

Lynn Kahle, Society of Consumer Psychology, APA Div.23, President 1997

Lynn Kahle's Thoughts:

I spent around a decade rotating through various leadership positions in SCP, including newsletter editor at a time when the newsletter (The Communicator) was actively mailed in hard-copy form, secretary-treasurer, and president. I am not certain of exactly what happened in what year, but we tended to work cooperatively on joint projects with little concern about who received credit for any given initiative. In a very real sense the entire leadership team was responsible for all of our activities. Interestingly, we elected several "celebrity" psychologists as SCP President (e.g., Marty Fishbein), and these people took their roles very seriously, actively contributing to consumer psychology and not merely accepting a figurehead role.

Perhaps the biggest issue during this era was what our relation with APA and other professional organizations ought to be. SCP started as a division of APA, but APA had become more oriented toward clinical psychology and less oriented toward academic and applied research psychology. Some groups left APA, and many individuals shifted their orientation toward the new APS, which formed to provide an alternative home to academic psychologists. We decided to become incorporated independent of APA but to retain our APA membership, which continues to today. We went from virtually all of our members being PhD psychologists and APA members to allowing non-psychologists to join, and our increasing independence from APA gave us some freedom but also much more responsibility. Of course now SCP has become more of a marketing organization and less of a psychology organization. At that time we had a larger proportion of members with psychology Ph.D.s who worked in psychology departments and also who were active in industry. Indeed, some of the real-world "mad men" played an important role in SCP. Perhaps ironically, APA responded to the divisiveness eventually by embracing diversity and instituting strong Division governance, much more than any other organization with which I am familiar.

We decided to hold a conference independent of APA, a radical departure. At first AMA helped us greatly, providing a venue and logistical support to hold our conference immediately adjacent to AMA Winter Educator's conference. We even held joint receptions, and it was convenient for people to participate in both conferences. As we grew, AMA decided to encourage us to go out on our own much like a parent might send out an adolescent into the world. At that time AMA did not have SIGs, and a consumer psychology AMA SIG even today seems unlikely. APS frowned on Divisions, but SCP people viewed ourselves as sufficiently distinctive to want a unique identity and home not available in APS. The Advertising and Consumer Psychology conference was strong during this period, usually hosted by an ad agency and focusing on a trending topic. It brought together academics and practitioners for careful consideration of a timely topic of mutual interest.

ACR at this time grew quite hostile to psychology and psychological research. JCR was perceived as ACR's journal, and it became far less welcoming to psychological articles, preferring "interdisciplinary" articles with dubious psychological standards. We thus decided to

form a new journal, JCP, where psychology-oriented marketing articles would be welcome. Some people wanted to call it the Journal of Experimental Consumer Psychology (similar to the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology), but that idea was rejected because a significant amount of good consumer psychology research includes non-experimental research. Also we recognized that not all consumer psychology is social psychology. Sometimes articles sent to JCR or ACR would be reviewed by people who did not understand psychology, but at JCP and SCP authors had a high probability of being evaluated based on sound psychological standards. Psychology & Marketing also formed around this time, but it had no link to a professional organization similar to SCP, thus calling into question enforcement of standards and editorial transition policies. One of the strengths of JCP has been excellence in editorial staff, which SCP has overseen.

As SCP grew like a weed, it became necessary to hire an Executive Director who could provide the continuity and professionalism that can be elusive with rapidly-transitioning volunteer leaders. That decision has turned out quite well for the organization.

SCP is a very different organization today than it was before moving away from APA. A personal paradox is that I have recently again become involved with SCP leadership as the APA Council representative. On the Council I have been elected president of the caucus that advocates for Academic, Scientific, and Applied Research Psychology, that exact subgroup that created the commotion when SCP sought greater independence. Today I view APA as one of the greatest and most important social science organizations.

My fondest memory of my time in leadership is the many close friendships formed with some first-rate people and scholars.