

AASP Conference 2001: The Application of Social Psychology in Asian Cultures

Asian Social Psychology in the 21st Century

The Fourth Biannual Conference of the Asian Association of Social Psychology in Melbourne, Australia

The fourth conference of our association took place from the 10th to 13th of July, 2001, on the campus of the University of Melbourne, Australia. It was a ground breaking conference for us in ways more than one. First of all, this was our first conference in the century and the millennium as the theme of the conference, Asian social psychology in the 21st century, signified.

Venturing into the wider world

It was also the first time in which, following the successes of the Hong Kong, Kyoto, and Taipei conferences, AASP ventured out of the comfort zone of East Asia into the wider world. Symptomatically, we held our first ever conference in conjunction with the annual conference of the Society of Australasian Social Psychologists (SASP), an association of social psychologists in Australia and New Zealand.

Locals say there is a "tyranny of distance" for Australia, aka terra australis incognita. Indeed, it is probably the last continent to be populated by humans, indigenous people known as Australian Aborigines by about 40,000 years ago. It has the distinction of the last continent colonized by Europeans only in the 18th century. It is probably fair to say that Australia is a former colonial outpost of the British empire, which is so far away from Europe that the then British government saw it fit to send petty criminals out of sight after North American penal colonies became unavailable in the 18th century due to the independence of the United States of America.

Despite the distance, a number of delegates hailed from a variety of countries, including Canada, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the United States, and Thailand. More than 200 independent contributions (both individual papers and symposia) were made, and the intellectual climate of the conference was charged with excitement.

Conference format

The conference was opened by Professor Richard Larkins, the Dean of the Faculty at the University of Melbourne, and followed by Professor Susumu Yamaguchi's AASP Presidential Address and Professor Kazuya Horike's JGDA Presidential Address. A special keynote address was given by Professor Sik-hung Ng (City University of Hong Kong), a native of Hong Kong and a long time resident of New Zealand, at the conference dinner which was

held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, a "sacred place" for Australians as a Mecca of cricket and Australian rules football.

Each day began with an invited speaker's hour long presentation delivered by Professors Klaus Fiedler (Heidelberg), Ken'ichi Ohbuchi (Tohoku), and Graham Vaughn (Auckland). Of special note is the fact that two Filipino social psychologists, Drs Augustus Anonuevo and Augusto Legaspi became the first recipients of the Kuo-Shu Yang Travel Award, initiated by Professor Kwok Leung and established by numerous donations from colleagues in Taiwan. Their contributions were invaluable in enriching our intellectual resources. On every day, a leisurely lunch time was coupled with the customary poster sessions, in which most delegates spent hours on end discussing social psychology (as well as other things).

On the third day of the conference, SASP delegates began to arrive for their conference, and a number of jointly sponsored activities were held on the third and fourth days of the conference. As one of the joint activities of the AASP and SASP, three workshops were organized by Dr Emiko Kashima, including Dr Michael Platow's (La Trobe) "Conference Presentation in English," Dr Michael Smithson's (Australian National University) "Confidence Intervals in Statistical Inference", and Professors Kwok Leung (City University of Hong Kong) and Cynthia Gallois's (Queensland) "Cross-Cultural Research Method." In addition, a number of symposia were held simultaneously, covering a wide range of topics such as culture and psychology, social cognition, small group processes, and social identity processes. At one time, six parallel sessions were concurrently running! On the last day, a reception was held with an opportunity for both AASP and SASP members to mix and talk while sampling local Australian wines, bringing the four-day conference to an end.

The beginning of an era

In many ways, the conference marked the beginning of an era for the Asian Association of Social Psychology. We will be a more confident and internationally minded organization with an eye to social psychology in the world while clearly establishing strong roots in the soil of Asia. With an increasing number of colleagues attending not only from East Asia but also South East Asia and South Asia, our claim to show case the best of Asian social psychology is now beginning to have stronger validity.

Clearly, with an announcement to hold our fifth conference in Manila, the Philippines, in 2003, the AASP shows a sign of its likely expansion in the future. Indeed, there is a concrete indication. To the call of submissions for the volume four of the Progress of Asian Social Psychology, our conference proceedings, 31 papers were submitted. Five editors, Drs Yumi Endo (Nara), Emiko Kashima (Swinburne), Yoshi Kashima (Melbourne), Cynthia Leung (Victoria University, Australia), and John McClure (Victoria University of Wellington), are busily working on the submitted papers. Although the submissions are generally of high quality, some papers are likely rejected as the space limitation does not permit the publication of all the papers submitted. A high rejection rate, though regrettable in one respect, is a sure sign that the intellectual quality of the association activities is on the increase.

There are a lot of reasons to look forward to our next conference in Manila.

Yoshi Kashima

Chair, Conference Organizing Committee