



# SCHOOL of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY ★ WASHINGTON, D.C.

## SPRING 2010 update



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A new AU

## The Impact of Hidden Populations

Assistant Professor David Pitts's New Research Shows How LGBT Employment in Government Agencies Can Affect Delivery of Services

Everyone knows policy is created at top levels, but it often lands unequally. What lies between the lawmaker and the citizen is implementation—and the implementers. One group of implementers are government workers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) individuals. Can their identity alter how policy changes affect others, particularly others who share their identity?

SPA Assistant Professor of Public Administration and Policy **David Pitts** and his coauthor Greg Lewis, a professor at Georgia State University, have taken a new sliver of available data and discovered a vast terrain of unexplored dynamics. Their research describes patterns of LGBT employment in government agencies, finding that the prevalence of LGBTs in the public service varies dramatically.

Pitts's scholarly peers have taken note: He received the 2009 Robert Bailey Award for the Best Paper in LGBT Politics and the 2006 Leonard White Award for the Best Dissertation in Public Administration, both from the American Political Science Association. Pitts's research, which has also appeared in leading public management and policy journals, helps us understand the composition as well as the power of the government workforce.

**Representation is a familiar concept to us as citizens. We elect officials to represent us—and our opinions—in political office. What does representation mean in the context of the government workforce?**

In this context, representation refers to whether government employees “match” citizens on characteristics like race and gender. Even though we don't elect them, these employees have incredible discretion in how they deliver public services, and research shows that they frequently use it in ways that benefit citizens of the same race or gender. There has been very little research on whether LGBT government employees use their discretion to the benefit of LGBT citizens, which is a primary motivation for our research.



**What are “hidden populations,” and why are they important?**

Hidden populations are stigmatized demographic groups that are difficult to identify using traditional survey methods. LGBTs are a good example of a hidden population because many do not openly admit to their sexual orientation, which makes it difficult to estimate the number of people who identify as LGBT. Researchers cannot draw an accurate sample of LGBTs for a survey if they do not have information about their numbers. There was progress on this in 2000, when the U.S. Census modified a question on its long-form survey to permit respondents to identify a member of their household as a same-sex “unmarried partner.” Since the long-form survey also includes questions about dozens of important social and economic characteristics, having data from this question permits us to examine how partnered lesbians and gay men differ from respondents with opposite-sex partners. Our sample, in total, was more than 2.5 million LGBT and non-LGBT participants.

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### MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Friends:

The range of issues associated with environmental protection poses formidable challenges. Air and water quality, chemical use and disposal, energy consumption and conservation, losses in habitat and bio-diversity, climate change, and land utilization are only some of the issues we confront. These challenges require the ability to design institutions, policies, and relationships between the public and private sectors that enable policymakers and others to recognize the connections among environmental, economic, social, and political factors. Discussions of environmental issues have to come to grips with how decisions are made: how goals are set and carried out; how public and private organizations relate to each other; how issues are defined and framed for effective problem-solving; and how progress is defined and measured..

SPA's newest institute, the Center for Environmental Policy (CEP), will focus on these “how's.” I am pleased that Dan Fiorino, a renowned innovator in this area with a record of achievement both as a scholar and leader at the Environmental Protection Agency, will lead CEP as a valuable forum for discussions of critical environmental policy issues. The Center will also sponsor programs for sharing information, perspectives, and experience. CEP will conduct analysis and research on how the nation can more effectively address environmental issues not only nationally but at the local, state, and regional levels as well. Most importantly, it will create opportunities and devise ways to engage a range of interests and organizations in a process of more effective environmental problem-solving. Under Dan Fiorino's leadership and with the existing expertise of AU faculty in SPA and beyond, we can expect great things from the Center for Environmental Policy.

Alumni frequently tell me about SPA professors who made a difference in their lives. Their affects are often life-changing so it is no surprise that many SPA graduates have established scholarships named for their teachers. Giving to these funds is also a gratifying way to honor these scholar-teachers and help students at SPA today. Please take a moment to review the current list of faculty-named scholarships on page four of this issue. Perhaps you will want to contribute or even consider establishing a fund to honor a professor who changed your life.

Best wishes,

*William M. LeoGrande*

William M. LeoGrande

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# SPA Students

## The Headscarf Divide

### SPA Boren Fellow Sarah Fischer Explores the Politics of Women's Lives in Turkey

Converging interests in politics and women's issues, coupled with an eye-opening backpacking trip, led SPA doctoral candidate in political science Sarah Fischer to consider the complexities of the headscarf in Turkey.



The Iowa native became fascinated with the politics of the headscarf in Turkey while researching a course taught by her now-dissertation chair, SPA Associate Professor of Government **Diane Singerman**. Fischer's interest in the topic propelled her to return to Turkey during the third year of her studies at SPA.

Fischer arrived just after the temporary lifting of a law banning university students from wearing the headscarf. Thousands of secular Turkish women took to the streets to protest the repeal of the headscarf ban. The ban was reestablished six weeks later.

"I can really imagine myself on both sides of the issue. I can understand how secular women feel, being afraid that, if the scarf is allowed everywhere, the country would become like Iran where women are forced to wear the headscarf," said Fischer. "And yet I could really sympathize with women who wear the scarf and want to go to university and don't feel the two should be mutually exclusive."

While researchers have already studied why certain women embrace the headscarf, Fischer wanted to discover the impact that wearing headscarves has on women's lives, particularly on their political participation. She is now back in the cultural and financial center of

Turkey, Istanbul—this time on a prestigious year-long Boren Graduate Fellowship—interviewing women on both sides of the headscarf divide. And while the headscarf issue appears to separate Turkish women, Fischer is finding that the political lines are much less clear.

Fischer found that while some headscarved women support the AKP, the Islamist party that briefly overturned the headscarf ban in 2008, others do not, believing that the party's promise to give more rights to headscarved women has not been fulfilled.

"Their political involvement stems from personal desire—to get an education, to have a career, to better themselves—rather than blind allegiance to a particular party," explained Fischer. Headscarved women are ostracized from many public arenas, including hospitals and courtrooms, an area that Singerman has encouraged Fischer to explore.

"Headscarved lawyers have been banned from court, and headscarved women are sometimes unable to testify on their own behalf," said Fischer. She has also been interviewing lawyers to understand how the headscarf factors into legal cases.

SPA Associate Professor of Government **Todd Eisenstadt**, a dissertation faculty adviser to Fischer, also helped shape her topic, encourag-



### The Truman Story:

**Kelsey Stefanik-Sidener**, an SPA junior and Leadership Program student, has been named a 2010 Harry S. Truman Scholar. The Truman Scholarship provides up to \$30,000 toward a graduate education leading to a career in public service, as well as leadership training, career and graduate school counseling, and special internship opportunities. One of 60 Truman Scholars, Stefanik-Sidener intends to pursue graduate training in law and public health in preparation for a career in health law, communications, and advocacy.

ing her to think beyond regional boundaries. "Eisenstadt's work on secularism and multiculturalism in Latin America has led me to examine cases I wouldn't otherwise compare Turkey to," said Fischer.

Fischer's dissertation committee has encouraged the student to explore other important avenues for her work: funding, promotion, and publication of her research. Fischer has already received a dozen fellowships, grants, and other financial awards and has presented her research at numerous conferences. This summer, Fischer will present two papers at an international con-

ference in Barcelona to focus on Middle Eastern studies.

Fischer hopes that her research leads to better understanding of the complex issues intertwined with this seemingly simple piece of cloth.

"The headscarf debate encompasses so many issues. It's a clash between elites versus non-elites, rural versus urban constituencies. It's not just what women can wear, but what kind of democracy Turkey wants to be."★

# SPA Faculty

## David Pitts on the Impact of Hidden Populations

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**In size or percentage, how does the general LGBT community compare with LGBT government workers?**

My coauthor and I find that lesbian and gay employees appear to account for about 1 percent of all government workers, compared to roughly 4 percent of all U.S. citizens. Because these numbers are based on self-reported data, it is possible that our analysis undercounts LGBTs in government, but we do not believe that this sort of bias would explain the entire difference between LGBTs in government and in the population as a whole. There is almost certainly underrepresentation of LGBTs in government. The question is how much, and what are the consequences?

**Representation of the LGBT community in government jobs is vastly uneven. How does this play out for citizens?**

We know that frontline government workers—like teachers, firefighters, social workers—often use their discretion to the benefit of their demographic group. For example, evidence shows that learning outcomes for minority students improve when they are matched with minority teachers. Women seeking child support enforcement recoup more money when they work with female social workers. We anticipate the same type of relationship to take place for LGBTs, particularly in areas like education, law enforcement, and health. If LGBTs are not working as frontline government employees in these areas, then there may be consequences for the quality of services that LGBT citizens receive from government agencies.

It seems like the nature of the government workforce is shifting. The Office of Personnel

Management, the government agency for HR matters, is now led by John Berry, a leading public administrator who is openly gay. Steps are being taken to repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” which would have major consequences for LGBTs serving in the military. What are the implications for LGBTs and others in government?

These shifts go a long way toward creating a culture where LGBT government employees are not afraid of being open about their sexual orientation in the workplace. Berry’s appointment at OPM is crucial. He has not shown himself to be an activist for LGBT rights by any means, but the symbolic importance of having an LGBT leader cannot be overestimated. These are great developments from my perspective as a researcher because they make it more likely that LGBTs will be willing to identify themselves in survey research and provide data about their opinions and experiences.

#### Were there surprises in your work?

There were unsettling disparities in LGBT representation between different geographic areas. The District of Columbia is at one end of the spectrum: LGBT employees accounted for almost 4 percent of D.C. government employees, including 10 percent of the K-12 teachers in our sample. On the other end were states like North Dakota and Arkansas, where LGBTs constituted only 0.1 percent of all state and local government employees. There was

not a single LGBT teacher in six states, and no LGBT law enforcement officials in seven others. To the extent that LGBT frontline employees can advocate for the needs of LGBT citizens, these geographic disparities suggest that such representation is likely to be very uneven across the United States.

#### These findings are just one step in your longer range research. Sketch out what’s ahead.

The next step is to identify specifically how LGBT employees can advocate for the needs of LGBT service recipients in different policy areas. I am examining this in the context of higher education through a series of interviews with students, faculty, and staff who work on LGBT issues. What I am finding so far is that LGBT students appear to place a high degree of importance on working with LGBT faculty and staff, which would suggest that the representational effects that we see for women and people of color are likely to take place for LGBTs as well. I am working on a nationally representative survey of college students on these issues to see if there is confirmation for the relationships I am finding through interviews. It’s tough to collect systematic, generalizable data on LGBTs, but I am optimistic that these first steps will provide information that helps us to better understand how sexual orientation affects (or does not affect) public policy. ★

## White House Veteran Anita McBride Joins SPA



**Anita B. McBride** has been appointed as executive in residence at SPA’s Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies. She will teach, write, and lead programs on the role of first ladies in domestic policy and international diplomacy.

From 2005 to 2009, McBride served as assistant to President George W. Bush and chief of staff to First Lady Laura Bush. She developed the first lady’s global and domestic platform in support of presidential policies and initiatives, including global health, education, historic preservation, and human rights.

Under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, McBride served as White House personnel director

from 1987 to 1992. From 2001 to 2004, she served President George W. Bush in White House management and at the State Department was senior adviser to the secretary of State and White House liaison as well as senior adviser in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. She was a U.S. delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Commission on Human Rights, and the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

McBride chairs the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board and is also a member of the United States-Afghan Women’s Council and the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS.

# SPA Alumni

## After the Earthquake:

### U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Kenneth Merten, SPA/MPA’86, Reflects on Disaster and Recovery



behaved with tremendous grace and dignity. Most have lost everything they ever had. They’ve lined up peacefully for food; they’re dealing with huge levels of uncertainty and a lot of personal loss; and I’m not sure how many other nations on the planet would deal as well. I’ve been very impressed with how well they’ve dealt with it.”

A career Foreign Service officer, Merten considers himself tremendously fortunate to have been spared more earthquake damage than some broken glassware and waterlogged photos and books (from burst water pipes) when an estimated 50 percent of the homes in Haiti were flattened or made uninhabitable. He and his wife and two daughters, ages 13 and 17, were all in their Port-au-Prince house when the earthquake struck.

“You couldn’t get your balance because the earth was shaking so much,” he remembers. “I could see the brick and cement house shaking.” Merten has had colleagues living with him since his family was evacuated. “A lot of folks are doubled up,” he says.

The ambassador meets regularly with the Haitian prime minister and other ministers, embassy officials, and colleagues from various NGOs and aid organizations. Much of his job is focused on triaging and troubleshooting crises, from medical evacuations to detained citizens and media errors he must correct and refute. Still, he says tremendous progress has been made since the tragedy that killed an estimated 230,000 people. “Things are slowly creeping back to normal,” he says.

Although this is Merten’s first post as an ambassador, it’s his third tour in Haiti. During his first tour in 1988-89, he was vice consul, handling immigrant and tourist visas. His second charge, from 1998 to 2000, was as economic counselor, overseeing U.S. investments and encouraging those looking to invest in Haiti. In between those posts, he worked as a special adviser to the Clinton administration.

Ambassadorial posts typically last three years, and Merten began his appointment in August 2009; so he’ll be in Haiti for a critical period of rebuilding over the coming years. “This embassy, I suspect, will grow significantly larger in terms of the agencies represented and the people here,” he says, acknowledging that his role in coordinating such efforts will keep his hands full.

Merten says he hopes fellow alumni and the entire AU community will not forget about Haiti as time passes and other stories dominate the news. “Haiti will need your help just as much in 6 or 12 months as it does now. They’ll have different needs, but the need will still be there.” ★

Haiti’s disaster lead to overwhelming grief and need. And also to misconceptions which Ambassador Kenneth Merten would like to address.

First, in the early days after the January 12 earthquake hit, “we kept seeing this breathless reporting about these people who haven’t seen any aid yet,” he says.

But Merten defends international relief efforts with the very real explanation that it’s tough to get aid to people when the infrastructure before the quake was already lacking—not to mention after a massive natural disaster that blocked many streets with trees, boulders, and large chunks of debris from fallen buildings.

“We didn’t even know where many people were. The only way to find them was to get in a vehicle and drive,” he says, and that required actually having or finding a working vehicle.

“It was very hard to get around, and honestly, the international community and Haitians, considering the infrastructure, did a really admirable job getting things out to the people.”

Another misconception Merten wants to clear up is the media’s obsession that Haitians were going to turn violent. “I don’t understand that,” says the ambassador whose job includes working with media from all over the world.

“The reality is the Haitian people have

## PHILANTHROPY

### Anita F. Alpern Scholarship Established

The School of Public Affairs announces the creation of the Anita F. Alpern Scholarship, an endowed scholarship program established through a gift from the estate of SPA Professor Anita Alpern. Beginning in May 2010, the Alpern Scholarship will provide annual scholarship awards to students in the Masters of Public Administration and Key Executive Leadership programs.

Professor Alpern, who died in 2006, served as Distinguished Adjunct Professor in Residence at SPA for over two decades. Professor Alpern worked at the IRS where, in 1975, she was appointed the first woman assistant commissioner for Planning and Research. At the time of her retirement, Professor Alpern was the highest ranking woman in the federal career service.

The new Alpern Scholarship joins other SPA scholarship endowments created by, or in honor of, emeritus SPA faculty or administration:

- Bernard and Adele Rosen Scholarship for the Masters in Public Administration Program
- Donald G. Zauderer Key Executive Scholarship
- Dr. Bernard H. Ross Public Administration Scholarship Fund
- Amos Perlmutter Award
- Morley Segal and Edith Whitfield Seashore Fellowship (AU/NTL Program)

Alumni and friends may contribute directly to these funds to help increase SPA's ability to provide scholarship opportunities for students. To make a gift or learn about endowed scholarships at SPA, please contact Dan Mackeben at [mackeben@american.edu](mailto:mackeben@american.edu) or 202-885-3968. ★

### Planning Your Gift to American University's School of Public Affairs

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To learn more, please contact Seth D. Speyer, director of planned giving, at 202.885.591 or [speyer@american.edu](mailto:speyer@american.edu)



**Honoring Charlie Levine:** Kenneth J. Meier of Texas A&M University delivered the inaugural lecture named for SPA's first Distinguished Professor of Government and Public Administration who died unexpectedly at the age of 49 in 1988. Charles Levine was also a founding director of the National Commission on the Public Service.

A memorial fund in Levine's name supports research, travel and other professional development opportunities for PhD candidates in public administration and policy. To learn more contact Dan Mackeben at 202-885-3968.

## SPA NOTABLES

**Stephen W. Christy**, SPA/BA '76, was appointed as the newest member of Arizona's State Transportation Board. He will represent the Pima County region in the planning and development of Arizona's transportation network.

**Adrienne B. Glasgow**, SPA/BA '72, became the new chief financial officer at the American Lung Association.

**Paul Mann**, SPA/MPA '05, received the Rear Adm. Wayne E. Meyer Memorial Award at the Pentagon. The award honors extraordinary efforts in military acquisition.

**Kara Marchione**, SPA/BA '99, joins the House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee as an education policy adviser.

**David Merriman**, SPA/BA '76, a public economist who helps state and local governments develop fairer and more efficient ways to raise revenue and implement public policy, has been named head of economics at the University of Illinois at Chicago and professor of economics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Kendee Yamaguchi**, SPA/BA '99, has been appointed executive director of the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. Yamaguchi is an emerging leader who brings a solid record of legislative, legal, management, and communications experience to the position.



Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House **Cecilia Muñoz** (with SPA Dean **William M. LeoGrande** and AU Provost **Scott Bass**) described immigration policy at SPA's Amos Perlmutter Memorial Lecture.

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## update

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Resource savings:

Wood Use	5 Fully-Grown Trees
Total Energy	3 Million BTUs not consumed
Greenhouse Gases	11,013 lbs CO2
Wastewater	1,187 Gallons
Solid Waste	301 lbs

Environmental savings data based on research by the Environmental Defense Fund.

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