



HONOR'S ENRICHMENT AWARD

ATTENDING THE ANNUAL
MEETING OF THE SOCIETY
FOR INDUSTRIAL AND
ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY

MAHIRA GANSTER

I was honored to receive the Honor's Enrichment award to attend the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIO). SIO is the professional conference for those interested in how psychological concepts apply to improve the workplace and individuals' working lives in areas including but not limited to leadership, teamwork, hiring, recruitment, job training, and occupational health/well-being. For me, the opportunity to attend SIO was important to me as a "final destination" for my undergraduate degree. Following CSU, I plan to join the organizational behavior Ph.D. program at the University of Arizona. Despite having excellent relationships with the faculty and students at CSU, both in the psychology and management departments, I felt like my perspective on the field as a whole was rather narrow. Attending SIO was a great way to understand the field I was going into as well as the type of role I could play in my future career.

The different sessions at SIO opened my eyes to areas of research I had not yet considered. Across the 3 days of the conference, I attended every session I could up until the minute I had to leave for the airport. I tried to be strategic about the sessions I attended- it seemed like everything was interesting- by attending those that were distal but related to my research interests. Some, like a session on recovery from stress that included a paper from one of my research idols, were novel ways of thinking about my current interests. The question and answer sessions at the end were particularly interesting because I was able to see how researchers I respected dealt with interesting/curveball questions to their work. For example, one researcher I highly respect found an interesting but unexpected effect and was able to discuss theoretical reasons why it might occur while also admitting it was an area she didn't know. I remember leaving one session on identity management at work versus at home (for example, the differences for an LGBTQ person leaving photo of their family on their desk compared to a straight individual through a lens of research that typically doesn't examine diversity issues) and wondering why I hadn't considered running studies in that area before! To me, these sessions reaffirmed and deepened my interests in topics I want to study more in-depth during graduate school.

The other sessions I attended challenged my thinking. The very first session I attended at the conference was one on organic data (ex: doing research using individuals' tweets collected from public comments). I was excited about the topic because I have a lot of methodological/measurement interests. However, when I was there, I realized that the session was really about the machine learning/artificial intelligence technology that helps extract that data.

As a bit of a luddite, this put off my interest in the topic. However, I stayed through the rest of the session and I realized this was a big area for growth. Not only is this a method of doing research that I had not previously considered, it is also something done in other fields (e.g., economics) that can help understand larger trends. I am now considering learning the type of programming related to the session to collect this type of data. I also enjoyed the sessions aimed for consultants rather than academics (though I plan to go into research). One session on appreciation programs in offices taught me how a topic that isn't often discussed in research can make big waves in organizations (and that perhaps there is a research gap in this area).

Finally, I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with my future classmates for graduate school in the Management and Organizations program at the University of Arizona Eller College of Management. Although I had accepted the offer barely a month before, they took me on already as part of their group and gave me advice for my upcoming move. As it turns out, I was the only candidate to accept their admissions offer (despite being a strong program) and so I will be entering in to next year in a cohort of one student. The older students were happy to offer advice for my first year, and professors were kind as well- especially as I am still trying to decide on my future advisers. I was also amazed to see the research they were doing. Two student-led publications were recently accepted at a top journal in our field, so it was amazing to watch them present their research. I didn't know that I needed to find role-models in other students, but I certainly did during my visit.

Finally, my experience at SIOP broadened my perspective on the field as a whole. I was not previously exposed to the consultant-aspect of industrial-organizational psychology other than through a few CSU alumni. Although I do not plan to go down that career path, I learned to highly respect their interest in applying our science to the workplace and improving others' lives, as well as the knowledge they bring for future research. My capstone class in my psychology major discusses the scientist-practitioner divide in my field often, but what struck me the most at the conference was the success that came from the two sides meeting together to present and learn from research as well as to discuss new ideas for a changing workforce.

I am very grateful to the Honor's Enrichment Award for the opportunity to fly to National Harbor, Maryland to attend SIOP. This visit taught me more about my field than any of my classes or graduate school interviews could have and has helped me both prepare and build excitement for my future career.