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Group and Intergroup Processes: An Introduction

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THIS ISSUE of *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* is a special issue. It presents a selection of articles based on talks given at the inaugural group and intergroup processes pre-conference of the meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), held in Austin, Texas, in January 2004. It is not a thematic special issue in the sense of focusing narrowly on a specific area of research, but it is thematic in the sense that it showcases the breadth and diversity of contemporary research on group processes and intergroup relations.

We decided to begin a group and intergroup processes pre-conference at SPSP because in a few short years SPSP has become the undisputed peak annual gathering of social psychologists from around the world—a gathering that is inclusive, diverse, and now very large. Almost every area of social psychology seemed to have or be about to have its very own pre-conference—except, that is, group and intergroup processes. This lacuna upset us; especially given the illustrious history and contemporary prominence of groups research in social psychology. We decided to fix it, with the intention

that the pre-conference would become a permanent feature of SPSP conferences.

Groups research has a number of specialist journals including this one, a long-running (since 1994) pre-conference at the annual meeting of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, and a strong representation at the three-yearly general meeting of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology. In addition, of the almost 1000 social psychologists who have submitted their professional profiles to the Social Psychology Network (SPN, <http://www.socialpsychology.org/>), 974 have listed their interests across 34 different areas—of these, 303 (31%) identify group processes and/or intergroup relations as one of their research areas.¹ Finally, group processes and intergroup relations feature prominently in the

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three most recent handbooks of social psychology. Six out of 37 chapters in Gilbert, Fiske, and Lindzey's 1998 two-volume 1,950 page *The handbook of social psychology* are dedicated to 'collective phenomena'; two of the four separate volumes that make up Hewstone and Brewer's 2001 *Blackwell handbook of social psychology* (2,530 pages) are on group processes and intergroup relations (51 out of 101 chapters); and Hogg and Cooper's 2003 *The Sage handbook of social psychology* (525 pages) is divided into five sections of which two are on group processes and intergroup relations (9 out of 23 chapters).

In this special issue of *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, there are six articles. They encompass processes within groups and processes between groups, and span both small groups and large-scale social categories. Adam Galinsky, Gillian Ku, and Cynthia Wang discuss how taking the perspective of another helps strengthen social bonds because of greater self-other overlap. Looking, to some extent, at the other side of the coin of belongingness and inclusion, Lisa Zadro, Kip Williams, and Rick Richardson report a series of studies showing that people tend to react more negatively to being ostracized by other people, than to being verbally attacked in the form of an argumentative dispute.

Brian Lickel, Toni Schmader, Mathew Curtis, Marchelle Barquissau and Daniel Ames focus on feelings in group contexts, in particular the conditions under which people can feel ashamed or guilty about other people's behavior. Vicarious guilt rests on feelings of interdependence with others, whereas vicarious shame rests on feelings of common social identity with others. This difference between interdependence and identity emerges in a slightly different guise in the paper by William Maddux and Marilynn Brewer, who draw on literature showing that women base their attachment to groups more on relationships, and men more on common category membership. Flowing from this, they report a trust-dilemma study showing a gender

difference in the bases of trust—women base it more on relationships and men more on shared group membership.

Relating to more large-scale intergroup behavior, Richard Crisp and Sarah Beck report two experiments focusing on the interactive roles of strength of ingroup identification and perceived ingroup-outgroup attribute overlap in the reduction of intergroup bias. Finally, Hillary Haley and Jim Sidanius provide an overview of social dominance theory, and explore ways in which organizations and their members try to find optimal fit between the organization's ideological culture and individual members' orientation toward hierarchy. Hierarchy enhancing organizations and hierarchy enhancing individuals go together well, as do hierarchy attenuating organizations and hierarchy attenuating individuals.

These six articles only scratch the surface of contemporary research on group and intergroup processes. But they certainly give a flavor of the diversity and breadth of this excellent research. We hope that research such as this, and more broadly on group processes and intergroup relations, continues to be an important feature of pre-conferences and symposia at SPSP and the other main social psychology meetings around the world.

Note

1. The SPN database is constantly evolving and the reported frequencies are accurate as of October 5, 2004.

References

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