The 2006 SPSSI Convention

SPSSI’s 2006 Biennial Convention in Long Beach focused on social justice and in particular how research can be translated into action and policy change. The conference was a huge success, with nearly 400 participants. From a pre-conference on real world helping and social action, to symposia on applied psychological research, to Beth Shin’s presidential address on how to “dance” with policy makers and encourage them to use research to inform their policy decisions, this year’s convention was clearly focused on encouraging psychological researchers to do their part to translate research into action.

The Graduate Student Committee also tried to match its events with the theme of the conference. For instance, the mentor lunch focused on mentors offering advice to mentees on how to push their own research into action and policy. There was also a roundtable discussion on various career options for graduating students, and much of the discussion focused on how one can do applied research and still get ahead in the field of psychology. In addition, the GSC sponsored a roundtable discussion on how to write for various audiences, including a policy-based audience.

A major part of SPSSI’s mission is to not only support researchers who do work on topics related to social issues, but also to help direct that research to policy-makers so they can make informed decisions about today’s pressing issues. Although not all researchers have the initiative to see that their research is translated into action, it is important for psychologists as a group to develop ways to get policy-makers to notice their work in general.

This emphasis on translating research into policy change is what attracts many graduate students to the organization as they are trying to develop themselves as researchers who also have an interest in engaging in social activism. The SPSSI Biennial Convention provided a comfortable environment for young researchers who are up and coming to interact with more seasoned researchers, who could offer advice on how to use one’s work to create real change in the world. SPSSI and the GSC’s hope is that graduate students in psychology will be the next big researchers making serious changes in today’s social issues.

Michelle Kaufman
2005-2006 GSC Chair-Elect

GSC Events

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AFTER GRADUATE SCHOOL: WHAT’S OUT THERE

Coordinated by Janice Adelman, Michelle Kaufman and Teresa Robbins

This popular workshop explored academic and non-academic career paths. Panelists included Roberta Downing, postdoctoral fellow at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University; Cindy Gilbert, Social Science Analyst for the Government Accountability Office; Jack Glaser, Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley; Brian Lowery, Assistant Professor of Organizational Behavior at Stanford School of Business; and Patricia Winter, Research Social Scientist for the US Forest Service. After describing the unique paths that
brought them to their current positions, the panelists took questions from the audience. Many issues were discussed, including how to find opportunities to expand your research experience in applied settings, strategies for marketing your skills and experience in varying job markets, and tactics for making your work influential upon current social issues. The panelists offered diverse perspectives that were helpful to students with an array of career aspirations.

Many thanks to the panelists for sharing their time, experiences, and insights. Thanks also to all those who attended the workshop for their participation and questions.

Teresa Robbins
2005-2006 GSC Member-at-large

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR LUNCH

This GSC sponsored lunch event offered students an informal setting to interact with distinguished faculty as well as peers on topics of common interest. Students shared a table with one of nine faculty guests - Hector Bettencourt, Mark Costanzo, Irene Frieze, Sam Gaertner, Yuen Huo, Bernice Lott, Allen Omoto, Dan Perlman, and Richard Wiener.

Mentors provided students, beginning their foray into the world of research, with an insider’s view of their domain areas and how their work could impact policy. In addition, advanced students were able to share their experiences with their relatively new peers, making for a valuable exchange. This hour and a half session thus resulted in a great networking opportunity for students keen on applying their research to social action.

Rupanwita Gupta
2005-2006 Newsletter/Web Editor

Race, Status, and Immigration Law

Racial prejudice has marked U.S. immigration laws since the first significant immigration restrictions were passed with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Later laws restricted immigration based on national origin and hemisphere, and marginalized undocumented immigrants rendering them more inferior than second-class citizens. Exclusion from the United States has been applied differentially to people from different parts of the world, and laws have targeted undocumented people who have committed even minor crimes.

In the wake of a bill passed by the House of Representatives in 2005, further militarizing the Mexican border, criminalizing being undocumented and providing services to the undocumented, immigration has become a national issue. Thousands of immigrants and advocates marched in cities around the country in the spring of 2006 calling for legalization and denouncing the House bill. The Senate passed its own immigration bill which proposes a similar militarization of the border, without criminalizing being undocumented or supporting those without documents. The bill includes a guest worker program similar to European programs which have arguably marginalized many immigrants from countries in which they live; it is also similar to the 1950’s Bracero program in the US which was disbanded after rampant employer abuses of immigrant workers. These new laws, as Massey\(^1\) has pointed out, would increase the number of deaths on the Mexican border and keep many migrants who would like to return to their country of origin from doing so.

Psychological research has addressed both attitudes towards immigrants and immigration as well as the effect of bureaucratic labels on immigrant identities. Negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration are related to factors such as social dominance orientation and perceived zero-sum competition\(^2\). When immigrants succeed they are seen as a threat to native-born jobs and when they don’t they are considered a threat to systems of social welfare. With regard to immigrants themselves, Solis\(^3\) has argued that illegality is a form of violence committed by the state against undocumented immigrants that has implications for their identities and violence within immigrant communities.

Current debates over immigration, then, present both an opportunity and need for psychological research and intervention.

Shaun Wiley
Doctoral Student, CUNY Graduate Center

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The Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage

Policy aimed at denying same-sex marriage is both a psychological and political issue. Over the past few decades, psychologists have documented the abhorrent prejudice, discrimination, and violence against the lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) community. Discrimination negatively impacts the health and well-being of members of the GLBT community and their families. The denial of marriage rights to a large portion of the US population is not only indicative of institutional discrimination, but it runs counter to the recommendations of the American Psychological Association (APA). APA policy statements stress that “it is unfair and discriminatory to deny same-sex couples legal access to civil marriage and to all its attendant benefits, rights, and privileges” and that the APA opposes “any discrimination based on sexual orientation in matters of adoption, child custody and visitation, foster care, and reproductive health services”.

Backlash from the 2003 legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and the highly publicized marriages of 4000 same-sex couples in San Francisco in 2004, have fueled debates and led to a proposed federal amendment regarding same-sex marriages. On June 7, 2006, the Senate voted 49 to 48 to defeat the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would have denied same sex-couples the right to marry and would have seriously threatened existing legislation regarding civil unions and domestic partnerships. Continued research aimed at highlighting prejudice and discrimination toward the GLBT community can assist in advocacy efforts.

For more information on psychological research related to same-sex marriage, visit: http://www.apa.org/ppo/issues/lgbfamilybrf604.html

For GLBT marriage updates from around the world, visit: http://www.amazingdreamspublishing.com/glbtmarriageupdates.html

For more information about APA’s Division 44, Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues, visit: http://www.apa.org/about/division/div44.html

For more information on psychological research, see: Journal of Social Issues (2000). Special Issue: Women’s sexualities: New perspectives on sexual orientation and gender, 56(2).

Jannie L. Franco-Zamudio
2005-2006 GSC Chair

Travel Awards to the 2006 SPSSI Convention

The Graduate Student Committee would like to thank Adam Pearson (Chair), Teresa Robbins, Michelle O’Sullivan, and Melissa Angus for serving on the Student Travel Award subcommittee this year. The subcommittee reported that the applications were exceptional. Congratulations to the following students who received a $150 travel award:

Elizabeth Chamberlin, Claremont Graduate University
Sapna Cheryan, Stanford University
Jennifer Crosby, Stanford University
Thomas Denson, University of Southern California
Luke Fiedorowicz, Loyola University, Chicago
Mary Murphy, Stanford University
Mary Prenovost, Boston College
Norann Richard, Simon Fraser University
Tamar Saguy, University of Connecticut
Lindsay Shaw, University of California, Berkeley

The GSC would like to thank Ayesha Boyce and John Edlund for serving on the 2005-2006 Recruiting/ Membership subcommittee!

SPSSI GSC Elections

The 2005-2006 Graduate Student Committee would like to congratulate the 2006-2007 members of the Graduate Student Committee. The new committee will take office on September 1, 2006. Thank you to all who participated in the election process. Your new GSC members are as follows:

Chair: Michelle R. Kaufman
Michelle is a graduate student in social psychology at the University of Connecticut. She has spent the past year attending council meetings and serving on committees in preparation of becoming the GSC Chair (and sole graduate student vote during SPSSI council). Michelle has worked on research that examines the
interaction of gender and power and the increased risk of HIV for women in South Africa and Nepal.

Chair-Elect: Janice Adelman

Janice is a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University. She has served on numerous GSC subcommittees and assisted in coordination of the 2006 SPSSI Biennial Convention. In an attempt to facilitate international connections, Janice coordinated the International Network Group session at the convention.

Members-at-large:

Jenny Escobar

Jenny is a graduate student at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her research interests include peace psychology, particularly in the promotion of peace during wartime or post conflict. More specifically, she is interested to see how various transitional justice mechanisms (i.e. truth commissions, reintegration programs) psychologically affect individuals and communities within this context.

Erica Rosenthal

Erica is a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University. Broadly, her interests converge at the interface of psychology, law, and public policy, but include the influence of stereotypes on legal decision-making. In January 2006, Erica became a reviewer for the electronic journal, Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy (ASAP). She spent last summer in Washington DC, as an intern at the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Michelle O’Sullivan

Michelle is a graduate student at Antioch New England Graduate School. Michelle has two part-time positions. First, she is an outreach clinician at an agency in Boston where she provides home-based individual and family therapy to a diverse group of families. Secondly, she serves as a program coordinator for male and female sex offenders in a prison setting.

Newsletter/ Web Editor: John Edlund

John is a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. He served as President of the Graduate Student Committee for the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. John would like to continue to increase professional, academic, and social opportunities for SPSSI graduate student members.

SPSSI Student Funding Opportunities

In support of student research, SPSSI offers several funding opportunities for graduate students:

E Clara Mayo Grants are given in support of master’s theses and pre-dissertation research on sexism, racism, and prejudice. For more information see www.spssi.org/Mayo flyer.html

E Graduate students are eligible for the Grant-In-Aid Program in support of research on social problems related to the goals of SPSSI. For more information see: www.spssi.org/GIAflyer.html

E Applied Social Issues Internship Program provides funding for research conducted in cooperation with private and public organizations. For more information see: www.spssi.org/ASIflyer.html

E Social Issues Dissertation Award. For more information, see: www.spssi.org/Dissertationflyer.html

For more information on funding please visit our website at: http://www.spssi.org/awards.html

Contact Information

2005-2006 SPSSI Graduate Student Committee

CHAIR: Jamie L. Franco
jfranco@ucsc.edu

CHAIR-ELECT: Michelle Kaufman
michellekaufman@msn.com

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE: Janice Adelman
janice.adelman@cgu.edu
Adam Pearson
adam.pearson@uconn.edu
Teresa Robbins
teresa.robbins@cgu.edu

NEWSLETTER/WEB EDITOR: Rupanwita Gupta
rupu.gupta@cgu.edu

SPSSI Central Office
208 I Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4340
Phone: 202/675-6956   Fax: 202/675-6902
E-mail: spssi@spssi.org   Web: www.spssi.org