SOCIETY OF AUSTRALASIAN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first edition of the SASP Newsletter for 2003. The header optimistically refers to it as the March issue, which we all know is a reasonable, but not terribly close approximation to the truth of the real publication date.

This issue is being circulated electronically only. There has been debate on and off over the last few years about the merits of electronic vs. hardcopy publication. Unfortunately, the economies of shoe-string professional bodies like SASP, and the declining ability of university departments to absorb printing and mailing costs, rather force a resolution to the issue.

All good things come to an end. This is the final edition of the SASP Newsletter to be edited by the Murdoch team. At the SASP AGM in Sydney we will be asking for someone else to take over the fun and honour of editing the Newsletter.

The Editorial Team
Ngaire Donaghue
Mike Innes
Iain Walker
Murdoch University

REPORTS

Post-Graduate Report

Hi all,

Well, it's hard to believe that it is almost SASP conference time again already. Bondi SASP promises to be another great annual conference, this time on the shores of Australia's most famous beach (a claim that it will hold until we

get a few more shark attacks at Cottesloe Beach over here in the west, or until Patrick Swayze and Keanu Reeves film another scene at Bells Beach!). I have been informed that there are approximately **90 postgraduates currently registered** for the conference, which is great to see!

There will be two specific post-grad events in Bondi to watch out for, namely:

●**The Post-Grad Workshops on Thursday, 24th April**
 Two workshops will be run on the Thursday. The first will be presented by Dr Nicholas Haslam and will provide an introduction to Taxometric Methodology. This first session runs from 10am to 11.45am, after which a **free lunch** will be provided. The second workshop is presented by Professor Joe Forgas and deals with the preparation of grant proposals and the writing of publications. Professor Mike Hogg was also going to present this session, but unfortunately he is now unable to make it to Sydney. As a consolation, however, Mike is providing a 6-page handout of his words of wisdom for us all. This session runs from 1pm to 2.45pm. (Conference registration begins back in Bondi at 3.30pm). Details of buses between Bondi Beach and Macquarie Uni will be made available shortly by Cassie Govan on the SASP website.

● **The Post-Grad Bash, Friday Night, 25th April**
At the suggestion of some of the local Sydney-siders, the possibility of a traditional "Bondi Beach BBQ" was being considered for the post-grad get-together on the Friday night. Unfortunately, however, it has just come to our attention that the Waverly Council has recently changed its alcohol policy for Bondi Beach (due to some rather over zealous schoolies late last year). Therefore, this plan may have to be abandoned in favour of finding a cheap BYO

restaurant that will take a very large booking. Due to the need to work out numbers for this booking, registered postgrads will be contacted over the coming weeks to indicate whether they plan to attend. If people wish to discuss anything to do with the Friday night bash then send an email to the saspgrads@mailman.anu.edu.au web list, or email myself (tkurz@central.murdoch.edu.au) and/or Cassie Govan (cgovan@psy.mq.edu.au).

Well, that's about all from me. I look forward to catching you all in Bondi!

Tim Kurz
Murdoch University
(SASP Postgraduate Rep)

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

AASP 2003 in Manila

Members of the Asian Association of Social Psychology (AASP) would like to thank SASP for the hosting of our joint conference in Melbourne 2001. The organizing committee for AASP's 2003 conference would like to invite SASP members to join us in Manila 2003.

James Liu
Victoria University of Wellington

The Fifth Biennial Conference of Asian Association of Social Psychology will be in Manila, the Philippines, July 29 to August 1, 2003. The conference theme will be "The Application of Social Psychology in Asian Cultures."

The 2003 Manila Conference represents the AASP's continuing efforts to develop and promote social psychological research in Asia. The conference will highlight the rich variety of approaches in studying, practising, and applying social psychology in Asian cultures. The conference shall also provide a venue for surfacing theoretical, methodological, and applied issues that may facilitate or hinder the growth of social psychology in Asia.

The conference will feature invited addresses by the following prominent psychologists who are

leaders in the study and application of psychology in Asian cultures: Dr. Toshei Yamagishi (Hokkaido University), Dr. Kwok Leung (City University of Hong Kong), Dr. Sang-Chin Choi (Chung-Ang University, Korea), Dr. Chang Weining Chu (National University of Singapore, Dr. Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono (University of Indonesia), and Dr. Noraini Noor (International Islamic University, Malaysia). AASP President-Elect Dr. Kwang-Kuo Hwang (National Taiwan University) will deliver the Presidential Address.

The conference will serve as a venue for sharing research on the various fields and aspects of social psychological phenomena. There will be oral paper presentations, symposia, and poster presentations in a wide range of fields in basic and applied social psychology, and also other subfields of psychology that deal with the social dimension of the human experience. The official language of the conference will be English.

The conference will be jointly hosted by three universities in Metro Manila: the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU), and the University of the Philippines, Diliman (UP).

The call for abstracts can be found in the Conference website and the deadline for submission of abstracts is on January 30, 2003. For more information on the AASP 2003 Conference in Manila please check the conference website at URL: http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/conferences/aasp or send e-mail to Dr. Allan B. I. Bernardo at bernardoa@dlsu.edu.ph or aasp@dlsu.edu.ph.

Notice of social dilemmas meeting in Sweden in August, 2003

The International Social Dilemmas Conference is held every two years and brings together researchers from Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Political Science and sometimes Philosophy and even the FBI. People interested in attending this meeting in Sweden, August 2003 should contact Mathias Gustafson (Mathias.Gustafsson@psy.gu.se).

Margaret Foddy
Carleton University
Canada

SASP Conference, 2004

Hi everyone, the 33rd Annual Meeting of SASP will take place on 15- 18 April, 2004, and will be held at Auckland (NZ). Further information will be available shortly from the conference website: http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/psych/SASP/ For any inquiries contact Ginny Braun <v.braun@auckland.ac.nz>

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Cassie Govan (postgrad at Macquarie University, Supervisor Kip Williams) and *David Neal* (postgrad at University of Melbourne; Supervisor Yoshi Kashima) have been offered a place in the highly competitive Society for Personality and Social Psychology's Summer Institute in Social Psychology (SISP) in Boulder, Colorado, July 2003. This is a wonderful achievement for Cassie and David, and a great boost for Australasian Social Psychology

Michael Platow has resigned from his position at La Trobe University to take up a position at ANU from the coming July.

OBITUARIES

We have recently witnessed the passing away of three significant figures in the discipline, two of these probably regarded as "greats" while the third was, while not possibly in the top echelon, still held a significant position and had an intellectual history which could be of interest to many scholars who examine the field of social psychology. The three figures are Paul Meehl, Harold (Hal) Kelley and Harold (Hal) Gerard respectively.

Paul Meehl held a hugely important role in the history of the development of psychological testing, research methodology and the understanding of mental illness. He held academic appointments in psychology, law and the philosophy of science making significant and innovative contributions to all those fields. He was early on in his career associated with the development of the MMPI, working at Minnesota with Hathaway and McKinley, and he continued to be associated with the development of such tools over his life.

From a social psychologist's point of view his major contributions were through his methodological contributions. He was a co-author, with Lee Cronbach, of the 1955 *Psychological Bulletin* Citation Classic on construct validity in psychological tests. He also had a laser like perception of the issues involved in the development of sloppy experimental designs. If any one wants a tutorial; on what is wrong with many post facto attempts to understand psychological phenomena they should read his article in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology,* 1971, on "High school year books". A reading of his collected works, *Psychodiagnosis*, published in 1973, should be mandatory for all clinical psychologists, although it is probably too robust an analysis for many minds.

Probably his major claim to greatness was the publication of his book, in 1954, on *Clinical versus statistical prediction*, which caused reverberations in the utility of information in making diagnosis of psychological conditions, which have never died down, and which continue in the field of social psychology in our understanding of how people are able to put together information about another reliably to make evaluative judgements. The impact on social psychology has been large, although it is amazing how many people do not know the name Meehl. His work has been passed down through the writings of David Faust and Robyn Dawes. Dave Myers very recent book on *Intuition* has a large section which places Meehl's work in its appropriate context.

Hal Kelley was an important figure in the field of experimental social psychology from the time of its rise as a specifiable discipline until his death. An early affiliate of the Research Center for Group Dynamics (RCGD) with Lewin and later Festinger at MIT and then Michigan, Kelley was later associated with the Hovland school at Yale then at Minnesota and finally at UCLA. His work was just too important and broad for any social psychologist to be ignorant of it. From his early "cold/hot" experimental study in the Asch impressions paradigm, through his work with the Hovland attitude change group, to his collaboration with John Thibaut on group dynamics, he was a seminal figure. The 1959 book on *The social psychology of groups* laid the foundation for a matrix analysis of interpersonal dynamics, a theme he perceived over many years

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with his work on interdependent relations and close relationships.

Kelley's other reputation was in the field of attribution processes. His 1967 analysis in an ANOVA model of the dimensions of person attribution played a major influence in redirecting the field of social psychology, possibly more fruitful as a result of his analysis than the seminal work of Heider, whose book had acted a s the stimulus of Kelley's work. He brought the areas of interdependence and attribution together in some really beautiful experimental work with Stahelski in the early 1970s on the role of interpersonal expectations and social behaviour in his formulation of the "triangle hypothesis". Hal Kelley continued to publish important theoretical work well into the 1990s. There is an important autobiographical account of his work in the book edited by Rodrigues and Levine, *Reflections of 100 years of experimental social psychology*.

This last book also recorded the life passage of the third person, **Hal Gerard**. Gerard was also affiliated with the RCGD at Michigan in the 1940s/50s and did some critical work in the field of conformity (with Morton Deutsch). Like Kelley he also was associated with attribution research, doing characteristic experimental work on perceptions of attributions, beyond the standard paper and pencil studies. He co-authored, with Ned Jones, the text *Foundations of social psychology* (1967) which many saw as the apogee of the experimental approach to the study of social phenomena before the agonies of the late sixties appeared.

While Hal continued to be affiliated with social psychology he became disenchanted with the field, its approach and its theorising and he turned to the study of the psychodynamic approach, eventually setting up a psychodynamic therapeutic practice in Los Angeles. His account of his intellectual journey appears in the Rodrigues and Levine book and makes fascinating reading for any who are interested in the ways in which careers and interests change over the life span and how those personal changes can reflect the intellectual norms and changes culturally.

These three people all made seminal contributions to the study of human social psychology and manifest in their different ways how close even experimental social psychology

remains to fundamental issues of human behaviour. Meehl's research on psychodiagnosis is fundamental to the processes of social perception, Gerard moved from the study of the social group to the study of the dynamics of personal change and Kelley's whole corpus of research was concerned with the dynamics of interdependence and how relationships are formed, maintained and dissipate..

Mike Innes
University of Adelaide

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BOOK REVIEW

Craig McGarty (1999). *Categorization in social psychology*. London: Sage. (Hardcover: 076195953X, US$103. Softcover: 0761959548, US$30.95).

Review by Lucette Ouschan and Vance Locke, School of Psychology, University of Western Australia.

The topic of categorisation in cognitive and social psychology is almost as old as these disciplines themselves. It therefore would have been an impossible task to attempt to cover the entirety of this area in one book (and even if it were possible one might question the wisdom of such an act). Indeed there are as many ways of approaching the notion of "categorisation" as there are scholars in this field. It should therefore be of no surprise to readers that "Categorisation in Social Psychology" offers its own unique take on what categorisation ought to be about in social psychology. Whilst the book attempts to critically analyse models of categorisation in general and social categorisation in particular it is not intended as a comprehensive review of the categorisation research. In the author's own words the book is intended as "…a book of ideas rather than a book of empirical results". Happily the author appears to have achieved what he set out to do.

There are two main parts to the book. In Part I the author presents a critical analysis of some relevant background literature on categorisation in general and social categorisation in particular. In Part II the author addresses a number of important questions in social categorisation for which he offers some preliminary solutions.

Part I of the book consists of seven chapters. In Chapter 1, the author outlines a descriptive framework to guide his analysis and critique of the categorisation literature. The framework describes constraint relations between three components relevant to categorisation, background knowledge, perceived equivalence and category use. His aim is to make the material more comprehensible by framing the various models of categorisation and his own arguments in terms of this constraint relations formulation. In this chapter he also presents the main assumptions that underpin his approach. Most importantly, the author acknowledges that his approach is largely influenced by Self Categorisation Theory (SCT). Both, Chapters 2 and 3, present a critical review of some of the current cognitive and social cognitive perspectives on categorisation in general. Whilst Chapter 2 deals with questions about the function and structure of categorisation, Chapter 3 deals with issues of category formation and use. In Chapter 4 the focus shifts to some of the social cognitive approaches specifically related to social categorisation. The literature covered in this chapter is presented around three principles believed to be fundamental to the social cognitive approach to categorisation. First, that categorisation reflects biased information processing, second that categorisation involves activation of stored knowledge structures and lastly, that categorisation is constrained by affective and motivational factors. In Chapters 5 and 6 the author explains categorisation from the SCT perspective and other approaches that similarly define categorisation as a 'sense-making' process. In Chapter 7, the author contrasts a social cognitive approach to categorisation with the self categorisation perspective by examining a number of questions relevant to each approach. The author concludes this section by highlighting the main differences between the two contrasting perspectives as well as pointing out some of the key problems with the social cognitive approach.

Part II of the book deals with more specific issues about categorisation in social psychology from the author's own perspective which is based on the SCT and reflects the assumptions outlined in Chapter 1. In Chapter 8 the author suggests that 'diagnosticity' may account for the fluidity in perceptions of coherence of social groups. Chapter 9 is co-authored by Diana Grace, and addresses the problem of social context in categorisation. The constraining influence of social context is explained in terms of 'shared explanations' and 'norms'. In chapter 10, the author deals with a number of issues related to background knowledge in categorisation. The chapter concludes with a proposition that causal explanation and covariation underpin the categorisation process. In the final chapter of the book the main ideas from Part II are summarised and those ideas applied to questions raised in Part I. Finally, the author returns to his main thesis, which is to define categorisation as a 'sense-making' process, and as such re-affirms the SCT perspective.

In this book the author has set himself two formidable tasks. Not only has he attempted to critique the expansive categorisation literature which is both uncompromisingly dense as well as frustratingly varied in its approaches, but in the second part of this book he has also attempted to develop a comprehensive thesis to redress some of the complex scientific problems in social categorisation. The author simplifies this daunting task by outlining a descriptive framework to guide his analysis of the categorisation literature and address his own ideas. In that way he makes the dense material and complex ideas more comprehensible. The author also makes it fairly clear from the outset that his approach is predominantly influenced by (but not necessarily limited to) Self Categorisation Theory. This is particularly important for the second part of the book, given that the topics covered are not only conceptually more demanding than those covered in the first part, but because the problems he raises and the solutions he offers are sometimes idiosyncratic of the SCT perspective on categorisation.

The coverage of material is extremely impressive and accessible to even those with little background in the area. Nevertheless, reading the book is difficult – there's no way around it. Not because the author hasn't done a good job – quite the contrary - but because the research typically carried out in this area is hard to penetrate. Despite this, the author steers a clear and solid path through the literature using SCT as his guide for most of the way. For those readers not sympathetic to the SCT way of seeing the world, then the second part of the book may offer some frustrations.

Given all of this, "Categorisation in Social Psychology" would make an ideal book for the social psychologist wanting a foray into the field

of categorisation. It takes a particularly stance towards the literature but is open and honest about this.

The dense and difficult nature of much of the work in categorisation makes it unlikely to be much use for most undergraduate courses but it would make a useful source for more advanced students and postgraduates. In the end, it's one of those books where you feel happy that someone has written it, but equally happy that it wasn't you.