

RiSE-UP Examines Cultural Differences and Freshmen Anxiety

September 03, 2003

The APS Student Caucus symposium for Research on Socially and Economically Underrepresented Populations or RiSE-UP included presentations by Wonkyong Lee, University of Waterloo; Mercedes Carswell, Michigan State University; and Yuri Miyamoto, University of Michigan.

In her presentation, “**Cultural Differences in Persuasion: Analysis of North American and Korean Print Ads**,” Lee sought to identify message differences in advertisements from the same company, such as Microsoft, to North American and Korean audiences. She found that the focus of a company’s ad differed to meet cultural expectations.

“This not only helps us understand cultural differences,” Lee said, “but what persuasive messages might be most effective for a particular culture.”

Lee examined six Korean and six North American ads and reviewed the content for promotion-focus, highlighting personal gain, and prevention-focus, highlighting self-improvement, messages. She found that the North Americans prefer a promotion-focused message and Koreans prefer a prevention-focused message.

Carswell’s presentation, “**Level of Racial Centrality and High School Racial Composition Increases Trait Anxiety**,” sought to identify factors that increase anxiety levels for freshmen African-American students. She specifically wanted to examine the impact of psychological disorders, such as anxiety and depression, on students in a racial minority. Carswell hypothesized that anxiety and depression would be higher for African-American students with low racial centrality, the degree of racial self-acceptance, who had attended mostly African-American high schools who were entering a college or university with a predominantly white population.

“It was surprising that racial centrality and high school composition did not significantly correlate at all with anxiety as measured at Time 1,” Carswell said. However, the results for Time 2 revealed that freshmen with low centrality and who had attended a predominantly African-American high school, now at a predominantly white school had higher levels of anxiety and depression.

In her presentation, “**Culture and Communication: Making Requests on Voicemail Disturbs Japanese But Not Americans**,” Miyamoto wanted to examine cultural differences between Americans and Japanese in the messages they left on answering machines or voicemail.

Miyamoto discovered that Americans focused on the meaning of the words in a message, making sure details were clear. Japanese, on the other hand, were more concerned with the meaning of the vocal tone of the message, making sure that their messages were appropriate to the relationship.

She found that Japanese adjust the way they communicate based on the relationship with the person

communicating to, more than Americans do. In a performance task conducted while leaving a message, Miyamoto found that Japanese participants did not perform as well as Americans due to the increased concentration required to manage not only the message information but ensuring appropriate vocal tone as well.