



CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
Section on Environmental Psychology (SEP)



Section members conduct research and advance theory to understand and to improve interactions between human behaviour and the physical environment, both built and natural. Our members' varied interests include: management of scarce natural resources; impact of human behaviours on the environment; 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.

Winter 2006

Message from the Editor

Spring has sprung, and the Winter issue of our Newsletter finally arrives. This time of year announces renewed life, as plants and trees take on a whole new look, promising a vast range of colours and fragrances. Enjoy the miracle of it all! In this issue, we share with you election results, the launch of our new website, and information on the upcoming symposiums.

Your contributions to future editions of the newsletter can be emailed to me at:

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Danielle Patry (U. Ottawa)

SEP Election

As quorum was not reached at the 2005 SEP annual business meeting, Luc Pelletier (Past-Chair) distributed a mail-in ballot. Thirty-one ballots were returned, and Dr. Frederick Grouzet (McGill) is re-elected unanimously as Chair of the Section (to serve in 2005-2006).

Many congratulations to Fred!

Message from the Section Chair

I am very happy to serve as Chair of SEP for a second year. Thanks to all SEP members for your support. My principal objective is to give to SEP a continuous dynamic and visibility in different ways. First, I am closely working with the Newsletter Editor (Danielle Patry) and the Webmaster (Simon Beaudry). I am pleased to announce that we have now a completely revamped web site (see on page 2). Second, a few months ago, you were asked to vote on the creation of a Student Paper Award for the best paper on an environmental psychology topic presented at the CPA Convention. I am happy to announce that the motion has been unanimously approved! Finally, I am proud to announce that the Environmental Psychology will be present more than once at the next CPA convention that will take place in Calgary. Indeed, the Section will present a Keynote and two symposiums (see on page 2-3).

I look forward to seeing you in Calgary!

Frederick Grouzet (McGill)



Environmental Psychology in Canada Gets a Face-Lift!

Our Section has completely revamped its website (see above). The goal was to update the visuals and content, but especially to translate the entire content in order to reach out to our Francophone members. Most of the content of the previous site was kept. In addition, we added and updated new content. You can now search through our suggested periodicals in the Journals area and browse our vast updated Links area.

Go take a look!

<http://www.cpa.ca/environmental/>

*Simon Beaudry (U. Ottawa)
Section Web Master*

CPA Convention in Calgary

This year, the SEP is proud to present two symposiums and one keynote:

The first symposium is titled:

*“ATTITUDINAL, BEHAVIOURAL, AND
NEUROLOGICAL IMPACTS OF
SPACEFLIGHT”*

presented by Peter Suedfeld (Chair); Rachel Kass; David Baillie; Nicole Buckley; Cécile Lacombe; Phyllis Johnson.

The second symposium is titled:

*“EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT
SUSTAINABILITY: THE INTERFACE
BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY”*

presented by Frederick Grouzet (Chair); Loraine Lavallée; Enrico Wensing; Sae Schatz; Beth Covitt.

Note. This symposium corresponds in fact to the 3rd Symposium on the Interface of Environmental Psychology and Other Fields of Psychology. The 1st one was organized by Luc Pelletier (St-Johns, NF, 2004), and the 2nd one was chaired by Luc Pelletier and Frederick Grouzet (Montreal, QC, 2005).

SEP Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Robert Gifford,
University of Victoria

*“SPEAKING WITH THE
DEVILS: IS THE GLOBAL
ENVIRONMENT IN
TROUBLE, OR NOT?”*

Abstract:

Is the world dangerously polluted and degraded? Are basic resources in short supply? Are there too many people on the planet? Many people, including most environmental psychologists, probably would reply to these questions in the affirmative. Slowly, over the years, I have learned that reputable academics, including many ecological economists, disagree. This discovery led me to examine whether one of the two camps is more correct in general, and to wonder in a broader sense to what extent different disciplines are so insular that they can seriously disagree without even noticing or acknowledging the other disciplines with which they disagree.

I will presume that my audience at CPA largely subscribes to the first of the two camps. Thus, statements like the following, that come from a quite credible academic source, with charts and tables to support them, may be surprising.

“When will we run out of energy? Never.”

“Air and water are getting purer. And the public is being taken to the cleaners by environmental groups...”

“[T]he quality of the environment is improving rather than worsening.”

“Natural resources will become progressively less scarce...”

“Land for recreation and for wildlife has been increasing rapidly in the US.”

(all quotes from *The Ultimate Resource*, by Julian Simon, 1980)

These quotes are 25 years old, but some modern economists and political scientists largely agree with these views, for example, the political scientist Bjorn Lomborg (2001). Lomborg claims a conversion experience, from being a Greenpeace supporter to believing in something close to Simon’s viewpoint. These social scientists clearly believe that environmental problems are exaggerated.

Much more familiar to this audience, I presume, are statements like the following, taken from the website of the David Suzuki Foundation: *“Humans have become so numerous and our tools so powerful that we have driven fellow creatures to extinction, dammed the great rivers, torn down ancient forests, poisoned the earth, rain and wind, and ripped holes in the sky.”* And, *“Our home, planet Earth, is finite; all life shares its resources and the energy from the sun, and therefore has limits to growth. For the first time, we have touched those limits. When we compromise the air, the water, the soil and the variety of life, we steal from the endless future to serve the fleeting present.”*

Each of these perspectives has a historical antecedent. Adam Smith (1776) asserted that acting in one’s self-interest (including converting natural resources into products) benefits humankind. In contrast, William Lloyd (1837/1968) long ago pointed out that when natural resources are finite, widespread self-interest must eventually have fatal, rather than beneficial, consequences.

Is one of these perspectives correct, and one wrong? Is there some sort of common ground between them? These will be the questions I explore in this talk.