

Jessi L. Smith

Candidate Statement

It would be an honor to serve as the Division 8 representative for the SPSP Board. I remember well when I started graduate school and our community of SPSP scholars convened at the APA convention. When SPSP began hosting its own annual meeting, the connection to our APA foundation loosened. But our two organizations need strong ties. SPSP is better when we partner with APA as a powerful lever of change, practice, and advocacy. And APA is improved with our field's timely and considered science. APA and SPSP are mutually committed to understanding human behavior to surmount crises: pandemic impacts, our dying planet, political polarization, and social injustice just to name a few. We make change together by using theory and data-informed strategies that promote vitality, inclusion, action, interest, and wellness (and so much more!).

If elected, I would bring my action-orientation work ethic and motivation and diversity praxis to the team to help in evaluating and setting priorities for SPSP and APA. My aim is to center ways in which we can increase our community's scientific, educational, political, and public impact. I do this by drawing from my experience using both basic and applied questions and methods to offer multiple ways of knowing, doing, and disseminating that scale up the impact of our psychological science. In this work, I am also committed to constantly rethinking, reimagining, and deepening what our science could be. Such a standpoint positions us to avoid the disempowering corrosive critiques that can too often shut-down change efforts and alienate ourselves from each other and from potential allies. If elected, I would follow a collaborative ethos of care and intentionally address the barriers and opportunities for "being" a full human engaged in knowledge production (as a researcher and scholar) and knowledge dissemination (as a teacher and change agent).

As one small example, several years ago now, our dedicated SPSP Fellow Review Committee implemented the changes to the Fellow review process to include different areas of strength and criteria weight. Having noticed that some in our field do not follow a traditional academic path and/or many do not have the same research resources, we proposed (and the SPSP Board approved) a new model for how to review Fellows. The following year when I was chair, we further refined the process as we drew from the lessons learned because, of course, the work is never done and there are always improvements to be made. This is but one example of how we can consider what we know, what we see, and put into action meaningful change.

Let me end by noting that in my humble view, as social and personality psychologists, we can do so much more than publish our findings. We can improve people's lives by proactively connecting our findings to the larger APA community to promote policies, practices, and positions driven (at least in part) by social and personality psychological science. As a Fellow of both APA and SPSP, I would welcome the chance to be an intentional part of the connection.