

Save the Hyphens

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As an assistant professor, I profited over several years from a small annual conference at Nags Head NC, sponsored by Bibb Latané, at which we presented our research in T-shirts and shorts, talked psychology over bonfires and long beach walks, and rode the cognitive revolution in (social) psychology. The dozen or so regulars at this week-long conference on a variety of social-cognitive topics followed a dozen or so regulars at a conference on a topic more traditional to social psychology, namely small groups. One year, we arrived to find the conference center's sole blackboard prominently bearing the international inscription of a circle with a diagonal slash, indicating prohibition. It was superimposed on the words: social-cognition.

As a vulnerable junior colleague, I wondered if I was following the right path, working in an area that some people in my home field clearly hated. Social cognition (in its late 70s, early 80s form) was viewed as taking over the field. People in other areas had some reason for paranoia; most of the editors and associate editors of the field's primary journals at that time indeed were regulars at the Nags-Head Social-Cognition conferences. People resented their editorial insistence on indicators of cognitive processes and their apparent preference for measures of recall, recognition, and reaction time, in stripped-down social settings. Even for someone sympathetic to these new bridges between cognitive and social psychology, it was a scary audience, beach sandals or no beach sandals.

Were the converts right to push their hyphenated agenda? Were the mainstream researchers right to resent the intrusion? Time would tell, and both the converts and the traditionalists have mellowed. Social cognitive approaches soon did permeate the field, to such an extent that a reviewer once thought that our book, *Social Cognition* (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, 1991), aimed to cover all of social psychology. It had no such aim, but the reviewer was not wrong to notice how many traditional areas were infected by the social cognition virus. Now it merits a standard chapter in textbooks, and a standard approach in many areas, including (gasp) the small groups area, which has continued to thrive, itself bridging many adjacent areas. Social cognition is here to stay, but so is social psychology.

We started this year's presidential columns, whose theme has been bridging psychological science, with a discussion of lumpers and splitters, neats and scruffies. Tastes differ, and people are happiest with their accustomed level of borrowing. Over the ensuing year, we have read columns by colleagues about the sweet side of crossing boundaries, as well as the tough side, borrowing between cognitive and neuroscience, liberal arts and psychology, decision science and organizations, clinical and emotions research, sociology and psychology, and social and neuroscience. Scruffy, lumpy adventurers have consistently fought the skeptics who have questioned the wisdom of borrowing. Sometimes the skeptics have been right, but sometimes the adventurers have been right. It would be well to remember this, as we confront this decade's new topics, and not too quickly to scrawl prohibitions over the newest hyphenated field. Take a few opportunities for intellectual adventure at the APS conference or your latest issue of our very own field-spanning journals.

A final note: Thanks to the APS staff and particularly to the *Observer* Editor for stepping in to cover last month's column, suddenly missing due to the death of my father, Donald Fiske. Thanks, too, to the many colleagues and friends who sent condolence notes to our family, all of whom are deeply connected to the field my methodologist father cherished and scolded. As my brother, Alan Fiske, put it at our dad's memorial, he oriented many of us.