information on most of the introductory texts included in this compendium can be found in Griggs (1999), Griggs, Jackson, Christopher, and Marek (1999), Griggs, Jackson, Marek, and Christopher (1998), Griggs and Koenig (2001), and Marek, Griggs, and Christopher (1999).

The compendium was prepared using Microsoft Word XP, with files available in “.doc” format. All files are also available in “.rtf” and “.pdf” formats for use with other word processing programs and computer environments. A listing of all files is provided at the end of this “readme.doc” file.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THIS COMPENDIUM

Instructors involved in the textbook selection process are typically concerned about finding a text at a level that is congruent with their students’ abilities. Textbooks vary greatly in the extent to which they offer supportive pedagogical aids and in the level of detail at which material is presented. Based on a classification system developed by Griggs (1999) and consistent with an earlier classification scheme by Whitford (1996), we have classified all texts in this compendium into five levels of difficulty.

The five levels of difficulty are derived from a three-level distinction based on input from introductory psychology textbook authors and editors (Griggs & Jackson, 1989) – high, middle, and low levels. Higher level texts provide great depth and breadth of content coverage and are closely tied to the experimental literature. These texts seem most appropriate for honors classes and students with above average ability. Middle level texts usually have the breadth, but not the depth, of the higher level texts. The writing is more engaging for average students, but the treatment is still scientifically rigorous. Lower level texts represent another step down in depth of coverage and, on the average, include more pedagogical aids and more often provide chapter coverage of nontraditional topics (e.g., applied psychology, sex and gender). Such texts also tend to be more heavily illustrated. Because it includes texts appropriate for all students except the two extremes, the middle category turns out to be much larger than the other two categories. Thus, further differentiation within this category is necessary, and it is broken down into high middle, middle, and low middle along the same lines as the original three levels. This 5-level categorization scheme yields 5 high, 6 high middle, 12 middle, 8 low middle, and 8 low level full-length texts.

We have organized our narrative descriptions of the texts and tables of comparative information by text level. We suggest you begin by examining the narrative descriptions of texts at the level you believe is best-suited to your students, then extend your search to at least one adjoining level to ensure that you consider all viable options. To familiarize you with the information contained in (and excluded from) the narratives, a description of the narrative

structure is included in the description of the organization of the compendium. After reviewing the narratives for the texts at the appropriate levels, you should then review the comparative tables for these texts. Publisher contact information is provided to assist you in obtaining examination copies of the texts that you wish to review in more detail.

ORGANIZATION OF COMPENDIUM

Section I: Individualized Narratives

To provide an overview of each text, we have created a detailed narrative description including a summary of text goals, organization, content, a description of special features, changes from prior editions, and a listing of reviews. Descriptions of briefer versions follow those of the corresponding full-length versions. If a text is available in two versions, we have classified the version that condenses topical information as a briefer version. On the average, briefer versions have fewer pages than their full-length counterparts; however, in some cases, due to differences in factors such as formatting or use of pedagogical aids, there is little difference in page count. Generally, descriptions of briefer versions emphasize comparisons with their full-length counterparts; however, if a text differs substantially in organization or content from its full-length version, the narrative format for the briefer version parallels that of the full-length text. A briefer version is generally at the same level or a level or so lower in difficulty than its corresponding full-length text. However, we strongly recommend that you personally review any briefer versions in which you are interested to ensure the level is appropriate for your students.

Detailed information about narrative structure is included in the “Narratives” directory “Structure.doc” file. Individualized narratives are included in the “Narratives” directory, labeled by level, e.g., “High.doc”, “Himid.doc”, “Middle.doc”, “Lowmid.doc”, and “Low.doc”.

Section II: Comparative Tables

To enable you to make cross-text comparisons, we have prepared three tables each for both full-length and briefer introductory psychology textbooks. Odd-numbered tables are for full-length texts, and even-numbered tables are the comparable ones for the briefer versions.

Tables 1 and 2: Level, Edition, Authorship, and Length Data

Tables 3 and 4: Content Analysis: Percentage of Text Devoted to Topics in Chapter Titles

Tables 5 and 6: Pedagogical Aids

Comparative tables are included in the “Tables” directory, labeled by number, topic, and type of textbook, e.g., “1Full_Length.doc”, “2Briefer.doc”, “3Full_Contents.doc”, “4Briefer_Contents.doc”, “5Full_PedAids.doc”, “6Briefer_PedAids.doc”. An explanation of the items included in the pedagogical aids tables is contained in the file “Pedagogicalaids.doc”.

Section III: Listing of Introductory Psychology Textbooks by Level of Difficulty

To provide a comprehensive source of reference information, we have listed reference data for all textbooks, classified by level of difficulty, in the file “Booklist2006.doc”.

Section IV: Projected New Editions and Texts with 2007 Copyright

To facilitate longer range planning, we have listed those texts for which new revisions or first editions are expected to be available in the latter part of 2006 or early in 2007. Our information is based on information received from publishers’ representatives and on projections based on

publication cycles for current texts. Please contact your publishers' representatives for the latest information on publication schedules.

Information about projected new editions and texts with a 2007 copyright is included in the "2007ed.doc" file.

Section V: Publisher Contact Information

To assist you in obtaining further information directly from publishers or in obtaining the name of your local representative, we have listed the mailing address, phone number, and web site address for contacting each of the eleven current publishers of introductory psychology texts.

Publisher contact information is included in the "Publishers.doc" file.

REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK

Although we no longer expect to update this compendium annually, we would appreciate receiving your feedback. Please e-mail your comments to Cynthia S. Koenig (cskoenig@smcm.edu).

REFERENCES

- Griggs, R. A. (1999). Introductory psychology textbooks: Assessing levels of difficulty. *Teaching of Psychology, 26*, 248-253.
- Griggs, R. A., & Jackson, S. L. (1989). The introductory psychology text market: Perceptions of authors and editors. *Teaching of Psychology, 16*, 61-64.
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- Griggs, R. A., Jackson, S. L., Marek, P., & Christopher, A. N. (1998). Critical thinking in introductory psychology texts and supplements. *Teaching of Psychology, 25*, 254-266.
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- Whitford, F. W. (1996). *Teaching psychology: A guide for the new instructor* (2nd ed., Appendix E, p. 141). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

LISTING OF DIRECTORIES AND FILES

NOTE. All files listed on this page are also available in “.rtf” and “.pdf” formats.

Readme.doc

The current file. Contains suggestions for use of compendium, information about the organization of the compendium, a request for feedback, references, and this listing of files

Narratives (directory)

Contains six files, five of which contain individualized narrative descriptions of textbooks, organized by level of difficulty

Structure.doc	Contains detailed information about narrative structure
High.doc	Contains individualized narratives for high level textbooks
Himid.doc	Contains individualized narratives for high middle level textbooks
Middle.doc	Contains individualized narratives for middle level textbooks
Lowmid.doc	Contains individualized narratives for low middle level textbooks
Low.doc	Contains individualized narratives for low level textbooks

Tables (directory)

Contains eight files, six of which contain tabular data for making cross-text comparisons

Tablelist.doc

Contains listing of tables and their titles (Odd-numbered tables apply to full-length texts and even-numbered tables apply to briefer texts.)

Pedagogical aids.doc

Contains explanation of categories in Table 5 and Table 6 comparing pedagogical aids

1Full_Length.doc

2Briefer.doc

Level, Edition, Authorship, and Length Data

3Full_Contents.doc

4Briefer_Contents.doc

Content Analysis: Percentage of Text Devoted to Topics in Chapter Titles

5Full_PedAids.doc

6Briefer_PedAids.doc

Pedagogical Aids

Booklist2006.doc

Contains listing of introductory psychology textbooks by level of difficulty

2007ed.doc

Contains information about projected new editions and texts with a 2007 copyright

Publishers.doc

Contains information about how to contact publishers of introductory psychology textbooks