



The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee Spring 2004

Congratulations 2004 Poster Award Winners!

This year at the SPSP conference, you may have noticed committee members wandering through the aisles during the poster sessions, scanning name tags, and posting small little labels next to a large number of posters. Well, you probably soon figured out that we were working hard on the Graduate Student Poster Award (GPA)! For the second year in a row, we offered the GPA as a way to recognize graduate student research. Students submitted entries for the award last Fall, and numerous PhD-level faculty volunteered to “secretly” judge the event. Between 3 and 4 judges (see the Spring 2004 Dialogue for the list of judges) approached nominees and asked about their research during each poster session. The judges based their decisions on the abstracts that were submitted, quality of the research, and the ability of students to present their research clearly and effectively to others.

As you can imagine, coordinating this event was quite a task! With 7 poster sessions and around 25 judges to work with, we were quite exhausted when it was all over! But, it was worth it... winners each received public recognition at the conference in the form of a formal congratulation (including fanfare and photo-op

with the judges) and the opportunity to keep their posters hanging for the duration of the conference. Winners also got a mention in the Spring 2004 Dialogue, and will have their photographs posted on the SPSP student website. And that’s not all! They also each received a \$50 award and 1-year individual user license for MediaLab/Direct RT courtesy of Empirisoft.

The competition for this award was tough! Judges spent a lot of time talking about the merits of each poster, and often visited posters a second time in order to be certain that they picked the best one.

This year’s winners were: Brandon Schmeichel (Florida State University), Megan Oaten (Macquarie University), Kentaro Fujita (New York University), Eugene Caruso (Harvard University), Natalie Ebner (Max Planck Institute for Human Development), Carol Wilson (Texas A & M University), and Geoff Umland (University of Colorado). Judges also decided upon 2 honorable mentions in each session, and these were Jennifer Knight, Dikla Shmuela, Danielle Menzies-Toman, Etsuko Hoshino-Browne, Dana Carney, Alison Kaufmann, Jonathan Adler, Heather Lench, Joseph Cesario, Julie McGuire, Pamela Smith, Olesya Govorun, Deanna Caputo, and C. Nathan DeWall. Great work!

We’d like to end with a special thanks to Blair Jarvis for his generous donation of the award money and user licenses. And thank you to all the judges for their much appreciated time and expertise that they lent to this event! It wouldn’t have been possible without them. Check the SPSP student web site soon for photos and more information about the GPA. We hope to get an entry from you next year!

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Networking?

As graduate students in psychology we may bristle at the mention of the word *networking*. We chose a prestigious career path because we didn't have to deal with that sort of shameless self-promotion, right? However, as career guides such as *The Compleat Academic* will tell you, networking may just place you in the position you've always dreamed of.

The first and most obvious way to network is talk about your research with your colleagues: other graduate students, professionals, and faculty members. At the very least, you stand to gain valuable feedback on your own research and insight into future

research directions. Ideally, you may be able to establish new working relationships. Furthermore, these individuals may be able to later write you letters of reference.

You can also make yourself known to other researchers whose research is similar to your own. This can be done in several ways. First, you could organize a symposium for a conference and invite individuals with similar research programs to participate. Don't hesitate to send manuscripts, preprints, or reprints to a few researchers to whom your work would be of interest. Less formally, you can also contact other researchers via email for advice or

guidance on a particular problem you are facing.

Malcolm Gladwell's popular book *The Tipping Point* highlights the importance of maintaining "weak ties." These are casual acquaintances – maybe just names on your Holiday card list – who nonetheless form a cadre of individuals who know who you are. In an academic setting, you can maintain weak ties by attending talks and interacting with speakers, inviting prominent researchers to give a brown bag talk or colloquium at your department, and volunteering to serve on your department's brown bag committee. Building name recognition for

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Munching with Mentors in Austin

This year's convention in Austin, Texas marked the first annual SPSP mentoring luncheon! The luncheon, co-sponsored by the Graduate Student and Training Committees, provided 50 student members with the opportunity to dine, network, and converse with one of ten mentors on a research or professional development topic of their choice. The luncheon was followed by a coffee/tea and cookie social. Suggestions received from members of the student listserv helped create the list of names and topics.

Interest in the luncheon was high, and the spaces filled very

quickly! Because of this, we have decided to make this activity a yearly convention event. It is our hope that next year's luncheon will offer mentoring opportunities on a broader range of topics and be available to a larger number of students. Any feedback on this year's luncheon would be helpful in planning for next year. If you attended the event, were there any changes you would suggest or things that you would like us to keep? If you were unable to attend the event, do you have any suggestions as to how to make next year's luncheon more accessible? Please offer us your suggestions by emailing spspgsc@yahoo.com.

Finally, we would like to thank the following individuals for serving as mentors for this event: Monica Biernat, Faye Crosby, Eli Finkel, Susan Fiske, Eddie Harmon-Jones, Batja Mesquita, Allen Omoto, Catherine Sanderson, Sam Sommers, Jim Uleman, and Wesley Schultz. Your help was appreciated!

Spotlight on...

Heike A.
Winterheld

This ongoing series features graduate students randomly selected from the subscriber list of the Graduate Student Listserv.

This edition of the Forum, we interviewed Heike A. Winterheld. She is a third year student at Texas A&M where She works with Jeff Simpson and focuses on close relationships. We asked her about her background and her life at A&M.

Why did you choose to attend graduate school in social psychology?

It wasn't a straight path. I was a practicing veterinarian before I became interested in psychology, and my original intention was to specialize as a vet in animal behavior. A class in comparative psychology piqued my interest in the evolutionary perspective of human social behavior, and then I wanted to learn more about all facets of social behavior. Since I had virtually no background in psychology, I did undergraduate coursework at the University of Hawaii, and worked with the Native Hawaiian Mental Health Research Development Program in the Dept. of Psychiatry to get hands on research experience in the social sciences. This work experience made me realize that I really wanted to pursue a career in research, and social psychology was the field that

interested me the most.

What are the strengths of your program?

One major strength is the high quality statistical and research methods training that students receive. Students learn to use a variety of research techniques, including experimental studies, questionnaire and diary methods, and observational studies of social interaction. I especially like the emphasis on studying dyadic interaction, and have come to appreciate the importance of collecting behavioral data in addition to self-report data. Another strength is the small faculty-to-student ratio, and the apprenticeship-based training. In my experience, faculty members are genuinely interested in students' ideas, and encourage them to pursue them (or tell you honestly if they think that it won't go anywhere). Another plus is that students are exposed to a variety of speakers from other universities in weekly seminars.

What are your research interests?

My main interests lie in the area of close relationships, particularly romantic ones. I'm interested in how people perceive, evaluate, and feel about their partners and events in their relationships, and how these processes affect relationship outcomes and individuals' well-being. In my Master's thesis I looked at how motivational orientations affect the ways in which people interpret, react to, and process events involving dating partners. In addition, I'm interested in how evolutionary psychology can help us explain issues related to

mating and sexuality in the context of intimate relationships.

My interest in relationships research started with the observation that many relationships are characterized by the absence of negatives, but not necessarily by the presence of positive aspects. There has been a long-standing bias towards examining negative aspects of relationships, and a focus on how to prevent negative relationship outcomes. But what if you have successfully negotiated the negatives in your relationship - where do you go from there? What are the factors that contribute to the formation of joyous, inspiring relationships, as distinguished from those that are simply characterized by the absence of negatives? This is a direction I want to go into.

What do you like most and least about being a graduate student?

Most - The relatively flexible work schedule, and that I can explore interests and ideas without any heavy responsibilities. Least - The pay, and exams. I've taken so many exams in my life, I'm sick and tired of them.

If you could give young graduate students one piece of advice, what would it be?

Don't view graduate school as an extension of your undergraduate years, but rather approach it as a job, and make good use of your working hours. When choosing an advisor, it is great when not only interests but also personalities match to some degree. This is especially helpful when you're working under pressure, which you might find yourself doing a lot. If you don't get along well with him or her, pressure will amplify any differences you may have.

President's Corner

Hello fellow graduate student SPSP members! I hope that the semester is wrapping up well for all of you. For those of you I didn't get a chance to meet at the convention, please allow me to introduce myself as your new SPSP graduate student committee president.

Last year the committee had a number of notable accomplishments including to regular publication of the *FORUM* and administration of the Graduate Poster Award (see the 2004 winners in this edition of the *FORUM*). The committee also spearheaded several new initiatives: they organized the first ever mentoring luncheon; co-sponsored a career pre-conference with APA; posted non-academic job opportunities regularly to the student listserv; and, conducted a web-based survey on graduate training of SPSP student members.

This year's committee is no less ambitious! Based on suggestions received via the listserv, the graduate student roundtable, findings from the web-based survey, and, last but not least, generated by our great committee members: Tarik Bel-Bahar, Susan Kiene, and Brandon Stewart, and returning committee member Jacek Jonca-Jasinski; we plan on continuing and expanding upon the projects initiated by last year's committee.

Our primary goal for this year is to increase training and professional development opportunities for graduate student members. Findings from the web-based

survey indicate that student SPSP members would like to see training opportunities tailored for both those interested in academic and non-academic careers. Our plan is to meet this need via a multifaceted approach. Plans are already in the works to offer a bigger and better mentoring luncheon at next year's convention, providing opportunities for a larger number of students to interact with PhD-level mentors in topics of their choice. Please stay tuned for more information about this! Second, we will continue to regularly post non-academic job opportunities to the student listserv. If you hear of any non-academic job opportunities, please pass them along for us to include! We will

also be regularly publishing articles on training and professional development topics in the *FORUM* (see the article on networking in this edition of the *FORUM*).

This year's committee is set on meeting these goals. On behalf of the graduate student committee, we look forward to representing you this coming year! Please contact any of the committee members if you have suggestions, concerns, or comments for us—we cannot do our jobs without you, and would love to hear from you! Thank you for your support, and we look forward to making 2004 an excellent one for SPSP graduate student members!

“Networking”

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yourself may just give you an edge when it comes time for them to invite job candidates for interviews. Think “mere exposure effect!”

So, next time you're at a conference, such as the annual SPSP convention, be sure to make the most of your experience by networking! A little effort now can have great rewards in your future professional career.

Resources

Darley, J. M., Zanna, M. P., & Roedinger III, H. L. (Eds.). *The compleat academic: A career guide* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

Taylor, S. E., & Martin, J.

(2004). The academic marathon: Controlling one's career. In J. M. Darley, M. P. Zanna, & H. L. Roedinger III, (Eds.). *The compleat academic: A career guide* (2nd ed., pp. 363-392). Washington, DC: APA.

Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Goldsmith, J. A., Komlos, J., & Gold, P. S. (2001). *The Chicago guide to your academic career: A portable mentor for scholars from graduate school through tenure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Going Beyond Academia, Before the Conference

At long last, here is a short synopsis of what occurred at the career pre-conference! Due to space constraints, we unfortunately had to cap attendance at a low number (25 people!) this year, leaving our e-mailboxes full of requests for materials from students and post-docs who could not attend. You may recall that we had a great line-up this year for the co-sponsored event with the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA started things off with a few guest speakers (Brett Pelham, Karen Gaspers and Alan Swinkels) answering “burning questions” of the professoriate while attendees noshed on fruit and danishes. The speakers discussed their own academic career paths and challenges faced along the way, particularly around gender issues in academia, and negotiating a career when both spouses are in academia. The format was very informal, and attendees got to ask a lot of questions at the end, and speak with the presenters individually before lunch.

After the lunch break, the non-academic careers panel began. To start things off, Gina Bellavia (from the Research Institute of Addictions) spoke about the benefits and challenges of working at a research institute that was separate from, but affiliated with a university. The next speaker, Terry Schell (from RAND), gave an interesting and informal talk about the types of research projects that RAND is involved with, the typical workload of a researcher employed there,

and some suggestions on how to get employed at such an institute. Following these two speakers was Alyssa Walters from the Educational Testing Service, and she described what it is like applying her research interests in stereotype threat to her job, and what the climate is like being one of the only social psychologists employed in her office. Lastly, xxxxxxxx gave an interesting presentation about employment opportunities within the Department of Defense for social psychologists. Much of the question and answer time involved attendees trying to learn more about the specifics of her projects and office climate, but as you can imagine, much of it was top secret and she needed permission to share (making the discussion that much more interesting, as you can imagine!). Several of the powerpoint presentations that were used in this section of the pre-conference will be posted soon on the SPSP graduate student web site under “links for graduate students”. Be sure to check them out!

After a short break for coffee, the last portion of the pre-conference, “Moving from ‘student’ to ‘professional’, tips for navigating the transition” began. This symposium addressed the process of moving from being a graduate student to being a professional. A panel composed of six individuals, all in the early stages of their career, discussed their recent transitions, including both previous and on-going experiences. The

panel included individuals holding tenure-track academic positions (Azenett Garza from Weber State University and Jay Linn from Widener University), individuals holding visiting or contract appointments (Chris Buchholz, from St. Lawrence University, and Bobbi Carothers, from the Centenary College of Louisiana), post docs (Rosanna Guadagno, University of California at Santa Barbara), non-academic positions (Jane Eubanks, Texas Department of Human Services), academics working outside of psychology departments (Jill Sundie, from the business college at the University of Houston). The members of the panel answered four key transitional questions, after which participants picked their brain for additional tips and tactics on navigating the transition.

We would like to thank everyone who was involved with the career pre-conference for all your help. First of all, thanks to all the speakers, without whom this event couldn't have take place. And of course, thanks to APA and the graduate student committee members for all their help in organizing and coordinating this event. It was not easy, but it was worth it! We hope that everyone found this event helpful and informative, and if you have any suggestions for how future events can meet your career development needs, please contact one of the 2004-5 committee members!