Presidential Session
Gregory Bateson and the Science of Mind and Pattern: A Centennial Session

Much of Gregory Bateson's work was misunderstood or unappreciated during his lifetime because it challenged people to think in new ways and defied disciplinary compartments. Textbook anthropology has tended to slot him into 'functionalism' or 'culture and personality studies,' which is far too narrow an assessment of his contribution. Many of his ideas were in fields that were widely separated during his lifetime, anthropology, psychotherapy, the sociology of small group interaction, communication studies, education, general systems theory, developmental biology and ecology. Today, many of his ideas in these fields are more accessible than they were at the time of his death twenty years ago. Taken together, and situated within the overall thread of Bateson's discourse on 'mind', and 'pattern' they are remarkably prescient; this is why a Bateson quotation elegantly capturing the contours of a new idea is to be found in so many books. Bateson made streams of ideas flow together, and in this confluence he developed a rigorous understanding of holism, systemic wisdom as he sometimes referred to it, both within and beyond culture.

This panel will explore the continuing relevance of Bateson's science of pattern in areas of direct concern to anthropology. Papers will address Bateson's ideas in psychological anthropology, aesthetics, and ecology, and his influence in such areas as visual anthropology, ethnicity, education, and the practices of family systems therapy, where Bateson is regarded as the intellectual founder.

The overall aim of this session is not only to review the importance of Bateson's contribution to anthropology but also to encourage anthropologists to look again at his science of pattern or order, his epistemology, the major texts of which are being reissued.

PARTICIPANTS
Session Co-Organizers:
Mary Catherine Bateson, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology and English, George Mason University (Chair).
Peter Harries-Jones, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, York University, Ontario

Speakers:
Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Professor, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo.
This paper will address the influence of GB's thinking about complex interactive systems on our understandings of ecology and of cultural diversity/ethnicity, and will draw on work in the Nordic countries to provide an example of the influence of his work outside the US.

Lynn Hoffman, M.S.W., M.F.T., Adjunct Faculty, Marriage and Family Therapy Program, Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, Connecticut.
This paper will explore Bateson's ideas about analogic communication as applied to families and relational therapies.

Peter Harries-Jones, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, York University, Ontario
This paper will discuss Bateson's aesthetics, with special reference to major themes of his posthumous publication, Angels Fear.

Ernestine McHugh, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Religion, University of Rochester. This paper will discuss Bateson's legacy within psychological anthropology, and the ways in which his ideas on play and paradox offer an integrative perspective within that field, one that can extend its central insights. The tentative title is: Re-framing Mind and Culture: Play, Paradox, and the Boundaries of Self.

Eric Silverman, Associate Professor of Anthropology, DePauw University.
This presentation will discuss and show a brief example of Bateson's innovative 1938 film from a Iatmul village on the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea and argue that both historically and methodologically this material, intended to be part of a broad comparative project, remains important for anthropology.

Discussant:
David Lipset, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Minnesota

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Culture and Personality Section
Once and future theory: Next steps towards Gregory Bateson's ecology of mind

Gregory Bateson was one of the most important social scientists of the last century, in part because of his radical methodologies for understanding humans as individuals and groups. He was born in 1904, and this year we celebrate his centennial with a session dedicated to revisiting and developing his work on ecologies of mind. Ecology of mind can be conceptualized broadly as epistemology-in-action, or as a suite of heuristic tools that allows us to perceive information transactions as central to human relations. This breakthrough for Western thought traditions dissolves some of the traditional boundaries of analysis--individual psychologies must now include the idea systems in which they are embedded. Gregory Bateson's ideas have been widely influential but have yet to be fully developed in a mature theoretical framework. We are still acquiring the skills for thinking about interactions rather than entities. This session takes up the challenge with contributions from psychological and cognitive anthropology, communications and cybernetics that further our thinking about ecological aspects of cognition, culture and society. A central theme of this session is the epistemological co-construction of the individual and the collective in human systems. Referencing magic, science and religion when appropriate, session participants will describe how they have built upon Bateson's concepts such as asymmetrical information feedback, emergent properties of collective consciousness, schismogenesis, the use of form in addition to content in communication, and the survival of systems of ideas. Topics include knowledge systems, informational paradoxes, cultural evolution and intergenerational learning. The papers and discussion in this session contextualize Bateson's contributions in contemporary psychological anthropology theory and comment on what needs to be done to take the next steps towards understanding and applying ecologies of mind. Our discussant is Professor Mary Catherine Bateson.

The session will include 5 papers followed by a commentary from Dr. Bateson. The seventh time slot has been reserved for extensive discussion.

Participants
Mary Catherine Bateson (Harvard Graduate School of Education): discussant
David Casagrande (Arizona State University): co-organizer
Felice Wyndham (Univerity of Gerogia): session moderator and co-organizer
Michael Lieber (U of Illinois at Chicago)
Frederick Steier (University of South Florida)
David B. Kronenfeld (UC Riverside)
Dwight Read (UCLA)

Paper abstracts:

KRONENFELD, David B. (UCRiverside) INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE COGNITIVE STRUCTURES--A BATESONIAN PERSPECTIVE. This paper describes how contemporary cognitive anthropology deals with cognitive patterns and structures, including "cultural models" and other kinds of cultural knowledge systems. It then looks at these cognitive structures from the perspective of Bateson's approach (especially in NAVEN) to relating the individual to the collective and cognition to affect--and these psychological concerns, in turn, to economic and political patterns. "The individual" includes a person's cognition, affect, desires, goals, personality, and so forth, while "the collective" includes culturally shared or standardized representations, patterns of action, and imperatives. "Cognition" here includes knowledge of motives, goals, appropriate feelings and actions, and so forth--as well as more mundane knowledge of what things are made of, how they are used, and so forth. My claim is that, even though our understanding of cognition and cognitive structures is much advanced from what it was in Bateson's time and work, Bateson still provides us with the best model we have for how to understand and treat these relationships. As one of the founding participants in the cybernetic revolution Bateson had understanding of the role of feedback in creating emergent social and cognitive structures--and thus an appreciation of the workings of what are today called "agent-based models"--that still has much to teach us.

CASAGRANDE, David G. (Arizona State University) BATESON, FESTINGER AND THE RECURSIVE ROLE OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION Using ethnomedicinal data from research conducted among the Tzeltal Maya of Chiapas, Mexico, I suggest partial explanations for two paradoxes of socio-cultural systems: why people often behave in opposition to their beliefs and why belief systems often fail to respond to environmental change. Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance can be applied to internal logical inconsistencies in shared cognitive models, but such applications have mostly been applied to the individual mind. Bateson's ecology of mind and communication emphasizes the influences of environmental information and social relationships on human thought across scales of analysis from the individual to the collective, which can lead to complex and asymmetrical potentials for environmental information feedback. I argue that daily behavior of individual Tzeltal can become inconsistent with widely shared abstract beliefs and much of Tzeltal social discourse involves collective strategies to avoid, manipulate or otherwise ameliorate resulting cognitive dissonance. Political power can be conceptualized as the ability to manipulate cognitive dissonance to maintain social cohesion, but with the potential cost of reducing adaptive information feedback and preserving maladaptive logical inconsistencies at both the individual and collective scales of analysis.

READ, Dwight W. (UCLA) SCHISMOGENESIS, CYBERNETICS AND CULTURAL EVOLUTION. Although Bateson only peripherally discusses cultural evolution, his idea of an ecology of mind lays out the groundwork for how we might explicate and model cultural evolution. His concept of schismogenesis identifies why it is necessary to model cultural evolution from the perspective of cybernetics and survival of a system in its context through self-correction, rather than from the perspective of Darwinian evolution based on individual fitness. But Bateson's argument cuts both

ways as he also perceives of biological evolution in cybernetic and not individual fitness terms. In this paper I discuss Bateson's ideas on schismogenesis, cybernetics and evolution from the perspective of a model for cultural evolution consistent with Bateson's notion of "the survival of the system of ideas."

STEIER, Frederick. (University of South Florida) DESIGNS FOR AN ECOLOGY OF IDEAS: COMMUNITY, SCIENCE AND DEUTEROLEARNING. This presentation situates Gregory Bateson's cybernetic approaches to information and the ecology of ideas in different learning contexts. In particular, it builds on experiences from designers, researchers, and interactors from, and visitors to, a regional science center, whose focus has shifted from designing exhibits to designing "learning conversations." This shift has been accompanied by a parallel shift in both the labels (e.g., from explainer to "interactor") and activities of those working on the floor of the science center, in interaction with the visitors. Key ideas of Gregory Bateson have informed the design aspect of this transformation, and also formed the basis of constructing meaning of the "learning conversations." These ideas include the framing of messages (including observers' framing), the embodiment of communication, recursive processes, deuterolearning, metaphoric thought, and consequences of a cybernetic epistemology. We extend these ideas to explore, consistent with Bateson's notions of an ecology of ideas, the relationship in practice between individual and collective deuterolearning, with the designer, "interactor," researcher and visitor embedded in mutual processes of "learning how to learn." Collaborative ways of valuing indigenous knowledge in community settings will be considered. This is an ongoing project, and implications for furthering the very ideas of Bateson that formed the basis of design will be developed.

LIEBER, Michael. (U of Illinois at Chicago) PARTNERSHIP AND PARADOX. From his early work in the 1940s, Gregory Bateson developed Russell and Whitehead's theory of logical types as a powerful analytic tool for understanding hierarchical ordering. From the outset, he included time as a property of hierarchy such that the category-member relationship could be seen as an outcome of mammals organizing their experiences. Paradox, in Bateson's cybernetic framework, is not just a logical potential in any hierarchy but also an outcome of a process of ambiguating the boundary between logical levels. Paradoxes may be momentary (as in sarcasm), institutional (as in double binds), or developments over evolutionary time (such as genetic specialization---> ecosystem change ----> extinction). The momentary paradoxes are the ones we most commonly experience, and, despite the intense discomfort so often associated with them, the ones we mostly ignore in systemic research. I examine one such momentary paradox observed to recur in discussions about equality among partners in meetings and workshops on community development through university-community collaborations. I explore the process by which the three level hierarchy--individual/social relationships/social group--degrades to a two level individual/group in the paradox and the complexities of the social settings that help to make social relationships the least stable component of the hierarchy in the short term and the most stable component in the long term.