2009 SPSP Training Committee Pre-Conference
Co-Sponsored by the National Cancer Institute

HEALTH RESEARCH IN SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

Co-chairs:
Jamie Arndt, University of Missouri
James A. Shepperd, University of Florida

Program of Events		
8:00 - 8:30	Breakfast & Introductory Remarks	Breakfast & Introductory Remarks
8:30 – 9:00	*How Practice can Reveal the Strengths (and Weaknesses) of Our Theories: Studying the Initiation and Maintenance of Behavior Change*	Alexander J. Rothman, Univ of Minnesota
9:00 – 9:30	*Gender and Communication in Medical Visits*	Judith Hall, Northeastern University
9:30 – 10:00	*Ambiguity in cancer control*	Paul Han, National Cancer Institute
10:00 – 10:30	**BREAK**	
10:30 – 11:00	*The Implications of Death for Health: A Terror Management Health Model for Behavioral Health Promotion*	Jamie Goldenberg, Univ of South Florida
11:00 – 11:30	*Goal adjustment and health*	Michael Scheier, Carnegie Mellon Univ
11:30 – 1:00	**LUNCH & TABLE DISCUSSIONS**	
1:00 – 1:30	*Racial Discrimination and Health*	Rick Gibbons, Dartmouth College
1:30 – 2:00	*Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer Through the Application of Vicarious Cognitive Dissonance*	Joel Cooper, Princeton University
2:00 – 2:30	*Conducting Research on Social-Health psychology at a Small College*	Marie Helweg-Larsen, Dickinson College
2:30 – 3:00	**BREAK (SPSP registration)**	
3:00 – 3:30	*Funding Opportunities for Behavioral Research at the National Cancer Institute*	Sarah Kobrin, National Cancer Institute
3:30 – 4:30	**PANEL DISCUSSION**	

2009 SPSP Pre-Conference Abstracts	
Alexander J. Rothman Univ of Minnesota How Practice can Reveal the Strengths (and Weaknesses) of Our Theories: Study-ing the Initiation and Maintenance of Behavior Change	The degree to which behavioral practices contribute to current rates of disease morbidity and premature mortality is a staggering practical problem. Although Kurt Lewin famously asserted "there is nothing so practical as a good theory," innovations in social and personality psychology too often are disconnected from the development of intervention strategies to promote healthy behavioral practices. How should we think about the disconnection between principles and practice? In my presentation, I will examine how my colleagues and I have pursued the integration of principles and practice in our studies of behavioral initiation and behavioral maintenance and what it has revealed about the "practical value" of our theories.
Judith Hall Northeastern Univ Gender and Communication in Medical Visits	Gender differences in communication style are both evident and influential in encounters between physicians and patients. Though gender differences in communication are well researched within social psychology, research on medical care has only lately turned to this topic. Using meta-analysis and original research, I worked to bring what is known from social psychology to bear on findings from the medical care context, as well as to examine correlates of gender and communication that are unique to the medical context. Research shows that in spite of homogenizing influences in medical selection and training, differences in the communication behavior of male and female physicians bear a striking resemblance to those documented in non-clinical research. In my talk, I will describe physician gender differences in attitudes and behavior, and relate them to current trends in medical education and the conceptualization of the doctor role, as well as to patient outcomes such as satisfaction.
Paul Han NCI Ambiguity in cancer control	Much of the health information people receive is ambiguous in terms of reliability, credibility, and adequacy. This is particularly true in the domain of cancer control, where ambiguity can appear in the prediction of personal cancer risks, the assessment of the benefits and risks of preventive, screening, and treatment interventions, and the development and implementation of clinical practice guidelines. Relatively little is known, however, about how ambiguity in these different circumstances influences affect, cognitions, and behavior. This talk reviews emerging findings regarding the effects of ambiguity in the domain of cancer control and outlines potential research questions that might fruitfully be explored from social psychological perspectives.
Jamie Goldenberg USF The Implications of Death for Health: A Terror Management Health Model for Behavioral Health Promotion	In an obvious sense, death does not bode well for an individual's health. Yet beyond this obvious but most dire consequence, and despite the intuitive connection between death and health, research in health psychology has not considered the unique implications of how people manage psychological concerns about mortality. Goldenberg and Arndt (in press, *Psychological Review*) recently proposed a terror management health model (TMHM) that integrates disparate health and social psychology literatures to elucidate how the conscious and non-conscious awareness of death can influence the motivational orientation that is most operative in the context of health decisions. In short, TMHM suggests that conscious thoughts about death instigate health-oriented responses aimed at removing death-related thoughts from current focal attention, whereas non-consciously activated death thoughts promote self-oriented defenses directed toward maintaining, not one's health, but a sense of meaning and self-esteem. Evidence for the model and implications for health theory and promotion will be discussed.
Michael Scheier Carnegie Mellon U Goal adjustment and health	Goals play an important role in theories of behavioral self-regulation. Goals provide people with reasons for living and help to define who they are. However, sometimes people pursue goals that are ultimately unattainable. Under such circumstances, it may be adaptive to abandoned unattainable goals and engage other goals that are more realistically obtained. This presentation will provide a theoretical framework for viewing goal disengagement and goal re-engagement, and review a series of studies that suggest that goal adjustment is beneficial for health.

Rick Gibbons Dartmouth College Racial Discrimination and Health	A series of studies using both survey and experimental methods examine the prospective link, found in previous studies, between racial discrimination and substance use among African American adolescents and adults. These studies used social psychological theories to determine what factors *mediate* and *moderate* the relation between perceived racial discrimination and drug use and drinking. The survey studies and experimental (lab) studies converged in demonstrating that anger, more so than depression or anxiety, mediated the link among both adolescents and their parents. In addition, the relations with the adolescents were moderated by effective parenting (less of a relation for those whose parents provided warmth and support) and coping style—a stronger relation for those who report using substances as a means of coping with stress. Finally, another study showed that ethnic identity was a protective (buffering) factor against both discrimination and substance use, but (significantly) more so for Black adolescents who live in mostly White neighborhoods. The findings illustrate the utility of social-psychology theory for understanding psychosocial factors related to health and health behavior.
Joel Cooper Princeton University Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer Through the Application of Vicarious Cognitive Dissonance	The relationship of attitudes to behavior plays a crucial role in affecting health related action decisions. Our longstanding knowledge that people desire consistency among their cognitions has led to research and recommendations concerning ways to establish more healthy behavioral practices related to the risk of skin cancer. Prolonged and unprotected exposure to the sun is a well-known major risk factor in melanomas. Using the lens of a new approach called vicarious cognitive dissonance, we have been able to create more positive attitudes toward the use of sunscreen as well as more proactive behaviors to reduce the risk of skin cancers. Recommendations for the further application of vicarious dissonance techniques toward other cancer-risk behaviors will be discussed.
Marie Helweg-Larsen Dickinson College Conducting Research on Social-Health psychology at a Small College	Many professors struggle to get research done while juggling the demands of teaching and service. Health psychological research can be particularly difficult to carry out in the small college environment in which there are no graduate students and limited access to both student and non-student populations. In this talk I outline some of the strategies I have used for keeping my research program active including (a) obtaining grant funding, (b) incorporating research into course work, (c) managing an effective lab with undergraduate collaborators, (d) obtaining data from local non-student populations, and (e) collaborating with researchers who have access to patient or large student populations.
Sarah Kobrin NCI Funding Opportunities for Behavioral Research at the National Cancer Institute	The Behavioral Research Program (BRP) of the National Cancer initiates, supports, and evaluates a comprehensive program of behavioral research ranging from basic behavioral to the development and dissemination of interventions. The five branches within BRP focus on areas including tobacco use, dietary behavior, sun protection, decision making, health communication, counseling about testing for cancer susceptibility, and participation in cancer screening. Each branch funds a portfolio of research with direct applicability to social psychology, including determining mechanisms of behavior change and maintenance as well as the contributions of individual differences to the effects of cancer prevention and control interventions. I will describe current research priorities for each of the five branches that are pertinent to social psychology. I also will provide an overview of the submission, review, and funding procedures of NCI, highlighting particularly how NIH grant applications and procedures differ from those of the National Science Foundation. Finally, I will describe current opportunities for funding from NCI, including mechanisms designed to encourage first-time NCI applicants.