



The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee Summer 2006

Graduation Day - What Comes Next?

Graduation has passed. Summer is on its way. Some graduate students pursue classes into the summer; whereas for others, summer is an opportunity to play catch up on projects and proposals that may have been pushed aside these past few weeks for course work and final exams. Others have finished graduate school entirely, and are on their way to breaking into the job market and beginning their careers.

This issue of The FORUM is meant to provide fellow students with experiences from recently graduated peers who have endured the job-hunt experience. The obstacles they have faced and their encounters with success will hopefully provide insight into the process of landing a job after graduation. Another focus in this issue is how to make the most of your summer break by providing various opportunities and suggestions to help you utilize the summer in a resourceful and beneficial way.

One thing to remember is that although this time of year is ripe with opportunity for graduate students to buckle down and work hard in preparation for looming fall deadlines and other upcoming events, be sure to take time to unwind and enjoy. For those of you who will be graduating soon, we hope this issue will provide answers to some universal questions in finding—and landing—that perfect job.

Making the most of your graduate school summers

Many of us have some “free time” during the summer sessions, or at least times away from teaching and coursework. We may find ourselves wondering how we can make the most of this time. The GSC has come up with some suggestions for many things to do this summer. What works best for you will depend on a number of factors such as your career goals, progress in your program, and even the availability of financial assistance from your program.

The purpose of this article is to offer general suggestions for all summer opportunities and not necessarily this summer specifically. Many of the courses suggested are full and some of the programs are not available this year, but we hope you keep these

ideas in mind for future summers.

Summer Schools:

European Association of Experimental Social Psychology Summer School
(www.eaesp.org)

- ◆ Various seminars in latest methodology, theory, & empirical developments in sub-areas of social psychology.
- ◆ Every two years for 2 weeks during the summer.
- ◆ 5 students from the US and Canada sponsored by SPSP (www.spsp.org/eaespsum.htm)
- ◆ There is one this summer and then the next one will be held in 2008.

SPSP Summer Institute in Social Psychology (www.spsp.org/programs.htm)

- ◆ Similar to EAESP summer

school

- ◆ Two week seminars on hot topics in social psychology
- ◆ Next institute to be held in summer of 2007.

Summer Institute in Political Psychology (ispp.org)

- ◆ For those interested in specialized training in Political Psychology
- ◆ Two weeks of on-line training.
- ◆ Includes lectures, informal conference (dependant on interest) and personal web space for participants.
- ◆ Acceptance for this event is currently closed. Please refer to the program website for more information on upcoming events.

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One year out: Reflections of a new faculty member

For some students, the job search process looms large from the very beginning of graduate school. Others prefer not to think about the elephant in the room until they absolutely have to. In the spirit of inspiring and informing GSC members who will be on the job market soon, or for those brave enough to think about it a few years in advance, we asked a recent graduate about her job search, transition from graduate school to a new academic position, and the adjustment that takes place. While not a representative sample, many of these insights are common among new faculty and may prove enlightening for fellow students.

Jennifer Harman graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2005 with a Ph.D. in Social Psychology. As a graduate student working at an interdisciplinary behavioral health research center, her research today continues to focus on health psychology, specifically HIV risk behaviors and condom attitudes in the context of close relationships. She recently finished her first year as an Assistant Professor in the Applied Social Psychology Program at Colorado State University and was nice enough to share her experiences with SPSP.

David Portnoy: Tell me about the duties of your current position.

Jennifer Harman: I do teaching, research, advising graduate students, and departmental service. My course load is 2:1, meaning two courses, one semester, and one in the other. I had a reduction the first year, so my teaching load has been 1:1 this year. Next year I'm also going to manage the laboratory course taught by graduate students.

DP: Which courses are you enjoying teaching the most?

JH: I love the graduate course. The course size is smaller, and the students already have a background in basic social psychology concepts so that we can explore the readings

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President's Corner

Welcome to the first FORUM of the 2006-2007 year. As themes for this issue include graduation, summer activities, and looking forward, I would like to take the opportunity to briefly share information about new resources the Graduate Student Committee is working to bring to you.

One new service that we have already started to offer is grant postings. Summer is a great time to utilize this resource. Take advantage of time you might not normally have during the school year and pull things together now for fall deadlines. Additionally, preparing early for grants this summer will allow time to prepare and submit any IRB applications that would need to accompany your grant application.

Next, as suggested through responses to our survey, the GSC will be working to set up information this summer for international students looking to travel. We are striving to provide information about services both in and outside the United States. Whether it includes traveling across the continent on the train or flying to a country you have never been to, all GSC members can use this resource.

Finally, for those graduate students who might be looking forward to teaching a course this fall, we are putting together a website that will offer example syllabi, lectures, in-class demonstrations, and assignments for introduction to psychology. This will be a tremendous resource for anyone who has to develop part (or all) of an introduction to psychology course. It will also be a valuable resource to instructors in personality and social psychology classes, as many of the demonstrations and assignments can be applied to those classes. We expect to have this available before the start of the fall semester.

If there is ever anything the GSC can offer or assist with, please let any of us know. I look forward to meeting many of you at conferences and serving as your president this year.

Have a productive and enjoyable summer!

Summer Activities - Continued from Page 1

Statistics Courses:

Data Analysis Training Institute of Connecticut (davidakenny.net/datic/datic.htm)

- ♦ Run by David A. Kenny, Professor of Social Psychology, University of Connecticut
- ♦ Various seminars held throughout the summer (i.e. Structural Equation Modeling, Hierarchical Modeling, and Dyadic Data Analysis).
- ♦ Emphasis on practical application of statistics, allow time for work with own data.

Scientific Software International (www.ssicentral.com)

- ♦ Courses include multivariate statistics (i.e. Structural Equation Modeling, Hierarchical Linear Modeling, Item Response Theory)
- ♦ Check out their website for courses offered.
- ♦ Not specific to Social or Personality Psychology but allows for time to work with your own data.

Writing, writing, writing and reading...:

No matter whether it is writing up manuscripts for publication, proposals (MA or PhD), or grant/fellowship applications, spending some time writing during the summer can really help you hit the ground running in the fall.

One strategy, especially for those who rely on a participant pool for their research, is to conduct as many studies as possible during the Fall and Spring semester and then spend the summer writing up and submitting manuscripts for publication.

Many students also find that without the burden of course work or teaching obligations, summer works well for reading literature relevant for upcoming proposals and writing literature reviews. Maybe you have had your eye on that grant-writing seminar your university offers. Perhaps you want to start a new line of research. There is no better time to sit down and start designing new studies and submitting materials to your IRB.

Conferences: Attend them or prepare for them

The two largest Psychology conferences (APS and APA) are held at the beginning and end of the summer respectively. Even if you have not submitted to present at a conference, there are many benefits to attending without the pressure of worrying about your own presentation. One of the many benefits of attending APA or APS is the opportunity to mingle with others in different areas of Psychology. This can be a great chance to inform your own research interests and perhaps even take you in a new and exciting

direction.

Preparing for SPSP is also a great way to spend some of your time off. Our conference has grown larger and larger every year and despite all the planning committee does to increase opportunities for those who want to present, there are still a large number of submissions rejected each year. Perhaps spending a little time at the beginning of the summer deciding which work to present and the best way to present it can increase your chances of having your submission accepted.

For Everyone:

Finally, the one thing we suggest EVERYONE does during their summer is to have a little fun. Yes, it is a good idea to use time this summer to plan out your next year of classes. Yes, this time is an important resource to utilize to your best advantage. Nevertheless, don't be afraid to hit the beach, nap in a hammock, spend some time camping, or just hang out with friends because summer will go by fast, and the best way to make the most of it is to enjoy it.

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Spotlight interview with some recent PhDs

As the end of the academic year draws to a close, many graduate students find themselves facing questions about their futures. For some, graduation is near, and with this event follows the job search and subsequent career pursuit. In an interview with recent psychology graduate Dr. Jeremy Heider we learn some universal truths regarding the job market, as well as some overall experiences in working in the field. In a second interview, recent graduate Sarah Wood illustrates a similar story of what to expect during graduation and the ensuing process of finding a meaningful career. Hopefully, these experiences may serve to help fellow graduate students understand the process of graduating and transitioning to work in an academic setting. Although not all student experiences are the same, many students undergo similar experiences in leaving graduate school in search for an academic or university position. In sharing their recent graduate experiences, perhaps these individuals' stories will answer certain career questions and help raise new ones about how to proceed into the competitive academic job market.

Jeremy Heider

Jeremy Heider is currently a visiting Assistant Professor, Eastern Oregon University, soon to become Assistant Professor at Stephen F. Austin State University. He was interviewed by Elizabeth Lee.

Summer Advice:

EL: Because the theme of this Forum Issue concerns summer activities for graduate students, can you share with us some of the things you did during the summer while you were in graduate school, or perhaps some helpful advice on the best ways to make use of the summer?

Jeremy Heider: I did take a couple of summer classes to accelerate things a bit. This allowed me to take comprehensive exams one semester before the other students in my cohort. Other than that, my summers were spent primarily on research projects (such as data coding and analysis and writing manuscripts). These efforts yielded two co-authored publications prior to graduation. In addition, a number of other papers are under review, including a first-authored piece, which was accepted for publication midway through this academic year.

Current Position:

JH: [I] teach two courses per quarter; supervise one lab per quarter, engage in scholarly activity (e.g., research with potential for publication), involve undergraduates in research, and participate in departmental activities (e.g., committees and the like).

EL: How many students do you typically have per course?

JH: It varies. The smallest class was ten students. The largest was thirty-five.

EL: Had you had experience teaching these courses previously?

JH: Only social psychology. All others have been new experiences. [I teach] Cognitive Psychology, Writing in Psychology, Social Psychology, Statistics & Research Methods, Emotion, and Psychology of Prejudice.

EL: What were you most surprised about concerning your new position?

JH: How much you're expected to figure out on your own (dates and deadlines and campus logistics such as building keys and parking).

Job Search:

EL: What was the most difficult aspect of the job seeking process?

JH: Finding schools that seemed like a good "fit." In my case, I was looking for a small-to-medium sized school with a tendency to focus more on teaching, but not at the expense of research. I wanted teaching to be most important, but also to have resources for research at my disposal and to be encouraged to use them.

EL: Was there anything about the process you found surprisingly easy?

JH: There is a plethora of resources on the web for job seekers, so finding job ads was never a problem. It was just finding ads that were attractive that I found more challenging.

EL: What was some of the best advice you received while on the job market?

JH: To avoid being too generic when sending out applications, like a stock set of materials that goes to everyone without any modifications. Rather, it is important to learn something – even just a little bit – about

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each school to which you're applying. That way, you can demonstrate that you actually know who they are. If you are contacted for an interview, it is a virtual guarantee that one of the questions will be, "So, what attracted you to this position?" If your answer is, "Well, I was just applying to everywhere in sight," you're in trouble.

EL: Can you share one thing you wish you had known beforehand?

JH: How to respond to questions related to funding (such as, "What are you looking for in terms of start-up costs?"). I had put a fair amount of thought into *what* I would want, but not *how much* to ask for. Only after a couple of schools had asked me this question did I receive some concrete advice on how to approach these types of questions.

EL: Did you have any restrictions on your job search (i.e. spouse, position, location?)

JH: For tenure-track positions, I avoided most states with severe winters. Despite being born and raised in northern Illinois, my wife and I both hate winter. There were a few exceptions. I applied to a few schools in the Mid-Atlantic area because of the presence of relatives in that area, but for the most part neither my wife nor myself want to be in a cold-weather climate for the long term. For visiting positions, this restriction was not applied quite as stringently.

Transitioning:

EL: What was the most difficult part of the transition from graduate student to your current position?

JH: I had taught courses on numerous occasions and was active in research throughout graduate school, so becoming a faculty member with teaching and only some research responsibilities has not been too difficult. Thus, I'd have to say the most trying part of the whole process was the 1800-mile move.

EL: What was the easiest part of the transition?

JH: Getting along with my new colleagues. They've all been great.

EL: What have you learned in your new position?

JH: How much I love small classes! {In graduate school} I routinely had classes with 50-60 students, but here at Eastern Oregon, my "large" class has 35. Everything else has been between 10 and 25 students. It's so much easier to get to know each student that way, and it's also much easier to get them all on the same page when it comes to the course content.

EL: Which aspect of your graduate student training did you find was most helpful or important in helping you attain your current position?

JH: Being allowed to teach upper-level courses. Unlike Intro Psychology TAs, advanced TA's, or those who teach upper-level courses, were given free rein to prepare and execute their courses in any way they saw fit. Thus, I gained valuable experience in designing and executing a course from start to finish.

EL: What advice would you have for those of us hitting the job market in the next few years?

JH: Whatever you do, try to make a positive *social* impression on the people who are interviewing you. Even if you are quite introverted, which I am, bite the bullet for your phone and campus interviews and try to come across as outgoing and friendly. When it's difficult to separate candidates, based on their qualifications, which is often the case, it's not uncommon for the tiebreaker to be, "Who do we think we will get along with the most?" Although this might sound superficial, it is a reality.

EL: How many positions did you apply for?

JH: Approximately 45-50 each year (last year and this year)

EL: How many interviews did you have?

JH: I made three campus visits each year. I also canceled two visits upon accepting a position. [I had] two offers each year.

EL: What was your job application strategy? More specifically, did you only apply for academic positions? A mixture of jobs and post docs? Only non-academic?

JH: Mostly tenure-track faculty positions and a few visiting positions and post-docs, which included some

New Faculty Wisdom

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on a much deeper level.

DP: What were you most surprised about at your new position?

JH: I am surprised at how “flexible” busy work is now. While in graduate school, I had to do pretty much everything I am doing now, *plus* coursework requirements, dissertation, etc. With those demands gone, my time is more flexible, and I can get work that *I* want done, on my own schedule. That is refreshing, actually.

DP: What was some of the best advice you received while on the job market?

JH: Don’t limit yourself geographically, unless you know *for sure* you would not relocate there. I applied to many places I had never been to before. Once you have the interview, you may be pleasantly surprised about the location. If for some reason you don’t like the location or institution and you get a job offer, you can also use the offer as leverage in your negotiations at another institution.

DP: How many applications did you send out and how many interviews did you get?

JH: I sent out about 80 applications, and I only applied for academic positions to start, with the exception of one post-doc opportunity that would have kept me in the town where I was living. From that, I got three interviews before accepting my current position and four other calls for interviews afterward.

DP: Can you share one thing you wish you had known beforehand

about job hunting?

JH: Networking with other people on the job market is also very helpful, because you can hear very useful second-hand information.

DP: What was the most difficult part of the transition from graduate student to your current position?

JH: The move across the country. I moved alone and knew no one here. Although I had plenty of time by myself to work, coping with the stressors of moving can be very challenging without in-person support from friends and loved ones.

DP: What was the easiest part of the transition?

JH: The faculty in my department has been very supportive. I am often invited out for coffee or to happy hour, or to their homes for dinner. Not having a new teaching prep the first semester was also very nice, because I could focus on getting my lab and my life set up.

DP: What have you learned in your new position?

JH: Learn the university’s policies on pretty much everything. The procedures and practices I was accustomed to at other institutions are very different where I am now, and it is just better to learn right away what the procedures are

DP: What aspect of your graduate training did you find most helpful in helping you attain your current position?

JH: Presenting research to faculty and other students was very useful, because so much of the decision to hire you is based on your job talk. Teaching opportunities were crucial, as I was able to have experience teaching before entering the job.

DP: What advice do you have for students hitting the job market in the next few years?

JH: Develop a clear line (or a few lines) of research and make plans for how you want to market yourself. Be honest with yourself about what type of department or program would be a good fit for you, and what balance of teaching/research/service would help you accomplish your personal career goals. Remember that when you are interviewing with a department, you are also interviewing them. Do *you* see yourself being successful there?

In sum, while Dr. Harman expressed that she that didn’t find any of the processes surprisingly easy, it is clear that she is thriving in her new position. We hope this has taken some of the fear and trepidation out of the job search process so that as graduate students you can focus your graduate career in a way that will produce the opportunities you want.

All articles presented in this issue of the Forum were written by members of the GSC and represent only the opinions of that author. All articles were edited by Vanessa Hemovich. The design and layout were produced by Camille Johnson.

Spotlight interview with some recent PhDs (cont)

Sarah Wood

Sarah Wood recently graduated from Northern Illinois University and will be teaching at the University of Wisconsin. She was interviewed by Elizabeth Lee.

Summer Advice:

Elizabeth Lee: Can you share with us some of the things you did during the summer while you were in graduate school, or perhaps share advice on the best way to make use of the summer?

Sarah Wood: Well, I usually use it to catch up on all the things I couldn't get to during the semester. I can get pretty easily distracted by teaching. I've typically spent summers doing some kind of work with data – either entering it or analyzing it – pretty much since I began graduate school. There's also the usual working on thesis/dissertation related stuff and preparing materials and IRB applications so you can be ready to start data collection at the beginning of the fall semester. And maybe relax a little! I know it's shocking to say.

Current Position:

EL: What are the main responsibilities in your current position?

SW: Prepping and giving lectures, activities, exams, paper assignments, grading everything; regular teaching stuff.

Job Search:

EL: What was the most difficult aspect of the job seeking process?

SW: Probably finding time to write up all the materials needed for application packets and writing cover letters. I hate writing cover letters.

EL: Was there anything about the process you found surprisingly easy?

SW: Working the automated mail center at the post office?

EL: What was some of the best advice you received while on the job market?

SW: It's a kind of tiring and sometimes a stressful process, which people warn you about, but you can't really understand until you do it...not unlike applying for graduate school and being in graduate school.

EL: Can you share one thing you wish you had known beforehand?

That I would definitely get a job.

Transitioning:

EL: Which aspect of your graduate student training did you find was most helpful or important in helping you attain your current position?

SW: To some extent everything now seems important, but in particular my teaching experience because that was something I specifically asked to do repeatedly. From my perspective, that seemed to be one of the big strengths of my CV to the places I was applying. Plus, getting teaching experience makes it much easier to have a teaching philosophy. Although, I suppose it should be said that getting research experience and being actively involved in some research is important also for the same reasons.

EL: What advice would you have for those of us hitting the job market in the next couple of years?

SW: If I was to do it over again, I'd start preparing things earlier. Also, what I tried to do was get the experiences I felt were going to be similar to the job I wanted to ultimately get. Not only because that is likely to make you more attractive to the places you apply, but also because it gives you an idea whether you will really like doing the job.

Because the theme of this Forum Issue concerns summer activities for graduate students, can you share with us some of the things you did during the summer while you were in graduate school, or perhaps some helpful advice on the best ways to make use of the summer?