

The Society for Descriptive Psychology

35th Annual Meeting

October 17-20, 2013

The American Mountaineering Center, Golden, CO

The Annual Meeting of the Society for Descriptive Psychology is an opportunity for professionals from many disciplines to gather and exchange ideas about a wide range of topics related to understanding persons and their behavior. Traditionally the scope of applications for Descriptive Psychology has included the practice of healthcare and psychotherapy; education and human development; societies, communities, and cultures; organizational leadership and effectiveness; forensic, legal, and law enforcement; computer science; and spirituality. The common ground shared by participants is the exciting and expansive conceptual framework of Descriptive Psychology.

The 2013 Meeting features presentations, panels, and participant discussions in the areas shown on the “Program at a Glance” pages and described in more detail on the following pages. In addition, Pre-conference Workshops are offered the first day of the conference. Instructions for conference registration and making hotel reservations in beautiful Golden, Colorado appear at the end of this program announcement.

For further information on the Conference, the Society, or Descriptive Psychology, please contact either:

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Society for Descriptive Psychology www.sdp.org

2013 PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Presenters, Presentations, Panels, and Abstracts: Thirty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Society for Descriptive Psychology

Creating Monsters: The Power of Descriptive Psychology Concepts in Understanding Genocide.

Charlie Kantor, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist, private practice, Rochester, NY

How can ordinary people be transformed into mass murderers? Much of the literature on genocide focuses on the person or the group, but Descriptive Psychology has systematically interrelated concepts of Person and Community to tackle the problem of the "banality of evil". With a particular emphasis on the genocide of the Rwandan Tutsis, I will use the concepts of Person, Community, World, and Status to understand how ordinary people can participate in genocidal acts.

Some Implications of Beliefs in Altruism, Free Will, and Nonreductionism

Raymond M. Bergner, Ph.D.,

Professor of Clinical Psychology

Illinois State University Normal, IL

We explored correlates of individuals' beliefs in altruism, free will, and nonreductionism, as opposed to contrasting beliefs in psychological egoism, determinism, and biological reductionism. Beliefs in altruism, free will, and nonreductionism were associated with heightened senses of meaning in life, higher levels of life satisfaction, greater beliefs in morality as a legitimate and important dimension of life, and higher standards of personal moral conduct; they were not associated with levels of social isolation. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Uncertainty Appraisals: A Radical Reformulation of Subjective Probability

H. Joel Jeffrey, Ph.D.

Professor of Computer Science, Northern Illinois University

When a patient asks a doctor, "What are my chances?" they are not asking what percentage of people recover; they want to know *their* chances. When a judge asks a psychologist, "What are the chances this person will re-offend?" she wants to know what to count on from this person, not what percentage of a group will re-offend—because she has to make a decision about this individual, not a group. When a psychologist asks himself, "What are the chances this person will harm himself or others?" he is not asking, "How many people like this will harm themselves or others?" because he needs to make a decision about that individual, not a group. The doctor, the judge, and the psychologist are asking questions involving what is usually called "subjective probability". Contrary to how it has been thought of since the 17th century, "subjective probability" is not probability at all. We present a radical reformulation of that range of phenomena as uncertainty appraisals, re-descriptions which, as with all other appraisals, carry tautological implications for action. The new formulation yields better ways of replying to

“subjective probability” questions and a new method, Complete Situation Analysis, for combining actual and “subjective” probabilities.

Children’s Development of the Person Concept And “Theories of Mind”

James Holmes, Ph.D.

Can we do better than the concept of Theory of Mind to account for the development of concepts of persons and their behavior? The quick answer is, “Yes,” and we will show how and why that is the case. For the past 20 years, developmental psychologists have focused on a very important question: how do children come to interact with others and more or less understand their behavior? Their attempts to answer have primarily been formulated in terms of a “Theory of Mind” (ToM).

We argue their approach is misguided because the ToM is an inadequate framework. ToM researchers have used the scientific method as a guide for how children might come to understand the world around them. They have typically argued that children collect facts based on a series of events or experiences and formulate naive theories from those facts. More recently, some ToM researchers have turned to computational modeling as a more modern approach to understanding children’s theory formulation. We argue that ToM must be replaced by a focus on the acquisition of the concepts of a person and their behavior. We shall provide examples of concept acquisition that could not possibly be accounted for by developing a theory or by “reading” the minds of others but could be accounted for by the child’s participation in the social practices of the community. Our goal is not simply to critique but to provide researchers with tools that help them understand how children become adult persons who are can understand and interact successfully with other persons.

“What’s in a name?”

C J Peek, Ph.D.

Assoc. Professor, Family Medicine and Community Health, UMN—Twin Cities

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."—Juliet Capulet, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*

That may be both true and practical in context of personal knowledge such as this. But when the challenge is to build up a new field of research and practice across many implementers and scientists over geography and over time, it will not do to have only locally-generated terminology, as in, “We know what we mean by that here.”

Juliet loved the person called Montague, but felt that the name was a meaningless convention in the context of her love. But in the world of science and practice, conventional names (lexicons) are essential to distilling generalizable knowledge or lessons learned from natural experiments going on across the country. With everything going by different names (even if locally ‘smelling as sweet’) there is no way to aggregate and study collective experience and build a field out of it. Building a field is what gives people a shot at not having to re-invent the wheel in their own local settings.

The presentation: First, the creation of consensus lexicons through paradigm case formulation and parametric analysis as outlined in *Descriptive Psychology*. Second, the application of lexicons and their derivatives to the practical questions of multiple stakeholders. Third, the special importance of lexicons in research essential to rapid healthcare transformation. Finally,

how to recognize a situation that requires a definitional framework to continue productive conversation—and get started creating one.

Reports from The Boston Study Group

Wynn Schwartz, Ph.D.

Core Faculty, The Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology Teaching Faculty, Harvard Medical School and The Harvard Extension School

On Indoctrination

An ongoing topic central at The Boston Study Group is how a community's choice principles can change a person's eligibility to live outside of that community. How do methods of influence affect a person's eligibility to engage in other worlds? Religious shunning will be taken as a paradigm case.

Love Across Differences: A Study of Interracial Couples

Anna Berin, Ph.D.

Using structured interviews based on Ossorio and Putman's conceptualization of community and culture; and on Bergner and Roberts's conceptualization of love relationships, significant themes in the romantic lives of 13 interracial couples are described. This study had two objectives: First, explaining how these couples navigate dilemmas of family, community, and culture and maintain a loving relationship. Second, to understand and represent the multiplicity of meanings attributed to love within these relationships. This research yielded seven themes common to these couples.

The Logic of AA, Community, and Addiction

Bryan Harnsberger,

An Analysis of Military Culture through a Descriptive Psychology Lens: One Medical Officer's Experience

Nichole Duckham,

The world of a United States Army Medical Officer is uniquely different from a civilian's. Operating within the limitations and possibilities that exist in the world of the military provides a context for understanding the American soldier and critical access to understanding, critiquing, and increasing behavior potential. We will look at military culture from the perspective of a medical officer and psychology intern using concepts from Descriptive Psychology and Status Dynamics.

Presenting AOC as a First Bite of Descriptive Psychology

Paul Zeiger, Ph.D. & Carolyn A. Zeiger, Ph.D.

Because it is logically fundamental (see CJ Stone: "Actor Central") and widely useful, AOC is an attractive candidate for an intellectual unit to present first when introducing DP. The authors have garnered experience at this; and have accumulated suggestions, principles, and precautions for how to proceed. In particular, the language used, the choice of examples, and the ordering of subtopics are all different if the presentation is being made from faculty to student for the student's own understanding, from therapist to client, or from faculty to student therapist for use with a client.

Actor Central III

Clarke Stone,
Independent Scholar

Continuing the overview of DP begun in AC1 and AC2, we'll look more closely at the job of the professional observer—psychologists, sociologists, etc.—and talk about maxims for how not to go wrong.

“And the beat goes on...and Green Shoots...and maybe some other awardy-type things, too.”

Carolyn A. Zeiger, Ph.D.

From conference to conference, we continue to think, expand, and develop our understanding and applications of Descriptive Psychology throughout the year. Presenters from previous conferences briefly describe where they have taken their work since they last shared it in a DP conference.

Environmental Ethics: A Descriptive Approach

Timothy Doyle, Ph.D.

Dept. of Religion & Philosophy, Northland College

Environmental Ethics uses a five-item case study approach to ethical issues but weakly facilitates dialogue among groups with diverse, strongly held opinions. The Ecofeminist narrative approach offers more inclusive boundary conditions for what is ethical, but it is unclear how to facilitate dialogue inside those conditions. A new model is developed based on the above approaches plus insights from Descriptive Psychology. Participants provide neutral descriptions acceptable to all as accurate portrayals of seven items. Parametric analysis reveals how the conceptions and results are different and the same along those seven dimensions. This precedes actual solution negotiations and prepares the group for dialogue by creating a better appreciation (i.e., a neutral understanding) of the other's position, values, etc.

“Through-Lines” and the Dramaturgical Pattern (and the Problem of Introducing New Concepts)

Wynn Schwartz, Ph.D.

Core Faculty, Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology Teaching Faculty, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard Extension School

A "through-line" is a structure of life episodes or patterns of action that share a common significance. A through-line links the significance of various acts over time. Group discussion will be invited on the use of this concept and how it has been employed in research. Central to this discussion will be the dilemma of introducing a new concept into the established Descriptive Psychology community.

THE GOLDEN HOTEL

The Golden Hotel is located at 800 11th St. in Golden, Colorado.

Conference reservations must be made by phone at (800) 233-7214 or (303) 279-0100.

Please specify the conference and group name when making reservations.

The room reservation deadline is Monday, September 02, 2013.

Room rates:

Single King, Double Queen: \$129 per room, per night, plus local sales tax

The Golden Hotel is 45 miles from Denver International Airport, 12 miles from downtown Denver, and 1000 feet from the American Mountaineering Center (a four-minute walk). It is just off I-70, with complimentary guest parking on-site. The Hotel is adjacent to Clear Creek and the Clear Creek walking path in the heart of Golden's downtown historic district.



The Golden Hotel on Clear Creek

THE HAMPTON INN DENVER-WEST/GOLDEN

The Hampton Inn is located at 17150 W. Colfax Avenue in Golden, Colorado.

Conference reservations may be made by phone at 1-303-278-6600 or online at <http://www.denverwestgolden.hamptoninn.com>.

*Please specify the group code **SDC** when making reservations.*

The room reservation deadline is Tuesday, September 17, 2013.

Room rates:

Standard Double/Double Room: \$109 per room, per night, plus local sales tax

The Hampton Inn is 35.2 miles from Denver International Airport, 12.5 miles from downtown Denver, and 3.5 miles from the American Mountaineering Center. It is just off I-70, with complimentary guest parking on-site.



The Hampton Inn Denver-West/Golden

REGISTRATION

To receive information about registration, please email <mailto:registration@euodp.com>.

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

The [Panhandle Learning Institute](#), a division of The Pelican Enterprise, LLC, will provide up to 12.5 hours of CE Credits for the conference (and up to 7 hours for the pre-conference). Please contact Linda Wasserman at 850-206-4608 or at pelicanpost@cox.net with questions.

The Panhandle Learning Institute is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Panhandle Learning Institute maintains responsibility for this program and its contents.