



43rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Descriptive Psychology



September 30th to October 3rd, 2021 Teleconference Meeting

The Society for Descriptive Psychology is a Community exploring the Person Concept—an interdependent conceptual framework of Person, Behavior, Language, and World—to create common ground for the Human Sciences. The Annual Meeting of the Society is an opportunity to share advances in, and applications of, Descriptive Psychology.

The primary goals of this conference are to continue the exploration of Descriptive Psychology as a conceptual approach to a broad range of topics within the behavioral sciences, neurobehavioral sciences, social sciences, and humanities, to continue building the Descriptive Psychology Community, and to promote further discussion about new approaches to disseminating Descriptive Psychology concepts and applications. The conference will include introductory, intermediate, and advanced presentations.

Topics to be presented at the 43rd Annual Meeting are diverse and address a variety of clinical, social, and ethical issues using concepts from Descriptive Psychology (DP). This year, topics include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, identity, self-concept change, conspiracy communities, and teaching during the pandemic.

The **target audience** for this conference includes participants in clinical, behavioral, computational, and theoretical disciplines, including participants with any degree of knowledge of DP (including none). A broad range of topics within the behavioral sciences will be addressed. To assist people with a developing interest in DP, participants with more comprehensive knowledge will be available for mentoring. The Society particularly encourages attendance by emerging professionals who are interested

in a new and comprehensive conceptual approach to their clinical practice and research work.

[Click Here to register for the Conference](#)

Registration information can also be found at <http://www.sdp.org>.

There are no fees for attending the conference presentations or attaining APA CE. The Society for Descriptive Psychology is a non-profit organization registered in Colorado. Should you wish to express appreciation for the value of the information in the presentations or for the CEs, please consider going to www.sdp.org to contribute to our student scholarship fund (offsetting expenses for students and emerging professionals to present at conferences), or contributing to any non-profit organization serving mental health or community service initiatives that improve the general welfare. For current members in good standing (i.e., those who have paid 2021 dues) who register for this conference, there will be a \$35 discount in the individual or family dues for 2022. More information about this will be made available in the next dues notice.

Continuing Education Information

This program includes 9.5 CE. The University of Denver, Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP) is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. GSPP maintains responsibility for this program and its content.



Conflict of Interest Disclosure: The Society for Descriptive Psychology is a not-for-profit volunteer organization. The Society and all speakers at this conference specifically have no other personal, business, or volunteer affiliations that may give rise to a real or apparent conflict of interest, relative to the content of presentations. In addition to assuring the conflict free status of speakers, the purpose of this statement is also to protect the Organization's tax-exempt status when contemplating a transaction or arrangement that could benefit an officer, director, or employee. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest that apply to non-profit organizations.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

September 30th to October 3rd, 2021

THURSDAY, SEPT. 30TH, EVENING SESSION

PLEASE NOTE: ALL PROGRAM TIMES ARE CENTRAL TIME ZONE!!!

6:15 – 6:30 *Conference Convenes*

Welcoming Announcements

Introduction of the President by the President-Elect

6:30 – 8:00 *Presidential Address*

Cinderella's Slipper: Exploring the Concept of "Fit" in Couple Relationships (1.5 CE)

Laurie Bergner, Ph.D., Private Practice, Normal, IL

As Dr. Pete Ossorio once said, when it comes to how good romantic relationships are or will be, it's all about "selection, selection, selection." In discussing couples' issues, clinicians often focus on personality deficits in one or both individuals. But in my clinical work with couples, I have often found that rather than personality deficits, the core problem may be that they are simply a bad fit in some important ways. It's a different way of clinical thinking about the issues that couples present with, but it's actually something that we implicitly understand and utilize in ordinary usage. In this presentation, I will explore the concept of "fit" in couples' relationships. First, I will look at the definition – or lack thereof – of the concept. I will follow with discussing how and why an initial good fit can become less good, or even bad, over time as a relationship develops. Then I will present a paradigm case of a relationship with good fit and discuss the varied elements that go into fit, discussing how weighting of these varied elements affects the importance (impact) of different kinds of poor fit. I'll follow with examples of common differences in fit, and consider what can compensate for different kinds of lack of fit. Finally, I will discuss how clinicians can use this concept in work with couples.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 1st, MORNING SESSION

PLEASE NOTE: ALL TIMES LISTED ARE IN CENTRAL TIME ZONE!!!

9:00 – 10:00 *Looking for Superman in Dangerous Worlds: Descriptive Psychology Explains Conspiracy Communities* (1.0 CE)

Charles Kantor, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist (Retired),
Rochester, NY

On January 6th, 2021, several hundred American citizens stormed the US Capitol. Provoked by recent conspiracy thinking that the election would be rigged or stolen by Democrats and years of beliefs that tyrannical forces controlled the US government, these citizens violently overwhelmed Capitol police and searched for politicians to “try” for treason. Conspiracy theories are not only associated with particular world views, but also with statuses, social practices, locutions and choice principles. In short, many persons who believe a particular conspiracy world view can be described as a member of a conspiracy community. I will examine the impact of conspiracy theories by using the formal parameters of the Community concept developed by Anthony Putman and by focusing on paradigmatic conspiracy communities associated with the Capitol violence.

10:00 – 10:10 *Break*

10:10 – 11:10 *Why Self-Concepts Are So Resistant to Change: Analysis and Clinical Implications* (1.0 CE)

Raymond Bergner, Ph.D., Professor, Clinical-Counseling Psychology
Program, Department of Psychology, Illinois State University, and Private
Practice, Normal, IL

In this talk, I will (1) review Peter Ossorio's unique formulation of the self-concept; (2) present some logical and empirical justifications for preferring this formulation to existing alternatives; (3) explain, based on this, why self-concepts tend to not change in the face of what would seem to be disconfirming evidence; and (4) describe some therapeutic approaches to modifying self-concepts that are based on Ossorio's view and that avoid many of the pitfalls inherent in mainstream approaches to this endeavor.

11:10 – 11:20 *Break*

11:20 – 12:20 *The ‘Persona’ Concept: A Descriptive Take on Social Learning Theory and Role Development in the Behavior of Persons* (1.0 CE)

Erol Zeybekoglu, Psy.D., Clinical Psychologist, Somerville, MA

This presentation will use Descriptive Psychology concepts and methods of formulation to take a fresh look at Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Maxims relevant to individual and social behavior, deliberate action, motivational weights and reasons, and use of the Judgment Diagram, are shown to provide a more complete account of what actually happens in instances of social learning through observation, adding to Bandura’s list of mediational processes that separate stimuli and responses in the acquisition of learned behavior.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, MORNING SESSION

PLEASE NOTE: ALL TIMES LISTED ARE IN CENTRAL TIME ZONE!!!

9:00 – 10:00 *Getting in on (the) ACT from a DP Perspective* (1.0 CE)

Charles Coté, L.C.S.W., Private Practitioner, Rochester, NY

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, also known simply as ACT, has become one of the fastest growing, “evidence-based,” popular and accepted approaches to psychotherapy. This presentation will provide an overview of ACT, focused particularly on its conceptualization of psychological flexibility and related applicability for therapy, followed by a discussion of Relational Frame Theory (RFT) and Functional Contextualism (FC), comparing it to DP concepts

10:00 - 10:10 *Break*

10:10 – 11:10 *A Descriptive Take on Mindfulness* (1.0 CE)

Walter J. Torres, Ph.D.

Mindfulness, or mindfulness meditation, as a practice and a therapeutic measure, has gained widespread acceptance and prominence. However, some of the core locutions used to speak of mindfulness, e.g., to “refrain from thinking,” muddle our understanding of the practice and its source of value. Improved understanding of its essential features and effects, both as a practice and as a therapeutic tool, can facilitate its adoption and propitious use. Concepts of Descriptive Psychology, in particular, the functions of “Actor - Observer - Critic,” “Appraisal,” and “What the Situation Calls For” are utilized: 1) to articulate more clearly the core features of mindfulness; 2) to distinguish it from other therapeutic tools; and 3) to enhance our understanding and appreciation of its particular value.

11:10 – 11:20 *Break*

11:20 – 12:20 *Identity: An Essential, But Sometimes Neglected, Parameter* (1.0 CE)

Mary K. Roberts, Ph.D., Independent Scholar

After a brief discussion of the place and power of conceptual systems in understanding persons, I will focus on the concept of Identity. “Identity” is one of the eight parameters in the parametric analysis of behavior. Keeping this in mind enables me to answer three intriguing questions:

- (1) What is wrong with the Cartesian inference, cogito, ergo sum (“I think, therefore I am”)?
- (2) Why are “identity crises” not an inevitable part of adolescence?
- (3) What is missing from the widely used Person Characteristics-Circumstances (PC-C) Model for understanding behavior?

SATURDAY, OCT 2, EVENING

PLEASE NOTE: ALL TIMES LISTED ARE IN CENTRAL TIME ZONE!!!

5:30-6:30 *Business Meeting (Members)*

6:30-7:30 *Society Social Hour, Announcements, and Celebration (ALL WELCOME!)*

SUNDAY, OCT 3rd, MORNING SESSION

PLEASE NOTE: ALL TIMES LISTED ARE IN CENTRAL TIME ZONE!!!

9:00 – 10:00 *Shared Language for Shared Work* (1.0 CE)

C.J. Peek, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Family Medicine and
Community Health, University of Minnesota Medical School,
Minneapolis, MN

It takes streams of effort converging from many different quarters to accomplish big things—healthcare and social justice being just two examples. In both cases, people from different disciplines, perspectives, identity, skillset, or sensibility are brought together in shared work. A start to making that possible is good enough shared language rather than constant quibbling about what things mean and whose language is better.

Two examples from 2020-2021 were amplified by the COVID pandemic and civil unrest over racial justice: Accelerated effort to 1) improve “population health” and 2) achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion in medical institutions. A practical task is to achieve good enough shared language—intellectual frameworks—to enable people to move forward together in shared work with less confusion, ambiguity, and conflict than before.

10:00 – 10:10 *Break*

10:10 – 11:10 *Teaching Descriptive Psychology During the Time of COVID: What Concepts Proved Serviceable?* (1.0 CE)

Wynn Schwartz, Ph.D., Lecturer, Harvard Medical School

Spring semester 2020 and 2021, I taught Case Studies in the Lives of Persons to a large group of international and multicultural undergraduate and graduate students at Harvard University. Employing Ossorio’s “Person Concept” and the concepts and methods from various descriptive psychologies, participants constructed a psychological autobiography informed by socially negotiated observer-critic feedback. When midsemester 2020 the pandemic struck, our focus changed to an examination of how this global circumstance affected our lives. This pivot was especially relevant for students in a period of transition, with its normal uncertainties, suddenly intensified by fears of infection, the shutdowns, social distance, masking, Zoom, etc. In effect, the pandemic provided an opportunity to test what descriptive psychological tools are readily serviceable for

understanding and navigating an unexpected time of uncertain duration. Agency descriptions, the three-domain judgment diagram, the parameters of community and culture, the social practices of degradation and accreditation, the through-line concept, Kubovian strands, and the nine foundational maxims proved particularly useful.

11:10 – 11:20 ***Break***

11:20 – 12:20 ***A Relationship View of the Person Definition*** (CE is not being offered for this presentation)

C.J. Stone, Independent Scholar

Ossorio stated two versions of the Person definition: “an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of Deliberate Action in a dramaturgical pattern”; and “an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of engaging in the Social Practices (SP) of a community.” To engage in an SP is to give, receive, or refuse a status assignment. Thus, “A Person is an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of giving, receiving, or refusing the Statuses of a community.” Further, a status says how X is to be treated, and how X is expected to treat us. Thus, a status is assigning a set of relationships between us and X.

Expressing the Person definition in those terms: an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of engaging in the Relationships of a community. Pathology is a significant restriction in engaging in the Relationships of a community. For therapy, if persons should be able to love, work, and play, then these are core relationships. Looking at which relationships in each category are not working well, are being avoided, are being handled well, and so on, may give a map of useful changes for any particular person.

12:20 – 12:30 ***Meeting Announcements and Adjournment***

**Further Information About the Society,
Descriptive Psychology, and Student Support**

Information about The Society for Descriptive Psychology can be found on the Society's website: <http://www.sdp.org>. A wealth of publications, including books, articles, and presentations by Peter Ossorio, plus many publications by SDP members, are available on the website.

Please consider supporting student presentations by donating to The Student's Fund. The Society for Descriptive Psychology is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations may be tax deductible. Please consult with your tax advisor.