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Book Reviews

Paul A. M. Van Lange

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ture by making frequent references to nationality that suggest the two are essentially equivalent. Ethnicity is a similarly fuzzy concept, defined as national origin but often equated with race and frequently overlapping in vague ways with cultural norms (of self-disclosure among African-Americans compared with European-Americans, for example).

For someone whose teaching and research lie primarily in areas of interpersonal communication and relational issues, these may be fine points that do not detract unduly from the book's contributions. At nearly 300 pages, this volume is an ambitious undertaking as a secondary text and with only one chapter (and scattered references elsewhere) devoted to personal relationships will probably not fit the bill as a primary text for courses in interpersonal and relational communication. The chapter on relationships has some useful observations about the influence of culture on relational expectations and patterns of relational development. It is, however, encumbered with the blunt instrument of individualism/collectivism as the only cultural distinction available to understand the impact of culture on personal relationships. In this regard, the book is unfortunately all too similar to other intercultural communication texts, and thus of limited value in the area of social and personal relationships.

K. F.

Miell, D., & Wetherell, M. (Eds.) (1998). *Doing social psychology*. London: Sage. 330 pp. ISBN 0-7619-6050-3.

Reviewed by: Paul A. M. Van Lange, Free University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

The field of social psychology, and the broad topic of social and personal relationships, has benefited tremendously from authors writing or editing handbooks, research design and methodology books, and books focusing on particular topics. However, books that seek to combine theory and methodology are sparse, even though such integration is of the utmost importance to the field of social psychology. *Doing social psychology*, edited by Dorothy Miell and Margaret Wetherell, is among the few books that deal explicitly with theory and methodology, although the emphasis is quite understandably on the latter. It is intended as a practical manual for social psychology and other psychology students, which is nicely captured by the title '*Doing social psychology*'.

The book provides useful information regarding the theoretical rationale for a given topic, how to translate this rationale into a particular study, how to analyze the data, how to get back to the theoretical rationale, and how to write a research paper. Two features of this book are particularly noteworthy. First, it covers a broad range of theory-based topics, including person perception, relationships and social interaction, group interaction, framing and decision-making, and social representation. Second, it covers a broad range of research paradigms and methodologies, including specific experimental procedures, questionnaire and survey research, qualitative and quantitative content analyses, diary methodology, and structured observation techniques. This diversity in theory and methodology is not to imply, however, that this book addresses a representative sample of theories or methodologies. Most of the theories that are addressed focus on construal or construction processes, and there is more than usual attention given to qualitative methods. The latter focus is acknowledged explicitly by the editors in the Introduction.

Chapter 2, 'Relationships, social networks and social interaction: An exploration in diary methodology', illustrates the intimate relationship between theory and methodology. The authors begin with outlining four project options: personal construction of relationships, intersubjectivity, social networks, and significant social interactions. Subsequently, the authors outline the further decisions one might face, such as whether to pursue individual-level or dyadic-level types of analysis, qualitative or quantitative data collection, and descriptive versus hypothesis-testing research questions. Throughout this chapter, there is attention to theory, and how it relates to methodology. For example, in illustrating hypothesis-testing research questions, the authors advance a distinction between (i) relationship variables, which

refer to the nature of the relationship with whom one had the most significant interaction of the day (e.g., satisfaction with the relationship, intimacy of the relationship, commitment to the relationship); and (ii) interaction variables, which refer to aspects of a specific interaction episode (e.g., satisfaction with interaction, intimacy of interaction, and significance of interaction). The authors also acknowledge that a particular key concept, such as trust, may be relevant to both relationship variables and interaction variables. And in illustrating descriptive research questions, the authors list some organizing topics, such as power, time, autonomy, and interaction patterns, which quite reasonably are believed to be central to social interaction and relationships. In the same chapter, the authors also urge students to link their results to theoretical concepts, such as equity and exchange, investment, and comparison level. This seems a useful, albeit ambitious, exercise for students.

The authors do a very good job of specifying the methodologies in sufficient detail. For example, the chapters, along with the appendices, describe the specifics of experimental procedures, questionnaires, diary methods, and observational checklists; careful attention is given to several practical issues, such as how to get started (e.g., what are the requirements?), how to proceed (e.g., what are the options in terms of timing?), and how to complete the research project (e.g., how does one go about writing it up?). With this guide, most students should be able to actually conduct their own independent research, with the possible exception of discourse analysis described in Chapter 2. Regardless of one's feelings, positive or negative, regarding discourse analysis, many readers should appreciate the authors' efforts toward illustrating the theoretical rationale and practical issues relevant to this approach. At the very least, the reader should get a feel for this type of analysis, particularly because the principles underlying discourse analysis are explicated, and the reader is made aware of some complexities (e.g., when to stop).

In closing, this is a useful book, and I very much appreciate the philosophy that social psychology is in many ways *doing* social psychology. Indeed, it is my experience that students come to appreciate social psychology even more when they work on a particular theory-based and/or societally relevant problem, experience how a particular methodology works, and actively engage in the different phases of a research project. This book may serve this important function for many students, and I hope that it also serves the function of inspiring authors to write books at the interface of theory and methodology. Given that several experimental and correlational designs were not addressed, as the editors note in the Introduction, and given that there are several social psychological theories that focus less strongly on construal or construction processes, it seems particularly important to write books about various methods and paradigms that constitute the empirical foundation of the most influential social psychological theories. If other authors are inclined to do so, they should take advantage of the format of this book.

P. L.