



The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee Winter 2006

Preparing for Memphis!

It's almost that time of year again...SPSP conference time that is. Just around the corner we'll converge on Memphis to partake in great music, bar-b-q, and the latest and greatest social psychology has to offer.

Conferences can be a whirlwind of new research, meeting new colleagues, connecting with old friends and exploring a new city all crammed into three short days. This issue of the FORUM is designed to give you practical advice to get the most out of this (and other) academic conferences. Worried about getting lost in the crowd? Check out "Size Matters" on finding a comfortable niche at conferences (p. 4). Trying to figure out how to meet people to collaborate or get a leg up on the job market? Take a look at "Networking Works" and then get inspired by reading the Spotlight interview with one student who used conferences to establish a productive collaboration (p. 3). Just want the facts? Check out the run-down of all of SPSP Graduate Student Committee's events at the conference (p. 2) or on our webpage <http://spsp.org/student/confpage.htm>

Hope to see you in Memphis at the GSC events!

Networking Works

Imagine you are at the SPSP conference wandering around at one of the poster sessions when your advisor spots you and beckons you over. You make your way through the crowd to your advisor when she or he says, "I'd like you to meet (insert big name professor you've been idolizing for the past year)." That's when you say, "Hi. Uh...cool poster."

Every student who has ever gone to a conference has to deal with the "little fish – big pond" feelings of being surrounded by successful, well-known professors. The experience can be overwhelming and intimidating, but also inspiring and exciting. The goal of this article is to help you take control of the daunting task of networking at conferences. Networking does not have to be

as difficult as it seems, even for those of us who are not the most outgoing, attention-grabbing person in the room. There are a number of ways to tackle networking successfully so you do not end up in the situation described above where you are caught off guard.

First of all, the right attitude is key to enthusiastically pursuing new contacts. Networking is just one of the many skills we should try to develop in order to be a proficient psychologist. Making professional connections can be helpful in getting jobs, initiating collaborations, increasing knowledge, and standing out above the rest of the researchers in your area. Having mutually beneficial contacts within and outside your area of expertise can truly serve as a catalyst to your success. Also placing the proper amount of importance on network-

ing may help you overcome some of the thoughts generated as reasons why you do not have to bother with something so intimidating.

Networking has to start somewhere, most likely within your own department. Start honing your abilities by introducing yourself to professors in your own department. Make an appointment and have a planned set of topics you would like to talk about. By expanding contacts at your school, you have effectively broadened the number of potential contacts you can make at a conference. Your advisor would be the person most likely facilitating introductions at a conference, but it does not hurt to have other professors from your school familiar with what you do, so that they may be able to introduce you

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SPSP GSC Events in Memphis

The SPSP GSC is proud to be hosting four events at this year's conference for our graduate student members. Two of these events: the Graduate Poster Award (GPA) and the Mentor lunch are back by popular demand. The other two events are new additions: A symposium on practical advice for excelling in grad school and a Social Hour for Graduate Students. We hope to see you at all or some of these events!

Graduate Poster Award: This is the 5th annual poster award and this year is bigger than ever with 3 awards (1 first place and 2 runners-up) per poster session. Students who enter are interviewed by three "secret" judges during their poster session. These judges decide on the three top posters for each session. Winners will have their posters displayed at the GPA Winners area for the duration of the conference, be listed on the SPSP GSC webpage at <http://spsp.org/student/posteraward.htm>, receive \$100, a copy of MediaLab and/or DirectRT and either a Millisecond Precision Keyboard or a Precision Response Box provided courtesy of Empirisoft.

Symposium: In lieu of the Pre-conference the GSC has organized in past years, we have decided to host a symposium entitled "Advice I Wish I Received in Graduate School". The symposium will be held during session F (Saturday, 9:45am-11:00am) and we have three excellent speakers lined up to give advice on a host of important issues for graduate students. First up will be John Dovidio (UConn, Editor: JPSP) who will speak about the publication process as a graduate student including information to help "demystify" the process and giving concrete suggestions for working within the system. Next up we will have Heather Claypool (Miami U.) speaking about effective academic job presentations. Specifically, she will touch on issues regarding advice for giving the most effective and engaging job talk possible. Finally, we will hear from Peter Glick (Lawrence U.) who will provide first hand advice about seeking and keeping a job at a small liberal arts college. He will touch upon suggestions for how to tailor your job application appropriately, have a successful on-campus interview, balance teaching and community demands while continuing scholarship, getting tenure, and actively keeping your connections to the wider field of social and personality psychology. This is the only SPSP symposium focused *specifically* on graduate student concerns; therefore it is one symposium you are not going to want to miss.

Mentor Lunch: This year's event will be held on Friday from 1:00pm-2:00pm with the location to be announced. The mentor event is always a big success with graduate students taking the opportunity to have an informal discussion about a research interest or professional development topic with an established professional in the field over lunch. Planning for this year's mentor event is well underway, with suggestions for both mentors and topics rolling in from graduate students. We expect registration for the Mentor event to begin in Mid November. Registration information for the Mentor Lunch goes out over the SPSP listserv and space runs out quickly. Therefore, make sure you have signed up with the STUDENT listserv <http://www.spsp.org/student/> so you do not miss out.

Social Hour: The GSC will be hosting the first annual Graduate Student Social Hour this year Friday January 26 from 7:30 to 9:00PM in the St. Louis room in the Marriott. The Social Hour will be an opportunity for Graduate Student members of SPSP to meet other graduate students, chat with GSC board members and generally have a good time. A cash bar and some finger food will be provided.

The GSC has worked really hard over the past year to incorporate feedback and suggestion from our fellow SPSP graduate students to make this year's conference events some of the best. We are excited about this year's lineup and hope to see many of our fellow graduate students at the events.

By Lavonia Smith-LeBeau
Pennsylvania State University

Spotlight Interview: Meet Peter Jonason

Originally from Connecticut, Peter Jonason now attends New Mexico State University. As a graduate student, his interests primarily focus on human sexuality and social psychology from an evolutionary perspective. Peter was asked to share his story about finding a working collaboration as a result of attending conferences.

FORUM: What are some of the conferences have you been to? Did you present?

PJ: I have been to SPSP, the Human Behavior and Evolution Society, National Communication Association, International Communication Association, and Media Ecology. I have also attended the evolutionary psychology pre-conferences for SPSP. I have presented two talks and four posters. I have presented at all but NCA. At ICA, I received a top student paper award.

FORUM: What was your best conference experience?

PJ: The best conference experience I have had was at the Human Behavior and Evolution Conference in 2006 because I had already made contacts with some researchers at SPSP 2006.

FORUM: What was your worst conference experience?

PJ: I found the National Communication Association conference to be the least useful. I have subsequently left the field of communication for psychology.

FORUM: Have you ever obtained a job/collaboration offer as a result of attending a psychology conference?

PJ: When I went to SPSP in 2006 I met Norman Li from the University of Texas at Austin. We met at the Evolutionary Psychology pre-conference prior to the full conference. We got to talking and found that we shared many research interests, perspectives, as well as personal compatibility. We then spent time at the Lurve party put on by Berkeley and started a dialogue. About 2 weeks after the conference, I contacted him about collaborating and he agreed. We presented this collaboration as a poster at the Human Behavior and Evolution conference in 2006 and hope to submit it for review soon. After that, we have done another collaboration and plan to do many more. I visit Austin now to not only meet with him, but to stay connected to individuals like David Buss. Through meeting him, I have become plugged into the heart of evolutionary social psychology.

FORUM: Do you think you will continue to attend conferences once you have earned your graduate degree?

PJ: I fully intend to continue to attend conferences post-PhD. I feel that they are network building opportunities as well as opportuni-

ties to socialize with like-minded individuals.

FORUM: Where would you like to see a psychology conference hosted?

PJ: Selfishly, I would like a conference to be here in Las Cruces, NM, but I recognize that it is in the middle of nowhere and thus unlikely to attract large crowds and is not suited for entertaining the attendees. Barring that, I would like to have conferences in larger city locales like Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Albuquerque, and Denver. I am sure these places have already or will soon be used, but going to the same city more than once might have an appeal to some. In sum, I would like to see conferences in places that bring all walks of life, including psychologists.

FORUM: What do you think can be done to encourage more students to attend conferences?

PJ: Primarily, I think it is the job of advisors to go to conferences and to lead their students to want to go as well. The current student-centered approaches are adequate in terms of offering money and awards. Perhaps, however, there should be a greater breadth of awards. The international communication association already does this.

Interested in finding out more about Peter? <http://web.nmsu.edu/~pjonason/>

By Vanessa Hemovich
Claremont Graduate University

Size matters: The benefits of small conferences

For those of you who have been to many conferences over the course of your graduate career this might not be news; big conferences are wonderful and awful all at once. While it is great to hear about research that may be totally different from your own and network, big conferences can be overwhelming and often feel unfocused. With SPSP growing larger each year it may be losing its “small field” feel as it gains members. But fear no more, there are solutions!

Many larger conferences (SPSP included) have a day for pre-conferences on specific topic areas. These pre-conferences are a great way to make connections with other graduate students doing similar work and get a chance to talk with faculty whose work you’ve read. They can also be a way to learn more about an area of research that is different from your own, I actually make a point to seek out topics that sound interesting but aren’t directly related to my work. Pre-conferences focus on a topic area, a specific issue, or even a new method or technique and allow you to explore a topic in

more depth than you might be able to do running back and forth between relevant symposia. Many pre-conferences also have their own poster or workshops sessions. So even if you don’t get so much out of a symposium with 300 other people, you may get some great ideas from exploring new ideas at a pre-conference. Some pre-conferences focus on a practical issue such as teaching techniques, a new statistical method, or getting a job (Don’t forget to attend the SPSP GSC’s symposium “Advice I wished I had received in graduate school”), that give you the opportunity to develop new skills that you otherwise may not have access to.

Another great way to take a manageable bite of a topic is to attend smaller conferences. These are often focused on a specific topic or area, so they don’t draw as many people. This last summer I attend just such a conference on Virtual Reality Technology and Psychology, while there were only about 250 people there, I found that I made more contacts and had a better experience than I had at larger conferences. Especially when dealing with a specialized area of a

field, smaller conferences allow more opportunity for informal networking (See “Networking Works” in this issue for tips on networking). While some of the big dogs in your field may be too busy at larger conferences getting a chance to introduce yourself and chat about research may be easier at smaller, and less crowded, conferences. Smaller conferences have their downsides too, often there isn’t a wide range of talks so you may not always have a talk or event to go to, but they can be a nice break from being lost in a crowd. The smaller nature of the field can also make it feel like going to a school where everybody already knows each other.

Smaller conferences also provide great opportunities to present your research; regional conferences are notoriously student-friendly. You can use these experiences to build your vita and get valuable experience giving talks to larger audiences. While you may be comfortable giving a talk to your peers, it is a great experience (if somewhat

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Upcoming Regional Conferences

Eastern Psych. Assn.

Midwestern Psych. Assn.

New England Psych. Assn.

Rocky Mountain Psych. Assn.

Southeastern Psych. Assn.

Southwestern Psych. Assn.

Western Psych. Assn.

State Psychological Orgs

SPSP pre-conferences

March 22 - 25, 2007

May 3 - 5, 2007

October 19 – 20 2007

April 12 – 14 2007

February 21-24, 2007

April 5 - 7, 2007

May 3 - 6, 2007

<http://www.apa.org/practice/refer.html>

<http://www.taramillerevents.com/spsp2007/preconferences.htm>

Philadelphia, PA

Chicago, IL

Danbury, CT

Denver, CO

New Orleans, LA

Forth Worth, TX

Vancouver, BC, Canada

Networking, cont. from page 1

to someone they know. It is a good idea to talk with your own advisor about how you feel about networking. Things to think about are how important is it to network at the stage of your graduate career, how confident you feel about meeting new professors, and who would be beneficial contacts to make.

Before a conference, it is wise to make certain preparations. Those who network like a pro might possess a generous level of tact, charisma and sociableness, but plenty of professors who have garnered the respect of their colleagues did not do so by having a wide arsenal of witty jokes. In order to network well, you have to be prepared. Before attending the conference, take the time to peruse through the schedule and pick out talks you want to hear and posters you want to view. Also figure out potential people you would like to chat with. Presumably, you will pick people whose research excites you, overlaps with your interests and raises questions that you can ask. Having a question you could ask multiple people is useful so that you do not have to remember questions for each person especially since you may not get to meet everyone you would like to anyway. Also practice giving a two sentence as well as a two minute description of your research since you will not know how much time you have a captive audience. Lastly, if you are on the job market, having business cards are convenient, and they are not an overly expensive investment.

Once you are actually at a

conference, there are strategies to keep in mind with introductions. It is fine to ask your advisor to introduce you to specific people especially your advisor's friends or acquaintances. Another strategy is to become acquainted with an advisee of the professor you would like to meet. Then ask the advisee to introduce you to his or her advisor. In return, it is always beneficial for you to be generous in reciprocating introductions too. Having a buddy with you to help you mingle can also make nerve-racking situations more bearable. However, some advise not hanging around your graduate student friends; obviously you already know them. It is also appropriate for you to introduce yourself without anyone else's help. Working yourself to a confidence level where you are able to smoothly and briefly introduce yourself and have a chat with someone is great. By doing so, you will be representing yourself as unique which can help you be remembered.

Be mindful that appropriate networking options often depend on the venue since the atmosphere can set a certain tone. Conferences often have social hours or coffee breaks which is a great time to quickly chat in a more informal, but professional setting. Lunches and dinners are excellent for being able to discuss more deeply about research topics and get to know the professor on a more personal level. If you find yourself at some kind of after-party, you might not want to assume that after a long conference day that a professor will be eager to have a serious discussion of research. After

symposia talks or during poster sessions, presenters will be most able and expectant to chat about their research. This is where if you are prepared, you will know what symposia to attend and who you will possibly introduce yourself to. Although you may have to wait to get to talk with that person of interest, make the effort to wait for your chance since you might not be able to cross paths with the person again later.

Some last advice is regarding appropriate, presentable attire. Conference attendees tend toward wearing business clothing, but there is a range in casualness. A good rule of thumb is that it is best to pack multiple options. You will want to be prepared for unforeseen weather or unexpected spills and stains anyway. Also there is nothing wrong with over rather than under-dressing for an event. Looking overly casual can give the impression that you are not professional and not taking the conference seriously. But you also do not want to over think what you are going to wear since professional attire can only do so much when making impressions on people. Just be neat, clean and unwrinkled. Finally, always wear your badge. People do look at each other's badges and it helps with being remembered or even with communicating if you are at a loud venue.

You can benefit from networking regardless of what stage you are in your graduate school career. It can take a few interactions with a certain professor before they remember you so it does not hurt to start getting in touch with people

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Small conferences, continued from Page 4.

nerve-racking) to present your work in front of strangers. These experiences also come relatively cheaply. Smaller regional conferences are less expensive to travel to and attend so that you can save your money for the one or two big conferences a year that might be worthwhile but are more expensive.

While you may feel the need to only attend the big conferences, take a look at some other opportunities. If chosen properly, smaller conferences and pre-conferences can be extremely useful for students to maximize their time and effort.

By David Portnoy
University of Connecticut

Networking, cont. from page 5

early in your career. Also networking certainly can help you generate ideas and solicit feedback that will help you later on. Do not feel like you have to present a talk or a poster to attend a conference. If opportunities arise to volunteer at a conference, it is an excellent chance to go and be initiated into the whole experience. Attending as many conferences as you can will help make you less nervous for when you do find yourself presenting research and networking with strangers. While it is easy to feel like you should put off thinking about networking, anything you can do to gradually become more comfortable is a huge step in the right direction. Hopefully this article has helped you plan on making goals to network at the next SPSP!

By Elizabeth Lee
Pennsylvania State University

President's Corner

With the focus of this issue of the FORUM being the upcoming conference in Memphis, I wanted to take time to talk about getting involved in the field. There are many ways to be involved in our field. You can attend and present at conferences (both regional and national), you can be involved in school level committees, or you can become involved in national committees.

Attending and presenting at conferences is one of the best-known ways to be involved in the field. At conferences, you have the opportunity to present your work and see work on the cutting edge. Attending non-formal events at conferences is also important. These events present a chance to meet and interact in a colloquial setting. The graduate student committee is sponsoring several such events in Memphis, and I hope you have an opportunity to partake in them.

Being involved with school committees is a great way to get involved. Many schools have

colloquium committees that have student representatives. Other schools have full graduate student committees to represent student needs and desires. These kinds of committees are especially rewarding because you are able to see immediate tangible effects on your education.

Another excellent way to be involved is to join national committees. The SPSP Graduate Student Committee is an example of one of the many graduate student committees that are working hard to serve the needs of graduate students. We give voice to the thousands of graduate students in SPSP. Getting involved in the committee is a way to help ensure that the voices are heard.

I strongly encourage you to be involved, no matter how you chose to get involved. Attend and present at conferences, get involved on your own campus, or even consider running for a position in the GSC. These are all truly a great experiences and present meaningful ways to be involved.

By John Edlund
Northern Illinois University

To learn more about the your SPSP GSC representatives, about the programs the GSC sponsors, and the other resources available from SPSP for graduate students, please visit our webpage at www.spsp.org/student.

All content in this newsletter was written by members of the 2006/2007 SPSP Graduate Student Committee. David Portnoy served as editor. Layout and design were implemented by Camille Johnson.