Welcome back and happy New Year from the DSSC!

We hope you all enjoyed the winter break and return re-energized and re-focused for this semester! Congratulations to Ashley and Shimrit for successfully completing the first semester! We hope the experience and achievements of the fall semester provide you with confidence as you enter into the spring.

We would like to thank Angelina and Ryan for the wonderful guidance and leadership they provided as DSSC chairs. Under their leadership, the DSSC coordinated many events, which provided our PhD community with opportunities to foster friendships across cohorts. They created a safe environment for PhD students to voice concerns and, when appropriate, advocated for students. We are incredibly grateful to both Angelina and Ryan and hope to continue their legacy!

We would like to recognize our talented colleagues. Many PhD students and candidates presented at major conferences, such as the American Society of Criminology and the Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management, published their work in journals and chapters, and were invited for job talks. Wonderful work! Please be sure to check the Peer Cites section to see the interesting work our fellow PhD students and candidates have produced over the semester!

One of our goals for this semester is to better connect with students across SP2 programs, such as the MSW, MSSP, and DSW tracks. We will be working with Erica Zaveloff, who heads up Community Teamworks, to identify a volunteering opportunity for our group to take part in along with others from SP2. We will also continue to organize social events and opportunities for the PhD student community. If you have any ideas, please let us know!

Have a great semester!

DSSC co-chairs,
Kalen and Allison
Kalen Flynn

This fall, I presented at the 2014 annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology (ASC). Held in San Francisco, the theme of the meeting was “Criminology at the Intersections of Oppression”. ASC is an international organization that brings together researchers and practitioners in an effort to promote multidisciplinary collaboration and exchange to further criminological and criminal justice research and disseminate knowledge.

ASC’s annual meeting provides PhD students interested in criminal justice and criminology related research the opportunity to present oral papers and posters. ASC’s eight interest areas contain sub-areas that are inclusive of a vast array of research interests that fall under the criminological umbrella. Interest areas range from types of offending to correlates of crime and include such topics as mental health, immigration, social construction of crime, gang offending, and prisoner reentry to name a few. ASC also hosts an employment exchange at each annual meeting where doctoral candidates can interview for faculty positions and meet deans from schools across the country. Their website houses an active list of professional employment listings.

My presentation at ASC focused on the impact of neighborhood social trust on perceptions of safety among adolescent youth. I presented as a part of the “Neighborhood & Place” interest group, which allowed me the opportunity to interact with leaders in the mapping field as well as to learn innovative methodologies and applications of theory. Jia Xue also presented both an oral paper and poster at the ASC meeting, and through this connected with fellow international researchers interested in her field of study.

Overall, the ASC annual meeting provides doctoral students with a plethora of opportunities for career advancement, networking, and advancing scholarship. The next ASC annual meeting will be held in Washington, DC from November 18th through the 21st. The theme of this meeting will be “The Politics of Crime & Justice”. The call for abstract submissions is now open, with oral paper abstracts due by March 13th and poster abstracts due by May 15th.

Micheal Shier, PhD

Tell us about your work as an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto?

This is an exciting time in my career. I was elated to have been hired at the University of Toronto in the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. It is a great institution and wonderful faculty. Since starting last summer, I have been carrying on with some research that I had started while I was at the University of Pennsylvania with Dr. Femida Handy on social innovation by nonprofits in Pennsylvania. Along with that, I have been working with some nonprofits in Toronto, doing some program evaluations, outcome measures, and social impact assessments. Soon I will be starting on a recently funded project (my first funded project!) investigating the organizational level factors contributing to workplace violence within the Government of Alberta’s child welfare organization. I have funding requests in for several other research competitions to further expand my research agenda, and other data is currently being written for publication. Besides my research and writing, I have been teaching and sitting on the PhD studies committee for my faculty. I have been trying to find the balance between these three areas of academic life – research, teaching and service – not to forget having a personal life too! It has been an exciting transition from a student to a faculty member, with a lot of new learning and personal and professional development.
What experiences at Penn were the most valuable to you as a student and now as an Assistant Professor?

Some of the most valuable experiences for me at Penn were the inter-personal relationships that I had with some of the faculty, members of the PhD cohort, and certainly my supervisor. The level of support received and the collegial atmosphere that I experienced really helped me to transition from being a student to being a faculty member. It definitely instilled a sense of confidence about my ability; which is important to have as you embark on an academic career, where you are in the position now to carry out your own research agenda and demonstrate your own expertise, and to provide leadership and mentorship to student learning and development.

What has been your biggest challenge as you have transitioned from being a graduate student to your current position?

The biggest challenge for me (by far!) has been developing an identity and practice as an adult educator. Prior to starting as an Assistant Professor I had not taught an entire course, nor any experience in curriculum development. I had to learn relatively quickly and develop a teaching persona and pedagogy as I moved along in my first course last semester. Certainly I made some mistakes, and this is one area of my professional development that is ongoing!

What were your key considerations in choosing to take a position at the University of Toronto?

This is a difficult question. There are several factors that you consider when you are given a job offer. For instance, is the salary and benefits package reasonable, do you want to live in that city, is there a reduced teaching load for new faculty members, what kind of research support is offered at the University and in your faculty etc. I certainly considered all of these things, but the key factor that made this an easy choice was that it felt like a good fit for me when I was there during my ‘job talk’. The culture, dynamics, and nature of the interactions with people were all very positive, and I certainly felt welcomed.

Do you have any advice for current SP2 PhD students vis-à-vis the job market and their career prospects and options?

It is important to have a clear message about what your research agenda is and how it fits into the wider discipline of social work (or whatever discipline you are applying into). It is kind of like a sales pitch. You have to be able to answer people’s unspoken questions around: why is what you research so important, and how will that contribute or advance what we are already doing here? And while there are a lot of academic job opportunities in social work right now, it is important to find the place that wants to see you succeed. One way that is evidenced is through opportunities of ongoing mentorship with senior faculty members, reduced teaching loads until tenure, and departmental and institutional support for early career research grants.

Is there anything else you think current PhD students should know?

One of the most beneficial aspects of the PhD program at SP2 was the flexibility in selecting elective courses. I had taken several applied statistical analysis classes, and I cannot tell you how much of a benefit it is having that skill set. For myself, it has opened up several research opportunities and collaborations just by having that ability. One of the other things that I think is important is that you have to really develop a professional work ethic and sense of time management in academia. By understanding your own capabilities and the amount of time it takes you to complete a task, you start to develop a sense of what you need to do to enhance your own productivity. If you segue right into an academic job after you finish the PhD program, this type of professional development will be hugely beneficial; because now you have to think about tenure!
**Publications**


McDougle, L., Konrath, S., Walk, M., & Handy, F. (forthcoming). Religious and Secular Coping Strategies and Mortality Risk among Older Adults. *Social Indicators Research*. DOI: 0.1007/s11205-014-0852-y


**Conference Presentations**


Walk, M. (2014, December). “Because I say so”: The impact of leaders’ attitudes during organizational change. Rutgers University, School of Public Affairs and Administration, Newark, NJ.


**Awards and Fellowships**

**Alexandra Schepens Wimberly:** Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (F31), National Institutes of Health, 9/1/2014 – 8/31/2017, $105,409, Yoga Intervention for Substance Use and ART Adherence in Community Reentry

**Alexandra Schepens Wimberly:** Peter F. McManus Charitable Trust Grant, 11/18/2014- 11/18/2015, $8,800, Yoga Intervention for Substance Use and ART Adherence in Community Reentry

**Jia Xue:** Honorary Awards—President Gutmann Leadership Award & GAPSA-Provost Fellowship, $1131, University of Pennsylvania, Dec. 2014

**Jia Xue,** President of Penn Chinese Dance Club: GAPSA Student Group Event Funding, $2469, University of Pennsylvania, Nov. 2014