

ISPP Virtual Seminar Series – Asia-Pacific Region November 2021

Organizers: Ying-yi Hong, Diwa Malaya Quinones, Peter Beattie, Idhamsyah Eka Putra

November 26 (Friday) at 3-5pm (Tokyo time) or 2-4pm (Hong Kong time) or 1-3pm (Jakarta Time)

Hosts/Moderators: Idhamsyah Eka Putra and Ying-yi Hong

Speaker: Christopher Kavanagh

Title: Ritual Trauma as Social Glue: Examining the role of dysphoric ritual experiences in generating social bonds, identity transformations, and extreme pro-group behavior.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://rikkyo-ac-jp.zoom.us/j/84388353434?pwd=RjBBExTNm1SUHM0bGYvemZNUjRPUT09>

Meeting ID: 843 8835 3434

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Abstract

Dramatic collective rituals, especially those that inflict physical pain or mental trauma on participants, have long been a topic of fascination for social scientists. From both a psychological and an evolutionary perspective, they pose a puzzle as to why people are willing to accept the ‘costs’ of participation. This talk examines some proposed answers, including recent theoretical models that link shared dysphoric experiences to the formation of identity fusion and promotion of extreme pro-group behavior. The existing empirical literature is discussed alongside an overview of related research projects conducted by the author, including 1) laboratory based artificial ritual experiments, 2) large N surveys of martial arts practitioners and observers of an emotional inauguration event, and 3) field studies conducted at a variety of fire-walking and cold-water immersion ritual events held across Japan. Collectively, the results presented offer preliminary support for an important role for subjective positive affect of dysphoric events in generating stronger group bonds.

Speaker Bio

Christopher Kavanagh is an Associate Professor at the College of Contemporary Psychology at Rikkyo University, Tokyo and a Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion at the University of Oxford. His primary research interests are in the social and psychological dynamics of ritual events, East Asian religions, intergroup psychology, and research methodologies that combine field and lab based experiments. He is also an enthusiastic advocate for Open Science practices, serves as assistant editor for the *Religion, Brain and Behavior* journal, and co-hosts the *Decoding the Gurus* podcast: examining online gurus, cult dynamics, and the psychology of conspiracy theories.