



# CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

## Section on Environmental Psychology

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*Section members conduct research and advance theory to understand and to improve interactions between human behavior and the physical environment, both built and natural. Our members' varied interests include: management of scarce natural resources; effects of extreme environments on personality and behaviour; territoriality and personal space; behavioural and mood effects of lighting and noise; perception and evaluation of building function and aesthetics; and, architectural design. Members receive the section newsletter, published three times annually.*

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### Spring/Summer 2003

#### Message from the Editor

Kate Charles, PhD., *National Research Council of Canada*, [kate.charles@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca](mailto:kate.charles@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca)

Welcome to a new section newsletter! I hope you are all enjoying a pleasant summer, either in Canada or elsewhere in the world. This issue includes some interesting articles, both from our new section Chair, Dr. Luc Pelletier, and from members who have attended conferences in recent months. I hope you will find it useful and thought provoking.

Contributions to future editions are most welcome, and can be sent to me at the email address above, or to:

Kate Charles, National Research Council of Canada, Institute for Research in Construction, Building M-24, 1200 Montreal Road, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0R6.

tel: 613-991-0939 / fax: 613-954-3733

#### Message from the Section Chair: Why are we doing things for the environment (al section)?

Luc G. Pelletier, PhD., *School of Psychology, University of Ottawa* [social@uottawa.ca](mailto:social@uottawa.ca)

I would like to use this first newsletter article to introduce myself and to present my vision of environmental psychology. I am a professor in social psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Ottawa, since 1989. I received my Ph.D. from the

Université du Québec à Montréal. My interests and major research endeavours are in the areas of human motivation and self-regulation. I have studied motivation in a variety of settings, including the motivation for pro-environmental behaviours.

My understanding of environmental psychology could probably be best described on a continuum that ranges from the study of the impact of the spatial-physical environment on human behaviour to the influence of human behaviour on the natural environment, and sustainable development. The environmental psychology that emerged in the 1950s and the 1960s is mainly concerned by the physical features of the environment where human behaviour takes place. My understanding of the main goal of that research is to better understand the relationships between the physical environment and human behaviour. One interesting aspect of that approach is that human behaviour is mainly conceived as a consequence of a built (from an architectural, technological, or engineering point of view) physical environment. At the other end of the environmental psychology continuum, the influence of human behaviour on the natural environment and the consequences for a sustainable development perspective emerged in 1970s and the 1980s as a result of more and more pressing social problems. One interesting characteristic of the sustainable development perspective is that when we consider the natural environment, human behaviour is usually conceived as a cause of the physical environment. It would probably

come as no surprise that when we consider our membership, both ends of the continuum are well represented in our section.

You may probably be asking yourself, where do I fall on this continuum? Clearly, my interests have been at the “sustainable development” end of the continuum. Over the last 10 years I have asked the question “Why are you doing things for the environment?” to thousands of people as a way of identifying different forms of (self-determined and non self-determined) regulation for pro-environmental behaviours and predicting the adoption, the maintenance, and the integration of these behaviours in people’s lifestyle. When I was trying to find an angle for this first newsletter article, I thought of asking a second related question “Why are we doing things for the environmental section?”

The answer to the first question may be obvious to most of you: Because you care, or because the environment is an integral part of your life and it makes sense to do something to protect it or to preserve our resources for future generations to come. These reasons make sense to me too and for many years they seemed to be enough to justify my “pro-environmental” actions and possibly some of my research activities. However, those reasons did not seem to be enough to justify more involvement outside my home or my laboratory, or as an active member of the section. So, when I was asked to take over as chair of the section, I asked myself “why would I do it?”

Because, it is obvious to me, that the research on environmental issues will increase in importance over the next few years. One has only to think about population growth, the depletion of natural resources, the double-edged sword of over consumption, the lack of conservation, and the achievement of an ecologically sustainable future, to come to the conclusion that substantial changes to human lifestyles will be required in the near future. When we think about issues like these, it becomes obvious to us that psychology should play a very active role in changing the human behaviours that have caused those problems.

I think of the environmental psychology section as a section that can make other psychologists more aware of the importance of studying issues related to the environment and a section where research from different fields can be integrated and disseminated. Several sections within CPA could offer interesting possibilities for close or relatively close connections with the Environmental section. For example, the Disaster and Trauma section may share similar interests with us concerning the trauma associated with an ecological or

human made environmental disaster; the Psychology in Education section may be interested by the education of the public on environmental issues or the introduction of environmental education program in a school curriculum; the Family section may have something to say about population control and family planning programs as strategies to reduce population growth or the implications over time of having children in a world that may not offer a sustainable future; the Developmental section could be interested by the implications and the psychological consequences over time of living in that world; the Health section could possibly become more interested by the consequences that environmental conditions may have on physical or mental health, or how the perception of health risks may influence people to change their pro-environmental behaviours; the International and Cross-Cultural section could have something to say about conflicts related to the exploitation of limited natural resources or conflicts about causes of environmental problems; the Perception, Learning, and Cognition section may be interested by the relationship between the perception of environmental risks and the decision to become more or less active; the Industrial-Organizational section could share their views on how new environmental demands or laws about the environment may affect an organization or an industry; the Social and Personality section could be interested by the strategies used to persuade people to do something about the environment, the dissonance between positive and negative environmental behaviours, the potential conflicts between individuals that do not share the same environmental values ( I apologize for the other connections that may be obvious to some of you but that I could not think of).

I would like all our members to think of our section as a section that could be connected to all those fields and to think of the “Environment” as an ideal context to test a theory or to apply research. The best way to increase the vitality of the environmental section may be by increasing our engagement with compatible specialties in psychology. So, next time, when you discuss research with one of your colleagues, I would like to encourage each of you to discover how their research could become interesting for us.

### **New Members**

A warm welcome to our newest members:

- Christopher Spencer (Sheffield University, UK)
- Jan Geerts (Technical University of Eindhoven, The Netherlands)

## **2003 Business Meeting**

The section's annual business meeting did not take place at the CPA convention in Hamilton, because quorum was not reached. The annual report and financial statement will be sent by mail to all members in late July, along with a mail-in ballot for section officers.

Nonetheless, the scheduled change of officers took place at the CPA Convention. Dr. Luc Pelletier assumed his responsibility as the new section Chair. Dr. Kate Charles and David Eichhorn agreed to return in their positions as Newsletter Editor and Webmaster, respectively. Dr. Jennifer Veitch remains on the executive as Past-Chair. The positions of Secretary-Treasurer and Chair-Elect (who would take office in June 2004) were not filled at the business meeting. Nominations for these positions were gathered recently, through the section's email discussion list, and election will take place by mail-in ballot. Look out for the ballots, arriving by regular mail shortly.

### **What I did while not on holidays.... A report on the 2003 CPA Convention**

Jennifer Veitch, *National Research Council of Canada*

There are those (including some family members!) who think that going to a conference is time off from work. I don't find it so – there are many events to attend and people to see, so the days are long and full. Although there was a small Environmental program at CPA this year, I didn't find it empty by any means.

The highlights were two invited addresses on Friday, June 13. Although not chosen to build a theme, I found a commonality: They each challenged their audiences to ethical behaviour, behaviour that is caring towards others and the environment.

The first of these was our joint CPA/Section invited speaker, Dr. Gary Evans. Gary's work will be known to many Section members, for it covers several important aspects of the field: environmental cognition, environmental stressors (particularly noise), and physical environments in schools. Most recently he has turned his attention to housing quality and its effects on health and well-being, particularly of children. This was the topic of his address to CPA. Those who missed it, missed out on a provocative lecture.

He started from the observation that much research on antecedents of mental health problems in children starts by controlling for socio-economic status, even though it is the best predictor of mental health problems after family history and physical health problems. Rather than being a confounding variable, SES is the source of

a lot of variance in its own right. When one looks at the risk factors associated with being of low income, one finds that being poor (in his U.S. sample) increases one's risk of being exposed to many stressors, both social and physical. On the social side, a poor child is more likely to have divorced parents, more likely to experience harsh discipline, more likely to be exposed to violence, and less likely to receive cognitive stimulation (e.g., by being read to, or having books in the home...). This is only a partial list. On the physical side, a poor child is more likely to experience higher air pollution, lower water quality, more lead exposure, and higher noise exposure (again, this is a partial list). One can sum the various risk factors that these children experience, and in so doing one finds that the more of these multiple stressors that the child experiences, the higher the likelihood of adverse physical health outcomes (this is a strong prediction) and the higher the likelihood of adverse social-behavioural outcomes, such as developmental delays. The work in this area offers a way to identify the best levers for action on these social problems; by improving our understanding of the various risk factors we might be able to determine where to invest to improve matters. I'm pleased to say that there is also work along similar lines being done in Canada, including the work reported by Dr. Robert Gifford in a previous SEP Newsletter.

Our Section Keynote Speaker was Dr. Ingrid Stefanovic, who is an environmental philosopher from St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. She spoke about her work on "Sustainability and Sense of Place". As you might think from the title, her approach is phenomenological, and therefore uses qualitative methods to understand the values that we attach to natural places. I found her a very engaging speaker, and the first phenomenologist I have heard who argued for a co-operative combination of qualitative and quantitative research to help us to understand and to solve environmental problems. Part of her lecture was an example of her work, a study of values attached to the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail, a 600 km trail from Niagara Falls to Trenton, Ontario. She has interviewed and walked the trail with adults and with children, to uncover the qualities that each finds in that setting. The adults, she said, tended to look at the lake as a vista; the children, by contrast, wanted to get *in* it. Quantitative methods might allow one to tell whether such differences are real, or chance findings because of the particular people she studied. Furthermore, she said, psychologists have expertise that philosophers don't: psychologists know something about behaviour change, which clearly we need if we are to live sustainably. Her

closing remark was a quotation from Lisa Newton's book *Ethics and Sustainability*: "The person who would live a caring life in community lives in contradiction if he or she lives in violation of environmental sustainability."

Personally, I found both addresses to be inspiring and challenging, perhaps leading to new research directions and certainly to self-reflection. The CPA convention week was a full one, but its success should be measured in how its attendees grow and change over the year to come. I look forward to more challenges next year in St. John's.

### **Report on EDRA Conference, May 21-24, 2003**

Cheuk F. Ng, PhD., *Athabasca University*

I attended the 34<sup>th</sup> Environmental Research Design Association (EDRA) Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the US, May 21-24, 2003.

The Residential Environments Network hosted a full-day interactive seminar on the first day. The focus was on current research and projects involving residential environments. The presentations included:

- "Defining and measuring residential quality" by Robert Marans. He talked about his residential satisfaction model and the 2001 Detroit Area Study. For more information, visit <http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/workfolio/DAS2001>
- "Housing and mental health" by Gary Evans, Nancy Wells, and Annie Moch. Gary Evans talked about their housing quality measure, and the relationships between housing quality and mental health.
- "Critical attributes of the home environment from a child's perspective" by Lorraine Maxwell
- "Residential nature and healthy functioning children: Exploring potential connections" by Andrea F. Taylor
- "Degrees of institutionality in housing: Spatial structure of selected housing types" by Julia W. Robinson
- "Cabins... Designs for private, personal spaces" by Dale Mulfinger
- "Lesson for today from the Greenbelt Towns Program" by Sherry Ahrentzen

On the second day, I presented a paper entitled "Living Arrangements and Housing Conditions of South Asian Immigrants in Canada". The paper presents the preliminary findings of a component of a collaborative research project on the integration experiences of immigrant seniors funded by the Prairie Centre of

Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration. My paper was part of a symposium entitled "Immigrant and Ethnic Spaces". The other presentations included:

- "Making a home: Supporting the Hmong-American identity through housing design" by Tasoulla Hadjiyanni and Julia Robinson
- "Identifying cultural marks in an urban ethnic space: The significance of semi-fixed elements and activity systems" by Nisha Fernando
- "Planning a religious neighbourhood: A study of an Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood" by Michal Mitrany and Sanjoy Mazumdar

Present at the symposium were about 30 researchers in architecture, urban planning, psychology, and other disciplines from mostly the U.S., but also from Korea, Kenya, Hong Kong, and other parts of the world. The presentations generated an interesting and useful discussion on how to design housing in a culturally sensitive way and yet suitable for the mainstream society. Hadjiyanni and Robinson's project is an illustration of a successful story.

There were several sessions on aging and the environment that I could not attend. One of the keynote speakers, Julienne Hanson – a British expert on housing for the elderly – talked about the problems in the design of subsidized housing for older people in Britain and her recommendations for minimum space and privacy requirements for such housing based on her research findings.

There were a couple of sessions organized by the new Cyberspace Environment Network. The first session was entitled "Technology and the Contemporary University". The presentations included:

- "Users' voices on technology in the contemporary university" by Leanne Rivlin, David Chapin, and Karen Steinmayer. They talked about how in 1996, their expensive "state-of-the-art technology" university office building became dysfunctional from the users' perspective.
- "An introduction to distance learning environments: Students, faculty and the virtual university" by Carol Oliver
- "The tangled web of pedagogy and technology" by Joan Greenbaum

The second session was a workshop on "Research design and use of the internet". The presentations included:

- "Researching the Internet from a social-ecological approach" by Maria Montero and Daniel Stokols

- “Personal space in a digital age” by Robert Sommer
- “Cooperative design of cyber environments” by Joan Greenbaum
- “What is so spatial about older people’s personal homepages?” by Heather Larson
- “The faculty in the context of distance learning environments” by Carol Oliver

At every EDRA conference, a number of guided tours are organized for the conference attendees, and this one was no different. This year’s tours included affordable housing, design for the elderly, neighborhood development, a human-factors lab, Mall of America, and hydrotopia. As a resident of the Greater Edmonton area who has visited the West Edmonton Mall often (sometimes involuntarily!), I felt somewhat obliged to see what the other big mall – the Mall of America – is like. We were supposed to get a “behind the scene” look at the mall development, but was told at the last minute that it would not be possible for security reasons – the homeland security alert was raised to orange on that particular day! Instead, an architect who was involved in the development of the mall gave us some facts and figures, and a synopsis of the concepts and ideas that led to the final design of the mall.

There was not much time for sightseeing. A round trip between the “Twin Cities” of Minneapolis and St Paul on the public transit was all I could afford. Overall, it was an interesting conference for me.

### **Influential Figures in Environment-Behaviour Research**

This announcement appeared on the Environmental Psychology in the UK’s (EPUK) email discussion list: As the past of environmental psychology lengthens, it is even more important to remember its origins not for sentimental reasons, but to understand why and how the discipline came into being. What were the motivations of the first researchers who had the insight to see that the social sciences in general and psychological theory and methodologies in particular could make an invaluable contribution to understanding and addressing the problems of the environment? How many generations of researchers does it take before a discipline or a sub-discipline can be said to be established? Indeed, can we speak of ‘generations’ of environment-behaviour researchers or environmental psychologists yet? If so, how many generations have there been? Who comprises the first generation? Who will go down in history as the founders of our field? Who have been influential in shaping the field?

Under the auspices of the International Association for People-Environment Studies (IAPS), David Uzzell (president of IAPS, professor at University of Surrey, England) and Gabriel Moser (professor at Université René Descartes, Paris) are planning to edit a book on the development of environmental psychology and environment-behaviour research. This book will not be a history in the conventional sense, as we wish to tell the story through the words of those who founded and shaped the field.

The development of a discipline owes a great deal and debt of gratitude to the personal careers and long-standing endeavours of research groups across the world. Our aim is to:

1. bring together the views of the main figures in this interdisciplinary area
2. explore how these figures came to be interested in the field and by whom they were influenced in their thinking
3. discuss the major contributions of environment-behaviour approach as seen by its major representatives, and how they see the future of environmental psychology.

As a first stage in this process, we are writing to invite you to tell us who you think have been (and maybe still are) important figures in the field of environment-behaviour research. They may be important and influential because

- they were the first people to work in a particular area of environment-behaviour relations
- they were the first E-B researcher in your country
- their theory or methodology has been very influential

You are welcome to suggest more than one person and please tell us briefly why you have nominated them. When we have collected this information we will endeavour to interview as many of these people as possible so that the story of environmental psychology and environment-behaviour research can be told in their words. We believe that this publication will not only be of interest to students and an invaluable teaching resource, but will also provide an important insight into the development of environmental psychology and its future direction.

Please send your nominations directly to:

[d.uzzell@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:d.uzzell@surrey.ac.uk) or [moser@psycho.univ-paris5.fr](mailto:moser@psycho.univ-paris5.fr)

## **Request for Presenters – Housing and Health Symposium**

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) is hosting a Health and Housing Symposium in Calgary, Alberta, on October 2-4, 2003. CHRA is the national voice for affordable housing for low- and modest-income households and the national network for building on capacity in our communities to meet housing needs.

One of the symposium objectives is to showcase examples of best practices in health and housing across Canada. We are looking for organizations or groups who have successfully implemented housing interventions with an intended health impact, or for clientele defined by existing health conditions (e.g. clients with mental illness, HIV, disability, etc.) and who would be willing to share their experiences at the symposium.

Participant selection will be based on a range of criteria, including regional representation and diversity of client groups. Participating organizations will be asked to prepare a presentation, provide information to be included in a written program summary, and to send to the symposium (at CHRA's expense) a spokesperson that can speak knowledgeably and answer questions about the housing program. If you wish to be considered, please send Tania Kyle, of the Centre for Health and Policy Studies at the University of Calgary ([tkyle@ucalgary.ca](mailto:tkyle@ucalgary.ca)), the following information by

**August 11<sup>th</sup> 2003:**

- name
- location
- program description
- target population
- program objectives
- key successes

James R. Dunn, Assistant Professor, Centre for Health and Policy Studies, University of Calgary.

### **Recent Publications**

Children, Youth and Environments (formerly Children's Environments), can now be accessed online, at <http://cye.colorado.edu>

Suedfeld, P. (2003). Canadian space psychology: The future may be almost here. *Canadian Psychology*, 44(2), 85-92.

The latest issue of the Journal of Environmental Psychology – vol. 23, no. 2, June 2003 – contains several articles on restorative environments, including

discussions on tracking restoration, effects of natural and urban environments, and environmental preferences. The issue also contains articles on wayfinding strategies, reactions to environmental risks, learning of interior features, noise and stress, and perceptions of global environmental change.

The previous issue of the Journal of Environmental Psychology – vol. 23, no. 1, March 2003 – contains articles on pro-environmental behaviour intentions, ecological behaviour, environmental concern and related behaviours, homeowner use of toxic household products, emotional relationships with places, view and colour effects on tasks, social and psychological factors in environmental activism, and perceptions of human ecology.

The latest issue of Environment and Behavior – vol. 35, no. 3, May 2003 – contains articles on nature as a stress buffer, mood and place preference, design of outdoor pathways on user perceptions, territorial behavior, littering behaviour, and person-environment fit on resident satisfaction.

The previous issue of Environment and Behavior – vol. 35, no. 2, March 2003 – contains articles on Ervin Zube's contributions to the environment-behaviour field, exurban and suburban developments and place, signage and location effects on recall, territory and boundaries, student artwork and sense of school ownership, and students' car use.

A recent issue of Built Environment – vol. 28, no. 4 – is a special issue on urban-rural relationships, and includes discussions on policy and planning issues, individual preferences, spatial strategies and territoriality.

### **Future Conferences**

American Psychological Association (APA) Annual Convention: 7-10 August 2003, Toronto, ON.

For further information, see:

<http://www.apa.org/convention>

Royal Geographic Society Annual Conference: 3-5 September, 2003, London, UK.

Including a one-day session on 'Sustainable development and governing of rural and urban areas' organized by the Planning and Environment Research Group and Rural Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society-Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG).

For more information, see: [www.ex.ac.uk/ebrg](http://www.ex.ac.uk/ebrg)

Methodologies in Housing Research Conference: 22-24 September 2003, Stockholm, Sweden.

Organised by the International Association of People-Environment Studies (IAPS), the European Network on Housing Research (ENHR) and The Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm.

For further information, see: <http://www.iaps-association.org/PaperCallFinal.pdf>

Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention: 10-12 June 2004, St. John's, Newfoundland.

For further information, will be available later in the year on the CPA website: <http://www.cpa.ca>

**Deadline for abstracts will be mid-October 2003.**

18<sup>th</sup> IAPS Conference – Evaluation in Progress: Strategies for environmental research and implementation: 7-10 July, 2004, Vienna, Austria.

For further information, see:

<http://info.tuwien.ac.at/iaps2004>

**Deadline for abstracts is Sept 30<sup>th</sup> 2003.**

Open Space: People Space: 27-29 October, 2004, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Hosted by OPENSspace: research centre for inclusive access to outdoor environments. The programme will include contributions from an international array of experts covering the major themes of the conference: children and young people; disability and social inclusion; health and restorative environments; tourism and leisure. Key speakers already confirmed include Mark Treib, architect and modernist landscape historian, Judy Ling Wong, Black Environment Network, Ken Worpole, urban policy expert, and Nilda Cosco, educational psychologist.

For further information, see:

<http://www.openspace.eca.ac.uk> or contact [openspace@eca.ac.uk](mailto:openspace@eca.ac.uk), +44-131-221-6177.

**Call for papers will be announced in October 2003.**

### Submissions

Submissions – including notices of upcoming events, calls for papers, commentaries, short articles, book reviews, recent publications, teaching, research and practitioner news – are all welcome. Send submissions to Kate Charles (see contact details on p.1).

### Membership

Membership of the section is only \$5/yr and includes three newsletters and access to the new section email discussion list. To join, CPA members can contact Sylvia Spallin: [cpamemb@cpa.ca](mailto:cpamemb@cpa.ca) Non-CPA members can become associate members through the Behaviour-Environment Interest News Group (BEING) – contact Mark Sandilands: [marksan@telusplanet.net](mailto:marksan@telusplanet.net)