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Abbreviations:
APA  American Psychological Association
APS  Association for Psychological Science
EPA  Eastern Psychological Association
MPA  Midwestern Psychological Association
NEPA  New England Psychological Association
RMPS  Rocky Mountain Psychological Association
SEPA  Southeastern Psychological Association
SWPA  Southwestern Psychological Association
WPA  Western Psychological Association

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As a psychology professor for two decades, I heard variations of the following: “Why do I have to take Research Methods? I see no value in it. I will never use it.” Early in my career, I tried to patiently explain how the critical thinking and communication skills students develop as they persist through the course transfer to any career path. In short, “persistence will pay off.” Later in my career, I changed tack: I asked students to reflect on how their experience in Research Methods would help them express their purpose.

Angela Duckworth defines purpose as “the intention to contribute to the well-being of others” (2016, p. 143). Combined with interest, purpose fuels passion, which is an element of grit. Indeed, Duckworth found that people with more grit place greater emphasis on purpose than on their own pleasure. To be clear, purpose does not mean denying your own welfare to serve others; it means that your goals connect to something beyond yourself. David Yeager and colleagues (2014) found that adolescents who identified a self-transcendent purpose viewed their schoolwork as more personally meaningful than those who focused solely on themselves or on others.

At this point, you might be thinking: “What if I don’t know what my purpose is?” William Damon (2008) contends that your purpose develops in adolescence. So, the kernel of purpose is likely there even if you do not quite have the words to express it right now.

Simon Sinek (2017) offers a method to identify and structure your purpose, which he calls your “why statement.” He suggests wording your purpose as: “To ____ so that ____.” The first blank is the contribution to others’ lives; the second blank is the impact of the contribution.

If you experience difficulty putting your purpose into words, you are in good company. You may even be thinking, “I don’t have a purpose.” Speaking from experience, it takes a fair amount of reflection to articulate purpose. Sinek recommends finding a partner to help you excavate your why. This partner should be someone you trust, who knows you well enough to understand your strengths and challenges, and will be honest with you. By sharing stories about when you have felt at your natural best, your partner can help you identify the “golden thread” that recurs throughout the stories and is the basis for your why. This thread is likely what your partner admires most about you. (Quick aside: By “natural best,” I do not mean to imply that people are born into a purpose and are preordained to find it. In this context, “natural best” means feeling fully yourself while doing meaningful work.)

My current why statement is: “I build capacity in people and in organizations so that they can flourish.” And yes, my prior drafts were different on the surface, but contained these kernels of contribution and impact. I keep refining the wording so that it feels like it captures my current identity. As I continue to learn more about myself, I expect my wording to change, but not the kernels.

Cognitive biases (especially confirmation bias) and cognitive dissonance notwithstanding, I can see how I expressed my purpose throughout emergent adulthood, even though I do not think I could have articulated it at the time. For example, as an undergraduate I coordinated the Orientation program for 2 years, overseeing the training and mentorship of approximately 90 peers who served as orientation leaders and assistants. In graduate school and beyond, I became involved in the leadership of some choirs in which I sang. In short, I sought out roles with great responsibility because I enjoyed helping people do what they did better. I also received support throughout my life from people who wanted to see me thrive. In short, I had models who showed me how to help people flourish.

As I transitioned into leadership roles at Psi Chi, I again found ways to exert my purpose, first as a chapter advisor, then as a regional vice-president, and now as Executive Director. If a trusted partner asked me to share moments when I have been at my natural best and moments where I have struggled and learned the most, I would share some of my experiences in Psi Chi. Although I was not involved as an undergraduate or graduate student in Psi Chi, I can see how chapter leadership roles could help generate moments where one is at their natural best.
If you think your purpose involves....

Consider....

Building capacity in others; amplifying people's strengths
President, *Vice-President*

Helping people make responsible decisions
Treasurer*

Helping people stay connected and informed through communication
Secretary,* Social Media Chair, Webmaster, Newsletter/Journal Editor, Student/Faculty Liaison

Creating and promoting inclusive spaces and practices
Diversity Officer

Supporting people’s wellness
Help_Helped Me (Mental Health) Officer

Creating opportunities for people to connect
Social Event Coordinator, Alumni Coordinator, Campus/SGA Liaison

Coordinating and organizing people and events
Membership Coordinator, Elections Coordinator, Induction Coordinator, Program Coordinator

Promoting a culture of generosity
Fundraising Chair

Maintaining a shared past that bridges the present
Historian

*Primary officer positions

Final Thoughts
When I asked my Research Methods students to link their course experience with their purpose, they could see how what they learned could help them help others. As I became more involved in Psi Chi, I learned how I could exercise my purpose. And I hope that you also consider how becoming involved in Psi Chi leadership could generate moments where you find yourself at your natural best.

Recommended Reading

References
https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037837

Become an Officer
Students: Do you see a resume-worthy officer position in the table above that would support your personal or career purpose in psychology?
Reach out to your local chapter advisor today and ask for information about how to fulfill this officer role at your chapter.
Not sure who your advisor is? Look them up in our Chapter Directory Search.
What's News in Your Part of Psychology?
An Invitation to Submit Your Headline

Shawn R. Charlton, PhD
University of Central Arkansas

Our initial invitation to submit to the “Psychology in the Headlines” column was published in the Fall 2019 issue of Eye on Psi Chi. Four years—and one global pandemic—later seems like a great time to issue another call for submissions and contributors.

The Headlines series is all about bite-sized (400 to 450 words) overviews of currently interesting topics in psychology. For example, this issue contains discussions of the future of AP Psychology and active engagement in the classroom. Over the past four years, headlines have focused on applications of psychology to current events, recent notable findings in psychological science, and interesting connections between psychology and our everyday lives. The best headlines are relevant, broad, and connected to current psychological science/application. These headlines shine a spotlight on work that exemplifies Psi Chi’s mission of “recognizing and promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology.”

The best headlines come from individuals working in areas related to the headline. For this reason, we invite headlines from Psi Chi members in all areas of psychology—or working in areas where they apply psychological science and concepts—to contribute to the Headlines series (either with a one-time headline or as a continuing contributor).

Benefits for Nonstudent Psi Chi Members
Professional life is busy. A 400- to 450-word contribution in a non-peer-reviewed magazine aimed at a specific audience also does not carry much professional weight. In other words, asking you to contribute a headline is a big ask. So let me tell you why the returns will justify the investment of time and effort in writing a Headline.

First, a headline draws interest to your expertise and professional impact. Although I ask that your headline not be an advertisement for a specific lab, business, or organization, the most interesting headlines are written by people working directly in the area highlighted by the headline. A brief, broad summary of your area
of expertise will connect the *Eye on Psi Chi* readers—and everyone you share the contribution with—to your area of work, interest, and expertise.

Second, headlines are written in more accessible, general reader language. Professionals often write, speak, and think with a field-specific vocabulary and dialect. Professionalese allows for efficient and clear communication within a group but is often unintentionally exclusive of those outside. The accessible, general reader language of a headline allows you to connect readers with your area of interest/expertise in a succinct, accessible way. The headline connects your area of interest/expertise with a much broader audience.

Third, your work is likely interesting, important, and informative. A headline that helps others connect with your area of impact strengthens and expands our Psi Chi community. As the community expands, you will likely find connections and opportunities outside your typical sphere of influence. These new connections will increase your impact, create new collaborations, and potentially engage with a new audience.

Finally, and I think the most important, your headline connects new Psi Chi members with the broader world of psychological science and application. Most new Psi Chi members, and *Eye on Psi Chi* readers, are undergraduate and graduate students who are seeking clarity on how psychology will fit into their personal and professional lives. These builders of the future of psychology are anxious to see psychology applied in the real world. Your experiences and insights are exactly what they seek. Writing a headline, then, is your opportunity to give back and invest in the future. Your area of psychology and current events may be the connection that an early career Psi Chi member is seeking for their professional future.

**Benefits for Psi Chi Student Members**

Writing a headline requires a student to (a) engage the scientific literature, (b) write science, (c) use APA formatting, and (d) communicate psychology to a broad audience. These are all skills that we want students to master. Encouraging students to write a headline as a class assignment or lab project provides a meaningful, hands-on, opportunity to hone critical professional skills. For example, students might write a headline summarizing a notable change or advancement related to a course topic or a short science-informed “how to” applying psychology to an aspect of everyday life relevant to the course content. Another approach would be for students working in a research laboratory to write a headline on how the lab’s research areas connect with current events. Either as a class assignment or lab activity, writing the headline puts students in a position to dive into a research topic to create a meaningful, real-world product.

These headlines’ short, research-intensive nature facilitates student learning and instructor feedback. Also, writing short pieces with many references helps students learn to use research to support a thesis in a focused way, which is much more similar to professional writing. Helping students learn to write short, concise communications is an important professional skill in our modern world.

Finally, the headline can become a student’s first professional publication. The best possible outcome is for students to publish peer-reviewed articles. However, the opportunity for students to publish peer-reviewed work is limited in terms of time that students are available to work on these projects, faculty time to mentor student publications, and the number of outlets for student research. Writing a headline provides a broader opportunity for student publication. For many students, the confidence that comes from publishing their headline may turn out to be what they need to fully jump into a professional research or writing career.

**Publication Details**

Submissions are welcome year-round from all members (students, academics, and nonacademics) of Psi Chi (at least one author must be a Psi Chi member) and can represent any area of psychology (science, practice, or industry). Accepted headlines will be featured in *Psi Chi’s blog* and listed on the *Psychology in the Headlines* page on the Psi Chi website.

We will also publish a selected sampling of these submissions in each *Eye on Psi Chi* magazine issue.

Here are some ground rules for your summaries:
- Summaries are limited to 450 words, excluding references and title.
- Full APA references need to be included for all sources.
- Focus on the headline’s impact on your area, not your contribution to the headline.
- Names and emails of all contributors must be included with the submission.
- Submissions are accepted year-round. Please send summaries to scharlton@uca.edu.

Would you like more information about Psychology in the Headlines or how you might use this activity in your classes? Please contact me at scharlton@uca.edu.
The Conflict Over AP Psychology in Florida

Parker Hamilton and Shawn R. Charlton, PhD
University of Central Arkansas

The ability of Florida high schools to offer college-level Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology courses was in question throughout summer 2023. The conflict between the Florida Department of Education; the not-for-profit College Board organization, which creates and administers Advance Placement (AP) courses; and the APA came to a head on August 3, 2023, when Florida announced a policy that, “effectively banned AP Psychology in the state” (College Board, 2023). However, a day later, a change in communication from Manny Diaz, Florida’s state commissioner of education, suggested that Florida high school students could complete the AP psychology course (NPR, 2023). The APA quickly responded to this change in communication with a statement highlighting that the policy change “puts students and science ahead of politics,” and that “APA opposed such censorship [removing sexual orientation and gender identity content from AP Psychology] on the ground that [APA’s] National Standard for High School Psychology Curricula—which Florida has followed—have included the topics for some 25 years, based on a large body of science” (Mills, 2023). Finally, on August 9, another letter from Diaz clarified that the entirety of AP Psychology could be taught in a way that does not violate Florida state law (Lonas, 2023). Although AP Psychology is currently being taught—in its entirety—in Florida high schools, the uncertain status of the course caused significant turbulence for Florida high schools and students preparing for the start of the 2023–24 academic year.

The conflict over the teaching of AP Psychology in Florida comes from topic 6.7: Gender and Sexual Identity. The objective for this target (6.P) is to “describe how sex and gender influence socialization and other aspects of development” (College Board, 2020). Officers from the Florida Department of Education contacted College Board on May 19, 2023, requesting edits to AP Psychology curriculum in response to changes in Florida’s Parental Rights in Education Law (Najarro, 2023). The College Board denied this request to modify the AP Psychology curriculum. In a June 15, 2023, letter, the College Board quoted a portion of their reply to the Florida Department of Education as:

[College Board] will not modify our courses to accommo-
date restrictions on teaching essential, college-level topics. Doing so would break the fundamental promise of AP: colleges wouldn’t broadly accept that course for credit and that course wouldn’t prepare students for careers in the discipline.

The learning objective within AP Psychology that covers gender and sexual orientation has specifically been raised by some Florida districts relative to these recent regulations. That learning objective must remain a required topic, just as it has been in Florida for many years. As with all AP courses, required topics must be included for a course to be designated as AP.

Two weeks following the College Board’s response, a letter on July 7, 2023, by Arthur Evans, CEO of APA, to Florida state educational officers summarized the impact of any decision to limit the teaching of this content in AP Psychology with the following statement:

[Florida’s] recent request and decision are not supported by scientific research or best classroom practices. They will reduce the number of people who can access college credits for psychology in high school and affect pathways for mental health professionals in [Florida], where students and the broader population desperately need more mental health support. Importantly, if enacted, these changes would reduce the quality of the education these students receive and erase an entire category of people from psychology courses. Furthermore, the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications was established as a human right by the United Nations in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (Evans, 2023, pg. 1). As suggested in the APA’s letter, limiting access to AP Psychology in Florida could have a major impact on the availability of future psychology students and professionals. AP Psychology is offered at more than 2,000 high schools in Florida with over 25,000 students completing the course each year. Additionally, Florida is also a state with major mental health challenges and limited access to mental health providers. Compared to other states (Lin et al., 2020), Florida has very few psychologists per 100,000 people, totaling just over 5,000 psychologists (FLHealthCHARTS.gov, 2023).

References

National Public Radio. (2023, August 15). AP psychology class may be available to Florida students after all. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2023/08/15/132555292/ap-psychology-florida-college-board
Active Engagement vs. Perceived Learning in the Classroom: An Exploration
Seungyeon Lee, PhD
University of Central Arkansas

Active learning strategies are believed to facilitate student engagement, enhance comprehension and retention of course materials, and better equip students for real-world problem-solving. However, students’ perception of learning in an “active learning” classroom is often lower than that reported in a traditional “passive” learning context. Identifying the cause of student bias against active learning holds promise for enhancing its efficacy within educational settings.

Deslauriers et al. (2019) explored the factors influencing resistance to active learning strategies, particularly among novice students and their instructors in introductory-level science courses. The primary objective of the study was to investigate students’ inherent, unbiased responses to active classroom engagement with course materials, devoid of any instructor influence. Deslauriers et al. undertook their study with the aim of delving deeper into misconceptions of active learning.

The authors conducted a randomized experimental design, wherein they juxtaposed passive lectures with active learning strategies. A cohort of 149 college students enrolled in a physics class at a private university were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the active learning group (experimental) and the passive learning group (control). Both groups experienced identical 90-minute lectures twice weekly, utilizing the same course materials. Participants had no prior interaction with their instructors before the study commenced, and they were subjected to identical tests assessing their learning outcomes and their subjective perception of learning (referred to as “Feeling of Learning”). Both instructors underwent comprehensive and identical training in active learning. To ensure consistency and minimize potential biases, the instructor was kept unaware of the administered tests, which were independently prepared by one of the researchers.

The results indicate that participants in the experimental group demonstrated higher levels of actual learning, despite lower levels of self-reported Feeling of Learning. Conversely, the control group consistently expressed a strong preference for the traditional lecture format, but performed lower on the learning assessments. The researchers proposed two possible explanations for their findings: (a) participants may be subject to cognitive biases that lead them to underestimate the extent of their learning, creating a discrepancy between perceived and actual learning outcomes (i.e., cognitive misleading) and (b) novice learners in a subject area may possess less development metacognitive skills, which could result in a misjudgment of their actual learning progress (i.e., novice metacognitive skills).

Active learning prompts students to actively engage in processing information, forming connections, and independently constructing their comprehension of the material (Keim et al., 2023). This heightened engagement generally results in improved comprehension compared to passive learning. However, the authors’ findings suggest that there may not necessarily be a direct correlation between students’ self-perception of their learning and their actual learning outcomes. In conclusion, although active learning enhances student comprehension, the complex relationship between students’ self-perception of their learning and their actual learning outcomes warrants further exploration and consideration in educational contexts.

References
The Arkansas Teachers of Psychology (AToP; www.arksps.org/AToP) extend our heartfelt gratitude to Psi Chi for their generous support through the 2023 Professional Development Grant for Teachers of Psychology. This grant played a pivotal role in establishing AToP and facilitating the inaugural AToP Summer Workshop on June 8, 2023.

With this grant, we have embarked on a transformative journey with a resolute goal of making a profound impact on our dedicated educators. By leveraging the funding, we not only enriched our own professional development but also extended this opportunity to 51 additional psychology teachers in Arkansas and Louisiana. The strategic allocation of this grant holds the potential to effect substantial change within programs, departments, institutions, and communities.

To fully appreciate the significance of this event and our gratitude to Psi Chi for making it a reality, allow me to set the stage. Here’s the backstory:

I have been a clinical instructor of psychology at the University of Central Arkansas for the past 10 years. Prior to starting my academic career, I had no idea how siloing academia can be; this feeling is magnified in my program as I am one of only two nontenure track instructors in our department. Our academic work keeps us all so busy with classes, advising, mentoring, research, service, writing, and email (so much email!). All these necessary (well, not all of the email is necessary) tasks keep us so busy that we can easily get sucked into our offices/classrooms/labs for what feels like weeks (but is really only hours) without connecting with our department colleagues, much less faculty from other departments and institutions. The disconnections of academia and the tendency to disconnect was intensified by the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me pause and assure you that my thoughts on the loneliness of academia are 100% relevant to my goal of thanking Psi Chi and highlighting how we used the professional development grant. I just need to build a little more background before this all comes together.

As I struggled with the Islandism of Academia, I often found myself wishing for a mechanism to connect with psychology faculty
across my home state of Arkansas. We have mechanisms to help students connect. For example, members of the UCA psychology department host the Arkansas Symposium for Psychology Students (ASPS; www.asps.org) twice a year. There was a short meeting where faculty would connect. However, the declining number of faculty who attend ASPS each year are busy mentoring their students and are very limited in time availability to make developmental connections with other faculty. Regionally, the annual meeting of the SWPA provides opportunities for faculty to connect but decreasing travel budgets and prioritization of travel to those presenting original research—not professional development—limit access to this regional meeting.

In the midst of this disconnect, a colleague and I started discussing the possibility of a state-level psychology meeting focused on the teaching of psychology. Our early conversations focused on ways that we could create and support a network of engaged faculty who could discuss the art and science of psychology teaching. We felt it would be important to keep the group at the state level as this would allow us to host meetings and workshops that could be accessed by faculty with limited travel funding. Unfortunately, like so many academic ideas and plans, especially those hatched around or during COVID, we lacked resources to translate from cool vision to impactful reality.

A couple of years passed with occasional discussions of our visions for the group, but no forward movement. Then my oldest daughter enrolled in AP Psychology at Conway High School in Conway, AK (a major thanks to the two outstanding AP teachers at the Conway High School, Ms. Sackhoff and Ms. Lancaster). Having a student enrolled in a high school psychology class brought to my attention the need to connect secondary and postsecondary psychology teachers. If it occasionally feels lonely in a psychology department surrounded by other psychology faculty, I cannot even imagine the loneliness of the high school psychology teacher (many of whom have very limited training in psychology and very few resources).

That is the background that you needed to understand our gratitude and motivation.

1. Investing in Professional Development
When I became aware of Psi Chi’s Professional Development Grant for Teachers of Psychology, I talked with my colleague about this grant as a mechanism of support for our ideas regarding the AToP group. We were not certain at first that the funding request would be appropriate as the recipients for the first round of grants were mostly focused on individual, existing, professional development activities. Nevertheless, we decided that it didn’t hurt to ask.

The first annual Arkansas Teacher of Psychology (AToP) workshop occurred Thursday, June 8, 2023. Fifty-two teachers of psychology—both secondary and postsecondary—from Arkansas and Louisiana met on the University of Central Arkansas campus for an 8-hour workshop. The theme of the workshop was Integrating Mental Health Advocacy Across the Psychology Curriculum. The event included a light breakfast, lunch, morning of presentations on mental health topics relevant to the psychology classroom, and an afternoon workshop where we brainstormed ways to use mental health awareness/advocacy as a unifying thread across the psychology curriculum. Attendees received a copy of Uncommon Sense Teaching along with an invitation to join our asynchronous book discussion group during the 2023–24 academic year. AToP has now established a Facebook group for continued communication between meetings. We learned about innovative teaching methodologies, cutting-edge research in psychology, and effective ways to engage our students. This investment in professional development has reinvigorated our commitment to providing the best possible education to our students.

2. Fostering a Community of Educators
Through Psi Chi’s support, we have been able to establish a supportive network of psychology educators in Arkansas. This community has enabled us to collaborate, share best practices, and offer mentorship to one another. By fostering a sense of unity, we aim to strengthen the quality of psychology education across our state. We would not have been able to make this group a reality and execute our inaugural workshop without the support of Psi Chi’s Professional Development Grant for Teachers of Psychology.

I see lots of opportunities for others to use this grant for their professional development. However, I would encourage you when submitting to consider funding requests that involve hosting a workshop or meeting. These types of requests increase the overall impact of the funding. Thanks to being in a position to use this grant for the AToP workshop, we were able to provide a professional development opportunity to 52 secondary and postsecondary psychology instructors.

3. Reflecting on Making a Difference
As we look to the future, our primary goal is to translate our enhanced knowledge and network into tangible improvements in psychology education. We are actively exploring initiatives such as curriculum development, teacher training programs, and outreach to underserved communities. Our collective aim is to make a significant and lasting difference in the lives of both our educators and students.

The 2nd annual AToP workshop will occur on June 14, 2024, on the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) campus (www.arksps.org/AToP). Thank you, Psi Chi, for being a critical piece in the creation of the Arkansas Teachers of Psychology (AToP). This opportunity has empowered us to evolve as educators and has set us on a path to effect positive change within our teaching community. We remain committed to our mission of fostering excellence in psychology education in Arkansas, and we look forward to the journey ahead.

Additional Note: Besides the Psi Chi grant, we received supplementary funding from the APA’s BEA Grants for Pre-College and Undergraduate Teaching Conferences, as well as a Faculty Development Grant from the University of Central Arkansas’ Center for Excellence in Teaching and Leadership (CETAL). My profound gratitude extends to Psi Chi, APA, and UCA CETAL for their invaluable support.

Mrs. Veda Charlton (BS, Psychology; MRC, Rehabilitation Counseling; Utah State University) is the Clinical Instructor II in psychology and counseling at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). Before UCA, Veda worked at The Institute for Effective Education (TIEE) in San Diego, CA (a non-profit K-12 organization serving children needing specialized education).
Life is often compared to a rollercoaster. A thrilling ride, with ups and downs, and loop-de-loops that can be exciting but also scary and nerve-wracking. At those big drops and downturns on the ride, the safety harness prevents you from going off the rails. If life is a roller coaster, I think of resilience as that safety harness that provides security and protection for the upcoming drops, twists, and turns.

Resilience is defined as a process leading to an outcome by “successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands” (American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.). In college, resilience is needed as you navigate the challenges and uncertainties of your academic journey. However, resilience is an important basis for personal development and well-being even beyond the complex and sometimes unpredictable challenges of college life. It is also an important foundation for future career endeavors and lifelong learning.

There are three different yet interconnected varieties of resilience: personal resilience, social resilience, and feedback resilience. Each of these shares the common thread of involving tenacity and maintaining a positive mindset. The great news is that resilience is a skill and, over time, you can develop and strengthen each of these distinct types of resilience to positively affect your personal and professional growth. Being resilient will help you persevere and succeed in the academic arena and when you enter the workforce.

Personal Resilience: Finding and Embracing Inner Strength

Personal resilience is the strength of an individual to cope with, adapt to, and recover from personal challenges, setbacks, and stressors. Personal resilience is crucial throughout life and will certainly be needed in the workplace. However, resilience is essential even before entering the workforce. Job hunting, in particular, can be incredibly stressful and overwhelming. Nancy Leighton, EdM, CCC, LMHC (Career Counselor and Coach), acknowledges that rejection is an inherent part of job seeking. Despite being an excellent job candidate, you will most likely experience not hearing back from employers, not getting invited for an interview, not being called back for a second interview, or not getting a job in the end.

I always remind the people with whom I work that they need to be resilient when they experience these inevitable setbacks. Perhaps, even more importantly, setbacks themselves make job seekers more resilient in both work and life, which is a valuable trait to develop. (N. Leighton, personal communication, August 28, 2023)

When you are successfully employed, you will continue to encounter challenges in the workplace, including tight deadlines, demanding projects, and difficult personalities. Personal resilience helps you manage the stress and demanding situations effectively, so it is important to foster your personal resilience. By using one’s own internal resources, such as strong coping strategies and mental and emotional well-being, you can strengthen your personal resilience.

To strengthen your personal resilience, identify your capabilities, and fortify your inner strengths:

**Become Self-Aware.** Learn to recognize your stressors and take proactive steps to address them. It is important to recognize the need for self-care to make you better equipped to face those stressors.

**Embrace Challenges.** When you are challenged and uncertain, you can foster a growth mindset by viewing setbacks as opportunities for learning. Instead of fearing challenges and uncertainty, accept them, be open to new opportunities, and make time to learn new skills.

**Set Goals.** Set realistic and achievable goals that can be broken down into smaller milestones, celebrating your progress along the way. This approach can help you stay motivated and focused during the ups and downs of your academic journey and then on your career path.
Social Resilience: Building and Maintaining Strong Support Networks

Fostering relationships, developing community ties, and strengthening social connections sets you up for the required emotional and practical support needed during times of stress and difficulty, and increases your social resilience. Social resilience involves skills such as effective communication, empathy, and collaboration to boost social connections. Social resilience enhances communication and fosters positive interpersonal relationships.

As you enter the workforce, building supportive relationships with colleagues and supervisors is crucial for success and well-being. Mallory Fix-Lopez, MS (Founder & CEO, language connectED, LLC and Vice President, Board of Education for The School District of Philadelphia), believes that social resilience is a necessary tool for your professional success.

It’s essential in the effort and time needed to build and hone interpersonal competencies, which help to foster collaborative, sustainable, and productive relationships that will propel your work forward. (M. Fix-Lopez, personal communication, August 30, 2023)

To strengthen your social resilience, strengthen your people skills.

Communicate Effectively. Communication skills are key to improving teamwork, productivity, and collaboration. Effective communication strengthens social bonds and fosters mutual trust.

Resolve Conflict. Maintain a harmonious work environment by learning how to manage conflicts constructively. This involves being empathetic toward others and trying to understand their struggles, as you try to find solutions to conflicts.

Build Your Network. Strong professional networks can lead to mentorship, career opportunities, and a sense of belonging. Seek the support you need and do not hesitate to ask questions or ask for help when needed.

Feedback Resilience: Embracing Growth Opportunities

Feedback resilience refers to your ability to accept and learn from the feedback you receive, and to apply this information to improve your academic, personal, or professional growth and performance.

Getting feedback, especially negative feedback, is tough. In the workforce, most employees experience some degree of dread at the prospect of critical or negative performance feedback (Cleveland et al., 2007). Fear of criticism can lead to procrastination, denial, and more (Jackman & Strober, 2003). But without getting accurate and insightful feedback, how can you perform better and ultimately grow?

Dr. Tammy Collins (Program Officer with the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, a non-profit medical research organization) feels that it is important to develop feedback resilience.

It isn’t always easy to have these difficult conversations, but if you don’t, problems may remain unaddressed and become amplified. I’ve personally struggled with resilience in this domain and made it a priority to consciously address it since transitioning to a new role. While daunting at first, receiving, and also providing, challenging—to-discuss yet necessary feedback is ultimately liberating and creates a positive working environment with a solid foundation of clear and honest communication. (T. Collins, personal communication, September 1, 2023)

Dr. Collins says that, although resilience helps us to quickly bounce back from difficulties, it should not be misconstrued as accepting or ignoring problematic behavior. For the giver of feedback, the key is to consider the individual’s ability to handle feedback and use it constructively to enhance their performance or skills. For the one receiving feedback, they must develop their feedback resilience and show a willingness to learn from mistakes.

The key to successfully receiving feedback is to focus on the future (Gnepp et al., 2020). Considering the feedback as information that will help you succeed moving forward, rather than an analysis of prior performance helps. Constructive feedback is a regular part of the work environment, and being receptive to it is crucial for personal growth and career advancement.

In their article, “How to Give and Receive Feedback Effectively,” Hardavella et al. (2017) offer some tips to receiving feedback:

- **Be Open.** Be a good listener even if it is initially difficult to hear.
- **Be Proactive.** Use the feedback to improve skills and create actionable plans to address any issues. Seek out new opportunities, workshops, and seminars to enhance your knowledge and skills.
- **Monitor Your Emotional Response.** Avoid jumping to conclusions and do not rush to react. Even better, show appreciation by thanking the person providing the feedback. Those who welcome feedback demonstrate a willingness to learn and grow.

All three types of resilience—personal, social, and feedback resilience—involves the ability to navigate challenges, persevere in the face of adversity, and maintain a positive mindset. Developing these forms of resilience will empower you to deal with workplace challenges, maintain a positive attitude, and continuously improve your skills and performance.

As college students, you will soon be entering the workforce. The workforce is like a colossal roller coaster, full of ups and downs and unexpected loops. But, with a strong sense of resilience as your safety harness, you are secure as you navigate the highs and lows of life. Your safety harness of resilience will hold steady when the world flips upside down. So, fasten your seatbelt and consider each twist and turn as an opportunity waiting to be seized.

References


Sleep is a fundamental and often misunderstood aspect of our lives, essential for maintaining both physical and mental well-being. Yet, in today’s fast-paced society, where productivity and efficiency are highly valued, people tend to compromise on sleep, thinking they can make up for it later. This is especially so for college students. A National Institutes of Health report (Hershner & Chervin, 2014) investigated sleep patterns among college students. The authors focused primarily on daytime sleepiness, “defined as the inability or difficulty in maintaining alertness during the major wake period of the day, resulting in unintended lapses into drowsiness or sleep.” The NIH report found that 60% of college students say they are “dragging, tired, or sleepy” at least three days a week, and more than 80% of college students say their loss of sleep negatively impacts their academic performance. The report indicates that college students rank sleep problems as the number two cause of academic difficulties, with stress being number one.

First and foremost, sleep is crucial for physical health. During sleep, the body undergoes a process of restoration and repair. Muscles are repaired, tissues are regenerated, and the immune system is strengthened. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to a weakened immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections and illnesses. This could be one of the reasons it seems like everyone is sick on campus during midterms and finals.

Moreover, adequate sleep is vital for cognitive function and memory. During sleep, the brain processes and consolidates the information and experiences acquired during the day, aiding in memory retention and learning. A good night’s sleep can significantly improve concentration, which positively impacts academic performance.

Sleep also has a profound impact on emotional well-being and mental health. Sufficient sleep is essential for regulating emotions and maintaining emotional stability. Lack of sleep can lead to increased irritability and heightened stress levels. It can also contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. A well-rested student is better equipped to manage stress, cope with challenges, and maintain a positive outlook on life.
Five Tips for Healthy Sleep

Remember, many factors influence a good night’s sleep, and some of them are harder for college students to control. Let’s focus on five of the most common suggestions for improving your sleep.

1. Your body likes a consistent schedule.

Because the average adult needs only seven to eight hours of sleep, you should avoid trying to catch up by sleeping for much more than that. If you can try to go to bed and get up at a consistent time each day, your body will respond nicely. You will fall asleep quicker and wake up easier and most importantly, feel more rested. Being consistent helps set your body’s sleep-wake cycle.

2. Avoid eating and drinking right before bed.

Try not to go to bed right after a big meal or late-night snack. While your body is processing the food, it can be disruptive to your sleep patterns. The same can be said about going to bed too hungry. Ideally you will not eat for about two hours before trying to fall asleep.

Drinking too much water right before bed is likely to disrupt your sleep too. Water is great for you, and drinking water to stay hydrated throughout the day is a very healthy habit, but too much at once and especially right before bed isn’t a great idea. The same thing can be said for caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. We know that coffee and energy drinks are commonplace on college campuses, but try to avoid them for a few hours before your planned sleep time. This can be hard when you need the caffeine to stay alert while studying and then need to get to sleep when done. A little strategic planning should help you get the caffeine effect you need to be productive while planning on the effect to wear off toward the end of your study session. Alcohol often makes people feel sleepy. It is a depressant after all, but it has very real impacts on the quality of your sleep. You might feel like you sleep great after drinking alcohol, but it is likely that you don’t feel rested when you wake up.

3. Try to avoid daytime naps.

When you are sleepy during the day, it feels great to close your eyes and take a nap. However, long daytime naps will often interfere with your nighttime sleeping. An occasional nap to catch up on sleep is fine but try to avoid taking naps that last for more than an hour and those that occur late in the day. Remember, the goal is regular and predictable sleep patterns.

4. Physical activity promotes better sleep.

Including regular physical activity in your daily schedule has numerous obvious effects, but it is also good for your sleep. Like most things, too much vigorous exercise right before trying to sleep can have a detrimental effect. Light exercise during the day is a great way to facilitate restful sleep.

5. A calm and peaceful environment promotes restful sleep.

This might be one of the hardest things for a college student to control. If you can create a sleep space that is cool, quiet, and dark, you have an advantage at sleep time. Too many distractions and you are likely to find that your sleep suffers. A room that is bright and screens that emit light are cues for your brain to be active and pay attention rather than relaxing and preparing for sleep. If you have a difficult time controlling your sleep space because you share it with someone on a different schedule, consider using ear plugs, an eye mask, and even white noise machines. These techniques can be part of a calming bedtime routine that conditions your brain to recognize that everything is safe and calm.

The notion of “burning the midnight oil” and catching up later may seem effective in the short term, but it can have detrimental effects on one’s health and performance over time. Sleep is a vital component of physical and mental well-being. Its importance extends beyond feeling rested; it impacts our immune system, cognitive function, emotional stability, and overall quality of life. It is crucial for college students to make sleep a priority. Ultimately, a well-rested student is healthier, happier, and more productive.

Reference


Ronald A. Stolberg, PhD, is a professor and associate program director for the Clinical PsyD doctoral program at the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University in San Diego. In addition, he maintains a private practice focusing on family therapy with adolescents and young adults. His favorite work is helping students and their families with the transition from high school to college.
The pursuit of graduate education represents a pivotal moment in one’s academic and professional journey. The choices you make during this process can shape future careers and aspirations—and your attitude can too! In what ways might your attitudes during graduate school interviews and the application process impact impressions of your confidence, enthusiasm, professionalism, and readiness? In this column, our three experts illuminate the intricate behavioral paths that all prospective graduate students must tread. Dive into the myriad concerns, curiosities, and considerations that underlie how graduate admissions professionals may perceive you and your request to join their program.

What details might faculty glean about students’ attitudes from application materials and interviews?

Mitch: Three things. One, does this student have a passion for psychological science? It’s not just what the essay says, it’s how well the essay conveys a drive, an interest, and a yearning for more knowledge. Second, does this student have good attention to detail? Typos on the application itself suggest there will be mistakes made in the research lab after they are admitted too. Third, how well does this student think like a scientist? Asking questions, raising hypotheses, and discussing literature shows that this is someone ready for grad school.

Julie: Additionally, faculty will get a sense of how interested the applicant is in the particular program. Applications that feel too general, in which there is not much detail about why the specific program is the best fit, are very noticeable. It’s helpful to add specific details about the program in your materials. It can be helpful to write about the course work, faculty, research lab, and annual events you are interested in from that program.
Jocelyn: Of course, motivation is a key quality for successful matriculation in graduate school. But the application must also convey that the student is a self-starter and able to self-manage. Graduate school requires self-management skills, such as being organized, being able to manage your time, and being curious and open to new ideas and differing viewpoints.

How important is a student’s attitude to faculty when applying to graduate school?

Mitch: Ideally, both the student and the faculty demonstrate a mutual respect, and eagerness to learn from each other, and a recognition that no one has all of the right answers—everyone is interested in being gracious and helpful to one another.

Julie: The attitude that comes across in written materials and during the in-person interview are of critical importance in allowing the faculty to get a sense of how you would fit in with the culture and in the cohort they are building. It’s a fine balance of being genuine and demonstrating how you would like to learn and contribute to the good work being done in the program/mental health profession.

Jocelyn: It is very important. After all, the student and faculty will be colleagues working together to potentially achieve a common goal. It is important for faculty to discern if the student would work well with faculty, staff, and other students in the program. A student who conveys an attitude of disrespect or unwillingness to learn may not be a student well-suited for graduate study.

What might cause you to think that a student applicant has too little (or too much) confidence?

Mitch: Humility is important because being a psychologist requires an open mind. If one personally seems to have too much confidence, or seems hesitant to assert their ideas at all, it would bode poorly for their success as a psychologist. I think the best way to convey a healthy attitude is to acknowledge that you are open to feedback, challenges, and making mistakes.

Julie: Agreed. Openness to feedback and humility are of critical importance. An applicant who behaves as if they already know everything about the program/faculty or speaks negatively to or about anyone they interact with during the interview process is making a critical mistake. Faculty are looking for people who are going to be teachable, engaged, and kind. Be interested, curious, and humble during your interview interactions.

Jocelyn: It’s okay to show humility in your application but be sure to exude confidence in your abilities and capabilities. Provide evidence of your academic history and special skills acquired as an undergraduate and educational or work experience that prepared you for graduate study. Be respectful, courteous, and curious indicating a desire to learn more. An application exuding arrogance and a “know it all” attitude is off-putting and likely to be viewed negatively by reviewers. If you “know it all,” why apply to graduate school?

Which emotions should students express when discussing their psychology-related and research interests?

Mitch: Enthusiasm! Curiosity! And open-mindedness!

Julie: Additionally, dedication and resilience. Research is a bumpy road at times, and applicants will want to demonstrate enthusiasm for a topic while speaking about their fortitude to persevere if faced with obstacles (e.g., with IRB review, low participant enrollment).

Jocelyn: All of the above! Students should also express persistence and malleability. As mentioned, research is not necessarily a straight path, and to quote my colleague, it may be “a bumpy road.” In fact, there may be several detours one must take to get to their final research destination. Students who understand and can address this in their application convey to the admissions committee their potential to manage the uncertainty and ambiguity that research (and graduate school) may bring.

Is it possible for students to appear too eager or desperate during the admissions process? Could this be a turnoff for faculty?

Mitch: Yes and yes. Although students indeed feel they have less power in the admissions process, the faculty are scared they will not get a good student. It is important to recognize that students offer major assets to a lab, and they bring an intellectual curiosity that fuels that lab for years to come. Admissions is like dating: Being too desperate or needy is definitely a turnoff.

Julie: It’s fair for applicants to express their interest in a program and their hope of gaining a spot. However, there is a fine balance between doing this and demanding reassurance or trying to push faculty to feel a certain way about you. Be yourself and explain the reasoning behind your interest in a professional manner.

Jocelyn: Yes, it is possible for students to appear too eager during the admissions process. Of course, students are excited, anxious, and even nervous about the process, and this may be presented as over exuberance and possibly desperation. Just try to be calm and professional during the admissions process. Failure to do so may be misinterpreted and lead to a negative review of your application.

If a student is a bit sarcastic, impatient, opinionated, stubborn, unconfident, passive, or has any other characteristics that...
could potentially be viewed negatively by faculty, should the student acknowledge this or hide it during the interview process?

**Mitch:** Always good to be honest and acknowledge one’s shortcomings, but also important to get feedback on how best to present with a positive first impression. And keep in mind that EVERYONE involved in the admissions process (students, administrative assistants, etc.) have a say and will reflect on how an applicant treated them!

**Julie:** Don’t pretend to be someone you are not. It will be a bad situation for you and the program if you gain a spot based on false pretenses and you then are stuck in a culture that feels uncomfortable for several years. Also, we are not as good at hiding our true intentions/thoughts as we think we are when interacting with others. Be congruent in your thoughts and behaviors. Let faculty know who you are, so both you and they can make an informed decision about the program.

**Jocelyn:** If you know you have these characteristics and you know they may be viewed negatively, then use them in a more productive way. Being opinionated is not necessarily a bad thing, it’s how you express your opinion. My point is, be true to you but know when and how to express yourself.

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**Are there any cultural differences in attitudes that students should consider when applying to graduate schools internationally?**

**Mitch:** Can’t speak to this one.

**Julie:** I do not have experience with international graduate programs. I would encourage you to speak with current students in all programs you are applying to, in an effort to get a sense of what it may be like in that program.

**Jocelyn:** It depends on what is meant by “cultural differences.” For example, this can mean cultural taboos in relation to social rules or gender relations. Like domestic graduate programs, a student should do their research to understand any cultural norms they should be aware of when applying to an international program.

Knowing this can help with the application process and may also aid in making an informed decision about applying to a particular international program.

**When applying for graduate school, what attitudes should students look for in faculty and current graduate students?**

**Mitch:** Happiness, generosity, and a desire to collaborate. You want to be treated the same way you will treat them, and you want a mentor who is invested in your career and success, no matter what they may look like for you.

**Julie:** Try to get a sense of how engaged faculty are with the students. Notice how they speak about their current students. Hopefully they praise the work and effort of their current students. It can be helpful to ask the current students about their level of burnout, receptivity of faculty to their wellness, and resources available to help them with self-care.

**Jocelyn:** Students should look for enthusiasm about the program, camaraderie, and sense of belonging. Do faculty and graduate students appear to be genuinely enthusiastic about the program? Do they share examples about the strengths (and weaknesses) of the program while maintaining enthusiasm for it? Are faculty collegial with one another? Do they collaborate on research? Is there faculty–student collaboration on research or other academic/clinical activities? Do students have a voice in the program? These are just a few of the things you should consider.

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**Mitch Prinstein, PhD, ABPP,** is the Chief Science Officer of the American Psychological Association and the John Van Seters Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has published over 150 peer-reviewed papers and nine books, including *The Portable Mentor: Expert Guide to a Career in Psychology.*

**Julie Radico, PsyD, ABPP,** is a Pennsylvania licensed clinical psychologist, board-certified in clinical health psychology. She has extensive experience in multi-disciplinary patient-centered clinical care, education, research, wellness, and leadership. She earned her doctoral degree in clinical psychology and master’s degrees (clinical psychology & counseling and clinical health psychology) at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Radico completed her postdoctoral fellowship in the department of Family Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Dr. Radico serves in leadership positions for the American Psychological Association, Pennsylvania Psychological Association, American Academy of Clinical Health Psychology, APA Society for Health Psychologists, and the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM).

**Jocelyn Turner-Musa, PhD,** is a Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Psychology at Morgan State University (MSU) in Baltimore, MD. She is the Director of student training in the MSU ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research, funded by the National Institutes of Health. She is also a member of the American Psychological Association and is Past-President of Division 1, The Society for General Psychology. Her research focuses on understanding the role of psychological and social factors on disease management and health promotion. Dr. Turner-Musa has received numerous awards including an American Fellows Award from the American Association of University Women.
2023 Psi Chi Diversity Article Award Recipients

Read Julianna Berardi’s *Psi Chi Journal* article: “Interaction Between Health Self-Efficacy and Race on Self-Reported Health Status.”

Conducting research in the field of psychology, especially health psychology, requires a lens of diversity and equity. These topics are not simply additions to research, but clear focuses, as health inequities and injustices run rampant in the United States. Historic and present marginalization affects individuals and communities of color in all facets of life. Health inequities occur in a variety of ways, as documented in this article and by other researchers, scholars, and individuals themselves. To me, it is not only imperative that research reveal inequities caused by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and ableism, but that research and knowledge come from those within communities affected by such injustices. I am honored to receive this Diversity Article Award and I accept it by acknowledging that the true experts in topics of diversity and equity are those with lived experience. While I am hopeful that readers of this article have learned something about health inequities, I challenge us all to turn to the voices and perspectives of diverse researchers—those of color, those with disabilities, those who are gender diverse, among others—for their work will lead us to solutions of inclusion, equity, and justice.

Julianna Berardi graduated from Ursinus College with undergraduate degrees in psychology and public health in 2021. She then obtained a Master of Public Health degree from Drexel University’s Dornsife School of Public Health in June of 2023. Passionate about community-based participatory research, community-led initiatives, trauma-informed practices, and violence prevention, Julianna works as a Clinical Research Coordinator II at the Center for Violence Prevention at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. She supports multiple research and evaluation projects that promote safety, health, and flourishing for youth, teens, families, and communities.

Read Dr. Uwe P. Gielen’s *Eye on Psi Chi* article: “The Nature of Childhood and Adolescence Across Time and Space.”

Many American developmental textbooks analyze the lives of children and adolescents who tend to grow up in small and perhaps incomplete families, attend educational institutions for numerous years, and are immersed in a digitalized world. Such childhoods were unknown throughout most of global history as well as in parts of today’s Africa and South Asia. Only 3.3% of the world’s children and youth live in the United States. To better understand the lives of most children and young people, the article takes us to places such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where girls often get married and start their families before the age of 15, have numerous children, work endless hours in the fields, and may be illiterate. My article focuses both on large differences between rich and poor countries and rapid changes in the digitalized worlds of East Asia, Europe, and multicultural Canada and the United States.

Uwe P. Gielen received his PhD in social psychology from Harvard University. His work has centered on international psychology, cross-cultural psychology, moral reasoning, and international migration. He is the founder and former president of the Institute for International and Cross-Cultural Psychology as well as Professor Emeritus at St. Francis College in New York City. He has also served as a former president of the International Council of Psychology, the Society for Cross-Cultural Research, and the International Psychology Division (52) of the American Psychological Association. He has given more than 345 presentations and workshops at scientific conferences around the world.
Congratulations to Psi Chi's 2023 Scholarship Recipients!

by Psi Chi Awards and Grants

We are incredibly grateful for the many individuals who, together, help us make annual Psi Chi Scholarships a reality. In addition to Psi Chi’s $400,000+ in annual awards and grants, it is exciting to be able to provide another $51,000 in scholarships.

Over the years, students of all backgrounds and aspirations have achieved Psi Chi funding in order to help them advance their educations and careers. This includes first-generation college students, international students, and even survivors of natural disasters. In particular, we wish to congratulate Alejandra Contreras de Solorzano, who is the second person to receive the new Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for Women of Color.

We believe that each of the high-achieving individuals featured below is well on track to become respected and important opinion leaders in their various fields in psychology. It is an honor to recognize their outstanding dedication to psychology and bettering their communities and beyond. The scholarship application portals will reopen in spring 2024; all student members are encouraged to apply!

**GRADUATE RECIPIENTS**

**Nuo Chen**  
University of Michigan  

“I am honored to receive the graduate scholarship, as it empowers me to continue my community outreach in a manner that holds personal and professional significance. Specifically, this award enables me to continue to participate in unpaid Chinese community activities that align with my identity and research.”

Nuo Chen earned a BS in psychology and graduated summa cum laude from Union College. As a first year PhD student in developmental psychology at the University of Michigan, she explores the role of bilingualism in literacy development. Through her research work, she hopes to promote an inclusive education system.

**Amanda Catalan**  
Eastern Kentucky University  

“Receiving this scholarship allows me the opportunity to deeply immerse myself in the training I am receiving and allows me to fully focus on my goal of reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, specifically within the veteran population. I am greatly appreciative of all that Psi Chi has taught me.”

Amanda Catalan, a student in Eastern Kentucky University’s PsyD program, is in her final year before graduating with her doctorate. On internship, Amanda provides psychotherapeutic and psychodiagnostic services to veterans. She hopes to continue working with veterans postgraduation, providing therapies to those with substance use disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, and those experiencing suicidal ideation.

**Emma Farson**  
Medical College of Wisconsin  

“This award helped fund my master of science in genetic counseling and supported my career goal of becoming a genetic counselor who is best equipped to advocate for underrepresented populations in the field and continue to engage with mental health awareness.”

Emma Farson is a first-year MS in genetic counseling student at the Medical College of Wisconsin. She earned a BS in psychology and biology from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and has been a member of their Psi Chi chapter since 2020. Emma hopes to continue to advocate for underrepresented populations.
Alejandra Contreras de Solorzano
University of Victoria

“This award lightens financial burdens, freeing my energy to focus on my research and the mentoring and nurturing of undergraduate psychology students.”

Alejandra Contreras de Solorzano is a master’s student in lifespan, health, and development psychology at the University of Victoria, with a strong commitment to bridging the gap between research knowledge and translation. Her research explores how executive functioning (EF) is transmitted across generations. With her research, she hopes to help the local parenting community.

Breanna Sampo
Claremont Graduate University (CA)

“Receiving this scholarship fills me with so much joy and gratitude as it greatly assists me in funding my graduate tuition. I have moved across the country from rural Illinois to a beautiful city in California to gain an enriched education and advance my career in academia, and this award makes this move possible.”

Breanna Sampo is entering her first year at Claremont Graduate University this fall as a PhD student in their positive developmental psychology program. She just graduated summa cum laude from McKendree University in May 2023. Breanna is continuing her research work with the Adolescent Moral Development Lab under the direction of Dr. Kendall Bronk and is excited for what her future holds.

William Murley
Texas State University

“My line of research focuses primarily on disordered eating, substance abuse, and suicidality. I am firmly committed to serving underrepresented communities and particularly interested in conducting research that benefits sexual and gender minorities.”

William Murley graduated summa cum laude through the honors college with a bachelor of arts in psychology at Texas State University. He is now pursuing a master of arts in psychological research at Texas State University and plans to begin a PhD in clinical or health psychology in fall 2024.

Elizabeth Arlington
American University (DC)

“This money will help immensely as I pursue my graduate degree. I attend school in D.C. and the rent here is quite staggering; this scholarship will allow me to spend more time and energy to focus on my studies, and I appreciate it more than I can express.”

Elizabeth Arlington is a master’s student at American University studying clinical psychology. Her research interests include personality disorder treatment, trauma symptomatology in adult survivors of child abuse, and political psychology.

Amanda Hay
Azusa Pacific University (CA)

“This scholarship has impacted my psychological career exponentially. The funds will reduce my education’s financial strain, providing me with the knowledge essential to counseling others. I am grateful for the opportunities made possible by this scholarship and will use my education to inspire healing in one person at a time.”

Amanda Hay obtained her BAs in psychology and theatre arts from Vanguard University, where she served as the Psi Chi chapter’s copresident. Currently, Amanda is studying clinical psychology (MFT) at Azusa Pacific University. She hopes to become an LMFT and counsel individuals and couples through relational healing.
**Savannah Brown**  
Winthrop University (SC)

"The Psi Chi Undergraduate Scholarship impacted me because it encouraged me to continue working hard and finish senior year strong. It is a huge aid in the graduate school application process and reassured me that I am pursuing the right field when I chose to pursue my degrees in psychology."

Savannah Brown is a senior psychology major with a minor in human development and family studies. She currently serve as vice-president of her Psi Chi chapter, and she previously served as secretary/treasurer. She is also on two other executive boards: Delta Zeta and College Panhellenic Council.

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**Alyvia Grace Fondren**  
Albion College (MI)

"This award will allow me to save money for my graduate school endeavors and provide me with more time to focus on volunteering efforts and research projects by allowing me to cut back on my work hours during the school year."

Alyvia Grace Fondren is a senior psychology major at Albion College. She has a minor in gender studies and hopes to become a licensed clinical social worker with a specialization in gender-affirming services and LGBTQIA+ mental healthcare. She is currently the president of her Psi Chi chapter and previously served as the treasurer. She is also active in research on campus and is interested in how being part of a marginalized community affects the efficacy of mental health services.

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**Lauren Lentino**  
Monmouth University (NJ)

"Receiving this scholarship will help me overcome financial barriers as I obtain my undergraduate psychology degree."

Lauren Lentino is a senior majoring in psychology at Monmouth University, where she serves as vice-president of her Psi Chi chapter.

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**Kye Hearn**  
Metropolitan State University of Denver

"I take an active role in leadership in the department of psychological sciences, as event coordinator for Psi Chi, but also as president of the Clinical and Counseling Club. I am taking part in an unpaid internship this semester and am able to do this because of the help this scholarship provides."

Kye Hearn is a senior at Metropolitan State University Denver studying psychology and sexuality studies. She hopes to attend graduate school in fall 2024 with emphasis in religious trauma and wellness. Kye serves as the event coordinator for Psi Chi and has served as secretary last year.
Abigail Holenchik
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

“This award allows me to continue my studies in psychology, a field that I have a strong passion for. By being awarded this scholarship, I am able to show my chapter that they can pursue their passions through what Psi Chi has to offer to students.”

Abigail Holenchik is a senior at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania majoring in psychology and minoring in disability studies where she serves as Psi Chi chapter president. Abigail is involved in research, leadership, and several student organizations on campus. Abigail plans to attend graduate school studying school psychology.

Juliana Reyes
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia

“I think we have the duty of placing psychology at the service of social reality. I am committed to do so by participating in research with victims and FARC ex-combatants in the Colombia’s conflict context. In the future, I hope to continue developing this by doing a PhD in victimology.”

Juliana Reyes is a senior student at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia, majoring in psychology. She coordinates Evolution, Behavior and Culture research group, and she serves as Psi Chi chapter president. Currently, she is involved in social, clinical, and forensic research, being a “young researcher” with the Science Ministry.

Ellie Reznicek
University of Nebraska- Lincoln

“I am overwhelmingly honored to be selected as a Psi Chi scholarship recipient for the 2023–24 year. Being involved in my chapter of Psi Chi has provided numerous opportunities for career growth, networking, and psychological education. This scholarship will allow me to continue pursuing my degree, which I will be forever grateful for.”

Ellie Reznicek is a junior at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, majoring in psychology and minoring in biological sciences. She currently serves as chapter Psi Chi secretary, works as an undergraduate research assistant, and is heavily involved in multiple student organizations. After graduation, Ellie plans to attend graduate school to pursue a PhD in clinical or counseling psychology.

Jessica Silverman
University of Victoria (BC)

“I enjoy creating opportunities for collaboration that give back to the community. I am enthusiastic about research on affordable, family-based intervention programs that value accessibility. Currently, my research focuses on the feasibility of a tablet-based cognitive neurorehabilitation for children with neurologic sequela recovering from cerebral malaria in Malawi, Africa.”

Jessica Silverman is an honors student and Psi Chi chapter president at the University of Victoria. Having achieved a bachelor of arts in sociology, she is pursuing a second degree in psychology with research focused on pediatric neuropsychology. Jess is dedicated to a career caring for children with neurodevelopmental symptoms.
Gap Year Before Graduate School: Pros, Cons, and Unknowns

John C. Norcross, PhD
University of Scranton (PA)

Michael A. Sayette, PhD
University of Pittsburgh (PA)

Abigail S. Charneski
University of Scranton (PA)

One of the most frequent questions when considering graduate school concerns the advisability of a gap year. “Should I take a year or two before applying to grad programs? Would it help or hurt me?”

Taking a gap year or years is becoming increasingly popular prior to matriculation into graduate and professional training. For example, the American Association of Medical Colleges reports that more than 65% of students entering medical education took at least one gap year between college and medical school (Rashid & Kibble, 2021). We are unaware of any similar comprehensive studies in psychology, but the percentage is at least a third of eventual graduate students taking a year or more between receipt of their baccalaureate and entering graduate training (Norcross & Sayette, 2024).

Research has indicated several reasons why students may, or may not, take a gap year prior to graduate school. Here, in brief, we address this perplexing question and its intricate calculations. It’s almost as wicked as calculus.

What Is a Gap Year Anyway?
A gap year is defined as a period of time, typically expressed as a number of years, when a person is not actively pursuing an academic degree or training following completion of a degree, typically a bachelor’s degree. In other words, the time off between your undergraduate and graduate education.

To complicate the definition a bit: Some students may earn a terminal master’s degree and take years before pursuing a doctorate as well. That also earns the designation of gap years.

Definitions properly identify inclusion and exclusion criteria. What is it not? The gap year is not a year off, but rather, a year or more of preparation for graduate education. It is not a vacation, but a year dedicated to improving your credentials and working diligently at what interests you. This period of time can be used to enhance your career commitment and graduate applications. You may gain real-world work or clinical experience, obtain additional involvement in research (for PhD programs), fine-tune your career choices, retake the GREs if necessary, and/or polish your personal statement.

When inevitably asked by friends and family what you are doing after graduation, we recommend that you proudly assert that you are taking a year to ready yourself for a future career in psychology (or another profession). No embarrassment or avoidance; rather, say it loud and proud that you are preparing to become a psychologist!

What Are the Pros?
Students express different rationales for taking a gap year. In our experience, the five major reasons are:

1. “I am burnt out on schooling and academics.”
2. “I am not financially stable and currently cannot afford the applications, let alone the graduate tuition.”
Burnout. The first reason for taking a gap year revolves around burnout. Burnout is a common response to the stress of schooling, described as a loss of energy physically and emotionally among other negative effects. Swords and Ellis (2017) found that 75% of health service psychology doctoral students experienced burnout at some time during their education. A brief break from formal education may restore your energy and dedication to graduate education, which places considerable demands on your time and resources. Those already feeling burnt out after the completion of an undergraduate career may benefit from the time away from academia.

Students taking one or more gap years have been shown to have significantly lower levels of burnout during graduate school than those not taking a gap year. In medical school students, for example, burnout significantly decreased after every additional gap year taken, meaning student burnout decreased further with two or more gap years instead of one or none (Guang et al., 2020). Taking gap years can thus prove beneficial if you are experiencing burnout during your undergraduate career.

Finances. The second rationale for delaying graduate education concerns money. Depending on the type of graduate program (e.g., many research-oriented PhD programs cover tuition and provide a stipend for living expenses; Norcross et al., 2010), applying and paying for graduate education can be financially daunting tasks. A gap year may temporarily replenish your bank account and provide relief from economic strains. Gap years as respite from the financial demands of higher education make sense for those experiencing acute financial difficulties.

Life Experiences. The argument for the third reason for a gap year, living and traveling before doctoral studies, proves more complicated. Of course, we want students to enjoy life, discover themselves, and travel internationally. The harsh truth is that full-time graduate studies, a part-time assistantship or job, plus research responsibilities require dedication of your time and leave relatively little for travel and other experiences. Hence, we generally support a gap year for students who desire to experience the joy of living before settling down into a graduate program and a lifelong career. That assumes, of course, that your gap year plan is realistic in terms of career aspirations and finances.

Career. Clarifying career decisions is an excellent reason for a gap year or two. If you are uncertain about your career path, then a gap year can be devoted to career investigation, research, and experience. The year can strengthen your sense of self and what you want for your future. Personal reflection during this time can also result in an increase in maturity, confidence, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence. For example, medical residents who took a gap year prior to medical school had significantly higher levels of emotional intelligence and decision-making skills than their peers who did not take a gap year and were more equipped to treat their patients (Shahid & Adams, 2020). Career decisions then become easier, and you can make that decision with more certainty (Rashid & Kibble, 2021).

Credentials. Taking a gap year(s) for the final reason, to enhance application credentials, enjoys our full support. The pursuit of a graduate degree is not a decision to make lightly or quickly; gap years can provide needed time for planning and preparation. The PhD programs, particularly in clinical and counseling psychology, have become increasingly competitive in recent years (Norcross & Sayette, 2024), and many students pursue a gap year to improve their chances of acceptance to graduate school.

Those taking a year or two to build their resumé often engage in postbacca- laureate programs (explained below) or research assistant positions. Other useful experiences during this period include retaking the GRE if necessary, professional networking, and gaining more clinical experience (Franz et al., 2017). These experiences enhance your credentials needed to gain entry into the graduate program of your choice.

For all these reasons, college graduates who took gap years and postponed graduate studies were slightly more satisfied with their decision than peers who went directly to a graduate program (Zimak et al., 2011). A solid work record, research experience, and a mature perspective on psychology are certainly advantageous.

What Is a Post-Bacc?
An enticing possibility during gap year(s) is to complete a psychol- ogy postbaccalaureate program. These programs, for students who
have completed a bachelor’s degree (in any discipline), are designed for those who want additional preparation for psychology-oriented graduate training. Although postbaccs have been around for decades in other disciplines, especially for those interested in applying to medical school, they are a recent development in psychology.

More than a dozen such postbacc programs exist in psychology, and most of them provide coursework in psychology, research assistantships, and internship opportunities (Zinger, 2014). All of these experiences improve a student’s credentials for their graduate applications.

We strongly recommend these postbacc programs to select students with a few caveats. First, most students will require at least a full year of attendance, and sometimes 1.5 or 2 years, to remediate their weaknesses or to acquire more clinical or research experience. Second, in addition to the time commitment, there is the cost of an additional year or two of tuition. Third, doing well in postbac training does not guarantee admission into a top-notch PhD program. If your academic credentials were not previously strong enough to gain entrance, then postbac training may not improve your chances of admittance to doctoral programs, especially when other top candidates did better the first time in their undergraduate careers.

Beware of the “magical” thought that, “Although I might have not done as well as my fellow applicants in my undergraduate psychology program, I will now do significantly better in a postbac.” Unless you are certain that your academic performance will improve during a postbacc, do not spend considerable time and money pursuing it.

Ambitious students can complete informal postbaccalaureate preparation on their own. That is, they arrange to take psychology courses, participate in clinical experiences, and take on research assistantships. Psychology programs, though, tend to prioritize their own, full-time undergraduates, and therefore, these arrangements are more difficult to finalize. However, this is not to say it cannot and does not occur.

Research assistantships for students planning to apply to PhD programs are the most popular alternatives to formal postbacc positions in health service psychology. These two-year positions usually include working as a research coordinator or research associate on a large grant project. Although the pay is modest (low $30K), the research training and experience prove extremely useful. The completion of such research experiences frequently comes with acquiring extensive scientific competencies, publications, and enthusiastic letters of recommendation for graduate school. That gives you a decided advantage into competitive PhD programs in psychology.

**What Are the Cons?**

Although taking gap year(s) certainly can provide benefits, there are countervailing forces as well. Let’s consider the downsides and the unknowns of gap years.

Taking a break does not guarantee a dramatic rise in your academic motivation. If you require a break after 4 years of undergraduate education, how will your energy and motivation fare for 2+ more years for your master’s or 6 years of intense study for your doctorate? And how will you spontaneously (re)discover the momentum needed to continue your studies for the years to come? How you handled your previous educational experiences may forecast if you are ready for the daunting task of another multiyear program.

Nor will gap years miraculously replenish your bank account. Taking a year or two away from formal education will most likely not fund multiple years of graduate tuition. In another year or two, you will likely still be repaying any undergraduate student loans and feeling the same financial burdens. So, what will be accomplished by gap years except that you are two years older?

Another unknown is whether an additional year or two will indeed make you more attractive to graduate admissions committees. It is not the time away from education per se that matters, but the time acquiring what graduate programs seek: high grade point averages, productive research experiences, stellar letters of recommendation, and the like. We reiterate: A gap year is not a vacation or time off, but time for active preparation. Our frequent motto is, “No gap year without a realistic gap year plan!”
Another unknown: Some students taking a gap year become lost in the time away from academics and, once returned, are less committed and focused on their career goals than before. A large study of 2,500 students that investigated gap years before pursuing an undergraduate degree, for example, found a significant difference in dropout rates. Those entering a university immediately had a dropout rate of 3% compared to a 8% dropout for those taking a gap year (Parker et al., 2015). Whether these numbers reflect the experience of a gap year, slightly different pools of students, or both, is unclear.

**Who to Consult?**

Before your gap year, we recommend meeting with a trusted advisor or mentor to develop a reasonable plan for the gap year. What exactly will be accomplished during this year should be established. Will you obtain clinical work, research experience, improved entrance examinations? A combination of these? Will you pursue a postbac or work as a research assistant? What are the precise steps to reach those goals? All of these details should be discussed before leaping into a gap year. Our favorite saying again is: *No gap without a plan.*

An advisor or mentor will help you decide if there is abundant evidence that a gap year will make a difference for you. The gap year should enhance the probability of acceptance into the graduate programs of your choice by improving your application. For instance, if someone has an undergraduate GPA of 2.5, it would not be wise to spend a year traveling the world. Instead, completing a master’s degree and improving your grades would probably prove wiser. You need a realistic plan that the gap year will improve your admission odds by remediating a weak area of your application.

Many of our faculty colleagues are divided when it comes to the advisability of gap years. Some are firm believers in taking the time and gap years, for all the reasons mentioned and more, such as gaining clinical experience and maturity as a person. Other faculty members argue strongly about moving you straight from college through graduate school to your profession, citing the above reasons and increased efficiency in reaching your professional career. That frequently translates into higher income more quickly, less time in dead-end jobs, and fewer delays in securing your life and career goals (be it career, marriage, children, travel, or other aspirations).

Unfortunately, many of these colleagues project their own needs and experiences onto you as applicants. We cringe when we hear fellow advisors proclaim, “What I did was . . .” before thoroughly assessing your unique reasons for contemplating a gap year. Every student has their own rationale behind a gap year and should not be automatically lumped in with others’ situations.

Our position is that gap years may or may not prove advisable depending upon you and the individual situation. Find a mentor who will focus on your circumstances and needs, not impose their personal history on you. At the end of the day, you know your needs and yourself the best, and with the guidance of your mentor, a gap year may or may not prove a wise decision.

**In Closing**

Embarking on a gap year prior to graduate education in psychology is a complicated and individual decision, defying simple advice. Each student will necessarily reach a specific answer based on their concerns and rationale beyond the inevitable, “It depends.”

A gap year may prove advantageous if you need to combat burnout, finalize career paths, and improve your credentials for graduate admissions. It also has the pro of “smelling the roses” and traveling before settling into a graduate program and lengthy career. At the same time, gap years may impede your momentum to complete graduate school, probably not replenish your bank account, and delay you from your goals. Two unknowns are the extent to which your gap years will remediate your academic weaknesses and how time away will alter your commitment to graduate education.

Knowing the respective pros and cons, consulting the right advisor(s), and engaging in honest self-reflection will determine what you need and if the gap year works for you. Such careful consultation and contemplation will increase the probability of a favorable outcome. Best of success in computing the wicked calculus of the gap year decision.

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**References**


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**John C. Norcross, PhD, ABPP, is Distinguished Professor and Chair of Psychology at the University of Scranton, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University, and a distinguished member of Psi Chi. He coauthors the Insider’s Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology, from which portions of this article are adapted.**

**Michael A. Sayette, PhD, is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh with a secondary appointment as professor of psychiatry in the School of Medicine, and coauthor of the Insider’s Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology.**

He has conducted research on applying to graduate school for decades and has directed graduate admissions for Pitt’s clinical psychology program.

**Abigail S. Charneski is a neuroscience major and philosophy minor at the University of Scranton. She serves as a research assistant in the Psychology Department and is applying to medical school (maybe after a gap year).**
The Online Graduate PhD Degree
Questions, Answers, and Case Analysis

Tony D. Crespi, EdD, ABPP
The University of Hartford

Michael C. Amico, PhD
Housatonic Community College
Selecting a virtual PhD has considerable appeal. Those with restrictive and/or debilitating health challenges, those with significant family obligations, and those residing in geographically isolated locales have sometimes found enrollment in a traditional PhD program impractical. A certified school psychologist on the island of Nantucket off Cape Cod, for example, or a marriage and family therapist seeing children and families in an isolated mountain community in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado may find a traditional PhD impractical without a major professional and personal disruption. Just as a diner looking at a fine restaurant might choose either late evening seating or look elsewhere, so a virtual online PhD can offer a menu option where a traditional degree is untenable.

Fundamentally, although a professional might have decided that an online PhD is a viable option, many questions loom. What courses or programs are available in this format? What is the potential outcome for career satisfaction? Can these programs lead to state licensure and/or certification for a practice career? In a basic way that questions about ingredients or cooking time might be posed prior to selecting a meal, so an applicant for a PhD should be able to pose multiple queries. In meetings in our offices, as well as during our conference presentations on graduate education, we often encounter diverse and complex questions. Join us as we explore questions commonly posed by prospective PhD students and post PhD students and faculty exploring options in graduate education. Consider the issues. Explore the carte du jour.

The Case Study: A PhD Student Changing Programs

Nicole attended one of our talks on academic careers—a presentation involving the pursuit of a position as a professor. Recognizing that her educational path was unconventional, she indicated that she was unsure how her academic credentials might be received with her nontraditional PhD. Explaining that she saw herself as a multitalented professional, she noted that, with multiple areas of knowledge and skills, she felt capable of teaching diverse areas and hoped this would increase her opportunities. As we spoke, she explained that she was in her 20s when she earned her first master’s degree in counseling. While noting that she felt that she had gained a good grounding from that program, she acknowledged a thirst for greater knowledge. Looking to become a well-rounded professional and envisioning a career in private practice, she entered an APA-approved PsyD program in clinical psychology. Relocating, she completed three years of coursework and received a second master’s degree. Then, after several practicum experiences, life circumstances interrupted her education.

Reeling with the realization she would not earn her anticipated degree, she was confronted with several questions in what seemed were insurmountable hurdles:

- Her life course suggested this degree was no longer workable.
- Her goals had shifted. She was no longer interested in a career as a clinician.
- She had begun part-time teaching and hoped to pursue that career trajectory.
- Two PhD programs she contacted would not grant advanced standing.
- She had not amassed any scholarly publications nor presentations.

She explained that faculty in two programs she contacted indicated that, although her transcript was impressive, she would need an additional 4 years of full-time study, including a residency. She was also informed that she would need to work as a teaching assistant. Given that she had been teaching part-time she felt conflicted. She also knew that, if she remained in clinical psychology, an internship might necessitate another geographic relocation. Simultaneously, with two master’s degrees, she was receiving multiple affiliate faculty offers for teaching, which provided a financial base for a self-supporting lifestyle. Finally, exploring online degrees, she found that Fielding Graduate University offered a “distance” APA-approved PhD in clinical psychology, but the requisite internship posed a potential obstacle.

These hurdles seemed insurmountable. She knew that additional loans were not realistic. A licensed clinical mental health counselor, she had decided to explore distance programs in organizational, developmental, and general experimental psychology, thinking that these would allow her to work while pursuing her goals. Finally, she decided a PhD in one of these areas would serve to fulfill three areas in her life. First, it allowed her to augment knowledge gaps. Second, it offered the opportunity to achieve her goal of a PhD. Third, by exploring a distributed education degree, she could continue adjunct teaching and build experience.

When we met Nicole, she was a newly minted PhD teaching part-time. Although this maintained her financially, she hoped our workshop might offer insights to further her career goals as she struggled to secure a full-time post. She was also unsure how to address the change in doctoral programs on her résumé as well as address her lack of scholarship. In our discussion, we noted that she was not alone academically and explained, as one example, that when Argosy University was shuttered, many APA-approved students were stymied as their academic track was derailed. In fact, many strained to find programs willing to grant advanced standing. We described multiple instances of challenges blocking degree completion, noting that few PhD programs accepted large numbers of transfer credits. Some would accept 6 credits. Others set specific required credits to grant a degree. Truthfully, this is more common than many realize. We also suggested multiple résumé formats, including simply indicating the school awarding the PhD, as well as possibilities for listing related, supportive, and transfer facets.

Positively, we noted that she held a PhD! Feeling some comfort with a new realization that she had a shared experience, she confided unexpected challenges involving academic bias about her PhD as well as concerns with her lack of scholarship. Somberly, she noted that post degree she felt distance education degrees lacked respect. Not disavowing this point, we noted new options are opening rapidly! As illustration, we noted the California School of Professional Psychology—part of Alliant International University and one of the largest training grounds for
psychologists in the country—offers both traditional and online PhD and PsyD degrees. In fact, CSPP offers a traditional and online PhD in industrial and organizational psychology as well as a traditional and online AAMFT-approved PsyD in marital and family therapy. We also spoke about the CACREP-approved counseling PhD program at Capella University as well as their track in general experimental psychology. Although we noted that Fielding Graduate University remains the sole APA-approved program using a distance format, we noted many university teaching positions, such as in organizational psychology or general-experimental psychology, do not require an APA-approved degree and noted that APA does not approve programs in these areas.

Unsure how nontraditional degrees and programs will be received in coming years, we noted that we have spoken with students who had been unable to complete traditional programs but were developing viable careers via this educational modality. We also spoke about necessary research on nontraditional education in this area as well as changes impacting higher education, including fewer undergraduate admissions. Hearing her acknowledgement that she wished she had better researched online programs and had found stronger mentors able to offer guidance relative to teaching and scholarly skills, we helped her appreciate a shift in distance learning as programs evolve. Still, what will the future look like? That is unknown.

In Nicole’s case we had suggestions. First, we noted that she had been in a position where her life circumstances suggested the value of a nontraditional PhD degree and that she had amassed solid teaching experience during this trajectory. She smiled! This was accurate. Now, the goal was how to best plan her future course of action. Helping her develop a defined plan was clearer given that she accepted these challenges and could see realistic possibilities.

Here’s our call to action: Be open to both traditional and nontraditional PhD programs, recognizing the need to balance the degree with solid professional skills targeted to a career objective. Faculty often must assemble scholarship. Nicole still lacked scholarship and had questions about furthering this ingredient. She had never been published. She had not presented at conferences. After our conversations, she felt more comfortable. She recognized pathways including possible coauthorships with faculty where she taught and now saw areas of research. She felt positively that her PhD in general experimental psychology had enhanced her knowledge. Still, Nicole had gaps. We noted many options she might not have considered:

- She might use her clinical mental health counselor license to explore university counseling.
- She might complete a traditional post-degree certificate in research to further that need.
- She might explore community college teaching as a viable full-time option.
- She might showcase her expertise in online learning on her vita.
- She might see if conferences had network opportunities for collaborative research.
- She might see if colleagues at her teaching institutions would serve as scholarly mentors.
- She might gather quantitative and qualitative data on online graduates in higher education.
- She might explore coauthorships with her teaching colleagues.

Following the conference, we asked Nicole if she had changed her view of her nontraditional PhD? Pointing out she was that rare individual who had completed significant coursework in both models, we asked her objective opinion. Reflectively she noted that she realized her former classmates also lacked knowledge and skills related to scholarship and felt many academics also had similar weaknesses. We agreed, pointing out that a number of traditional PhDs also struggled with scholarship! We also noted that the distance education format of her PhD required more active participation in her learning than what she experienced in a traditional program where students could remain passive in their learning. She had acquired a PhD, and it was a testament to her determination. We also encouraged interesting research on graduates of traditional and nontraditional programs. She was intrigued!

In hindsight, in our workshops, we have met both traditional and nontraditional PhDs unable to secure tenure-track appointments due to deficits in scholarship. Nicole was not alone! We have met PhDs without skills impacting poor publications. We have also met nontraditional PhDs with successful teaching careers, and we have met individuals who had multiple doctoral degrees. One individual with a traditional PhD in educational psychology also held a nontraditional PhD in developmental psychology. We met another individual with a nontraditional PsyD in clinical psychology and a nontraditional PhD in organizational development. The narratives are diverse. In general, those who we meet who are successful are diligent, flexible, and set goals to compile the requisite experiences to cultivate success. Each has developed a unique and individualized menu.

Today Nicole holds a position at a college. She is satisfied personally and professionally, is on course in her life, and is further developing published scholarship.
Dynamic and Diverse Job Markets: Questions and Answers

As students weigh graduate programs, an understanding of different job pathways and educational formats can be instructive. The following questions and answers might be helpful:

1. Can both “clinical” and "non-clinical" degrees be acquired through distance modalities?
Yes. Programs may award a PhD, EdD, or PsyD in applied areas leading to licensure including clinical psychology or counselor education, and doctoral programs are also available in such areas as marriage and family therapy, offering a PhD, PsyD, or DMFT degree (doctor of marriage and family therapy). Further, nonclinical programs may encompass such areas as general experimental psychology, organizational psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology, organizational development, leadership psychology, as well as in other facets of psychology and related disciplines.

2. Can licensure and certification be acquired through online programs?
Yes. Although Fielding Graduate University is presently the sole distance program approved by APA in clinical psychology, multiple distance programs in counseling hold approval through CACREP, and AAMFT has approved doctoral programs in marriage and family therapy granting the PsyD or DMFT degrees. Individuals studying state statutes may also contact individual state licensing boards to better understand state standards and restrictions. Not all programs are approved by these associations and not all hold regional accreditation, a key necessity for state licensing.

3. Can I teach without licensure or certification?
Yes. Although programs recruiting faculty for graduate programs in clinical and counseling psychology typically desire licensure (and state and national certification in school psychology), and although programs in school counseling often seek state certification, this is only one facet. “Clinical” programs may wish faculty with licensure and counselor education programs may desire state and/or national certification and/or licensure while faculty in such areas as social psychology, general-experimental psychology, or organizational development typically do not need such markers! Consider these figures relative to practitioner numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical psychologists</td>
<td>148,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School counselors</td>
<td>110,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and family therapists</td>
<td>41,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology professors at colleges and universities</td>
<td>41,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology teachers at junior colleges</td>
<td>29,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology teachers in junior colleges</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4. Is a PhD typically viewed as a prestigious degree?
Yes. Just as both an MD and DO can enjoy rich careers in medicine, the MD is more generally regarded. So, too, individuals should weigh employer bias and degree status. The bias that a distance PhD is less earned and more given is one that was dominant a decade ago. However, over the last decade, as enrollment trends changed and with COVID-19 impacting educational delivery, notable shifts have and are occurring. With admitted dissonance in schools where they admitted faults in distance learning classes, changes have been initiated. One professional we encountered with a distance PhD, enjoying a satisfying clinical career, suggested that a PhD offers perceived competence! Another with a rare EdD in clinical psychology and credentialed as a licensed psychologist noted one potential employer had indicated they were looking for a doctoral psychologist! Similarly, a DO we met with a sterling practice and prestigious university affiliation spoke of a bias relative to MD/DO degrees. Each individual should weigh multiple facets in choosing their choice on this menu, realizing a careful examination and selection of choices can lead to a satisfying meal creating a lifetime of memories.

5. Is a PhD generally more frequently evident for a university or college teaching career than a PsyD or DMFT degree?
Yes. When one of the first autonomous schools of professional psychology opened as the California School of Professional Psychology, it initially awarded the PhD. While CSPP (part of Alliant International University) now awards both the PhD and PsyD in professional psychology, it notes a PhD might be preferred for a career targeting research and teaching. Similarly, while marriage and family therapists may acquire a PhD, PsyD, or DMFT, and while Alliant International University offers a unique PsyD in marriage and family therapy, the preponderance of faculty hold the PhD. It doesn’t mean however that a PsyD can’t teach. However, given that those pursuing these degrees often want clinical careers there is sometimes less focus on scholarship, research, and teaching. Students should weigh multiple factors in making decisions.

6. Is accreditation important?
Yes. In many facets, regional accreditation is required, which is through regional governing commissions such as the New England Commission of Higher Education or the Middle State Commission on Higher Education and these accreditations are often considered key to validity and acceptance. Following this facet, the APA accredits doctoral programs in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology, and “combined” programs blending two or three specialties, while not granting approval in programs in such areas as social psychology or developmental psychology. However, this is only one approval. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) approves “specialist” and doctoral programs in school psychology, the American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy (AAMFT) approves programs in marriage and family therapy, and The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) approves programs in counseling including counselor education, school counseling, and clinical mental health counseling. Choices are complex.

7. Is a nontraditional PhD degree valuable?
Yes. A degree can open a new menu while not necessarily all choices as pedigree bias exists. Just as an MD may have more status than a DO, so applicants to a PhD, EdD, PsyD, or DMFT program should recognize that employers may value traditional and nontraditional degrees with different biases. In terms of value, there is another option often missed in the job market. At community colleges, where many faculty have master’s degrees, a PhD is valued. An individual we met shared that his union contract is written such that a distance degree with regional accreditation is viewed no differently than a brick-and-mortar PhD. A year ago, a certified school psychologist confided that, after completing the bulk of a PhD in an APA-approved program, she needed to relocate. With few credits accepted by universities, she elected a distance PhD. Although this new program could not lead to credentialing as a licensed psychologist, their employer granted a raise—approximately $10,000—for their PhD. The financial gain for the PhD amplified the value of their degree. It is important, then, to research and set expectations just as one does with a menu.

8. Can a distance PhD offer pay raises?
Yes. Positively, certain contracts are written in ways such that certain community colleges, as illustration, may grant a raise for a PhD as long as regionally accredited. This can yield salary increases of thousands of dollars, and over a career, it can add hundreds of thousands of dollars of increased revenue. Further, promotion to an associate or full professor rank may provide a salary increase. An individual we met discussed how there was a salary increase of $10,000 a year that came with promotion to full professor, and because they had a PhD (from a distance learning program), they were able to apply for promotion three years earlier. Similarly, a colleague we met with a distance PhD working in a state hospital system found that the system did not require licensure and enjoyed multiple promotions.

9. Are there times when a nontraditional degree may be preferable?
Yes. Geographic limitations, health limitations, and family obligations may make a traditional degree less viable. A licensed professional counselor in Provincetown in New England or practicing in the rural mountains of Colorado with a desire to acquire a PhD, may find an online program desirable given geographic limitations. With the impact of the pandemic, the ability or desire to engage with in-person learning has changed the narrative and highlights benefits of a distance model of education. Individuals can develop highly marketable skills, deliver education in a distributed format, and acquire a strength at a time when universities and colleges have enrollment declines and need to consider ways to increase enrollment via distance education. In our talks on graduate education, it is clear that students and practitioners must weigh multiple strengths and limitations in selecting graduate programs.

10. Is it possible to gain the skills necessary from a distance learning program needed for long-term success?
Yes. Instead of looking with a biased belief about distance education, see it more individually based on whether professors at these distance programs can teach a student key professional skills. Skills such as research, publishing, presentation, grant writing, and teaching are areas that can lead to a satisfying professional experience. Doing a review of professors and their curriculum vitae in distributed education programs will provide insights as to whether they can teach these skills. The mindset should focus on quality of training regardless of the delivery system’s methodology.

11. Are there advantages and variations to distance learning programs?
Yes. Although there is a range in quality of these programs as well as in the variety of courses and programs offered utilizing this format, some are well-respected. Some
12. If I am a licensed professional counselor or licensed marriage and family therapist, can I establish a successful practice with a PhD or PsyD outside clinical or counseling psychology?

Yes. One does not need to possess a clinical psychology degree unless the identity of being a clinician is important to one’s sense of self. An LPC or LMFT with an online PhD in industrial and organizational psychology, as example, can develop a vibrant career in teaching and/or in practice. There are jobs. From hospitals to corrections and from counseling centers to teaching, applied positions exist which can be met with varied degrees. Further, college teaching as well as related college positions such as student affairs and career centers offer rich options. Each must choose their path.

Conclusions

Researching graduate programs requires a dedication to action. Whether interested in a PhD, EdD, PsyD, or DMFT degree, this may be a time for acceleration. For students, the range of online and nontraditional graduate offerings can present as a new and large menu presenting an overstuffed sandwich of offerings. Sifting through the layers may suggest more options than might easily fit into a now overstuffed wrap. The thing is that we actually praise the effort involved in laying out each selection or each list of elements—more programs—than will comprise your final list. As good as quantity in a sandwich is good, a more selective choice of a la carte items to include may mean less quantity but the quality and balance in items may lead to a more satisfying outcome.

Over the past 20 years, several students with bachelor’s degrees and master’s degrees, as well as PhDs and PsyDs have attended our workshops on graduate education. Many had solid positions including careers as a certified school psychologist, certified school counselor, or licensed marriage and family therapist but were interested in new career trajectory and wished a PhD. A number held positions that did not require state certification or licensure in areas including state protective work or forensic counseling. A few were employed as adjunct faculty but felt stymied securing full-time tenure track faculty positions. Virtually every individual was interested in pursuing either a different career track or was interested in gaining further depth and breadth of knowledge involving certification, licensure, and career opportunities. Some wanted to know the secret sauce to full-time faculty positions in academia. These conversations illuminated the complex web that blends graduate education with career employability. Similar to a perfect award-winning recipe, it takes research, a blend of ingredients, and some trial and error to find that secret sauce to one’s career.

Many students will make application to traditional programs and relocate to pursue advanced degrees. This path can provide many opportunities post-degree but still necessitates thoughtful planning regarding degree choice (PhD vs EdD vs PsyD) and specialty. Many students will make applications to nontraditional programs. Applicants unable to relocate, especially in geographically restricted locations such as on islands or in the mountains, or those with family obligations or health restrictions may find nontraditional programs the only viable choice. We have met individuals who left traditional programs for myriad reasons but still wished to complete their degree.

As we examine educational opportunities, it is evident that nontraditional degrees can be effective in certain situations and for certain aspirations. At the same time, no program can guarantee employment nor access to all employment possibilities. Just as weather conditions can prevent airlines from reaching certain destinations, and just as a ship’s captain must thoughtfully plot and plan a course when traversing challenging water conditions, so too graduate school applicants should compare and contrast multiple options in plotting their educational course of action. One recipe that may satiate one diner may not satisfy another diner’s palate. There is no truth to the one size fit all mentality.

Putting it together, perhaps at no time in history have so many options been available. Traditional degree? Nontraditional degree? Truly, balancing a graduate degree in this contemporary market is challenging. This article addressed timely questions. Although the academic world is still evolving, distance programs are increasingly offering a novel option and opportunity. Research carefully and consider programs that can help propel your career in the trajectory that can support the lifestyle to which you most aspire. For now, as you consider your options, we hope this material can help. Embrace the menu of options as you pull together various ingredients to assemble a delicious career. We believe there can be joy in learning. Whether in person or virtually, we hope your journey will bring you joy.
Faculty, students, and Psi Chi members: Have you explored the new APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major, Version 3.0 with a careful eye for how it applies to you and your career? To cast light to this valuable resource and provide insights into its significance, we asked Dr. Jane Halonen to answer questions about key changes and ideas to use the guidelines.

Dr. Halonen is a distinguished psychologist and a prominent figure in the field of undergraduate education who chaired the APA Board of Educational Affairs Task Force on Psychology Major Competencies. As one of the driving forces behind the latest APA Guidelines for Undergraduates 3.0, she offers a wealth of knowledge and perspective on the critical role that these guidelines play in shaping the educational experiences and future prospects of psychology students. Read on to discover the evolution of these guidelines, their impact on students and faculty alike, and the broader implications for the field of psychology.

What is the importance of reviewing the newest APA Guidelines for Undergrads 3.0, and who all should read it?

The APA requires that all official policies undergo a formal review every 10 years to ensure that policies reflect current best practice. Guidelines 3.0 represents the second time these expectations have been revised. You can expect Guidelines 4.0 to roll around in 2033!

The Task Force that put the Guidelines together tried hard to make the document accessible for anyone with a stake in undergraduate psychology education, but we think it is especially important for students to become familiar with the goals and outcomes specified in the document because it should help with whatever next step follows graduation. If students can point to exemplars of the work they have done that fit with the national guidelines, we think that will impress both employers and graduate admissions committees.

What are some of the most notable changes in Guidelines 3.0?

The Task Force gathered feedback on Guidelines 2.0 before embarking on discussions of change. As a result, we expanded our focus on the value methods and statistics, on career preparation with a baccalaureate degree, and on the...
Can you highlight some creative ways that psychology students and Psi Chi members could incorporate the new guidelines into their academic and extracurricular activities?

1. Local Psi Chi organizations can compare their own curricular experiences to what is now being presented in the Guidelines and provide feedback to their faculty and program chairs if there appear to be areas of deficiency. Similarly, positive feedback about how well a department is meeting these expectations would also be well-received. That analysis would give students practice in owning the skills they have been developing throughout their own experience.

2. I use the Guidelines in my own capstone course in a creative way. I find out what future the psych major wants to achieve and I match them with a professional who is living that life. I share the guidelines with both the student and the career mentor. After constructing a career plan and a psychology-focused résumé, the student then meets with the professional and is obligated to illustrate that she is ready to graduate according to the guidelines set forth in 3.0. Students tell me they are intimidated at first by having to justify themselves to strangers but when it is over, they recognize that they just have had an opportunity to practice job interviewing skills without having any high stakes penalty attached. They often tell me it is one of the most meaningful learning experiences they have as an undergraduate.

What are some activities or events that Psi Chi chapters could host to disseminate understanding about the guidelines within their academic communities?

Any time Psi Chi can capture public interest to help clarify what psychologists can do is a good thing. I am aware that there is a week in the spring that is dedicated to public information campaigns about the true nature of psychology, but I’m in favor of taking advantage of any celebration possibility to help improve the public relations problem we tend to have in psychology. For example, some programs celebrate Fechner Day on October 22. Why not have a public celebration that can spread the word about the true advantages a psychology degree can confer. The best way to do that is to highlight or demonstrate the skills that psychology majors polish throughout the curriculum. I agree with Dr. Steven Chew that a psychology education produces “superpowers” that can really give students an edge when they enter the workforce. Why not embark on some activities that allow you to practice being a psychology ambassador?

Looking ahead, what do you envision as the long-term impact of these updated guidelines on the field of psychology education and the professional journeys of aspiring psychologists?

We are keenly aware that Guidelines 2.0 had a far-reaching impact in helping programs across the country and even internationally produce high-quality experiences for undergraduates. The guidelines often serve as the framework by which programs undergo academic program review so we are confident the same kind of transformation is likely to be possible for Guidelines 3.0. We are confident that students who have an in-depth ability to talk about their skills in fluent and polished way will reap some amazing advantages in their own academic journeys.

Jane S. Halonen, PhD, has been a professor of psychology at University of West Florida, James Madison University, and Alverno College (WI). Her scholarly contributions have focused on helping psychology students, faculty, and departments achieve optimal performance. She has been involved over the course of her career with helping the American Psychological Association (APA) develop guidelines or standards for academic performance from high school through graduate levels of education. Dr. Halonen served as the Chief Reader for the Psychology Advanced Placement Reading from 2004-09. The Society for Teaching of Psychology, which she presided over in 2000, named her Early Career Award to honor her mentoring of generations of new faculty. She won the American Psychological Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award in 2000. In 2003, APA named her an “Eminent Woman in Psychology.” In 2013, she won the AIP Award for Applications in Education and Training in Psychology.
I f you don’t mind, I’d like to wreck a timeless children’s story for you. Ok? In The Little Engine That Could (Piper, 2001), Tillie the steam engine believed that she could in fact reach the top of a steep mountain with a heavy load of toys. Whilechanting her belief again and again (“I think I can! I think I can!”), she worked hard and ultimately accomplished her goal. This tale inspires children everywhere to believe that they can do anything they set their minds to.

But here’s the catch. How do we really know whether Tillie’s belief or optimism had any influence over her ability to climb the mountain? In other words, empirically speaking, does the correlation equal the causation? Could it be that perseverance, not optimism, is really what drove her forward to victory? Could it be that even a train without any optimism or perseverance whatsoever would still have reached the summit? Further, what if this other unmotivated train could have completed the journey even faster than Tillie did? You might have just exclaimed, “How outrageous!” But without a few hundred steam engines willing to complete psychological testing before starting the journey, there is no way to tell.

Enter researchers like Dr. Sara Jaffee, a developmental psychopathologist at the University of Pennsylvania whose work often focuses on academic success and optimism. Dr. Jaffee coauthored a recent publication in Psychological Science (Brumley et al., 2019) that sought to identify the importance of optimism, though of course, not in fictional trains (bummer, I know!). Specifically, her study investigated whether students who believe they will attend college will actually do so. Here’s what they found.

Two Kinds of Optimism
When speaking with Dr. Jaffee about optimism, she is quick to pause the conversation to clarify what kind of optimism she should discuss. She explains, “There is a distinction between optimism in terms of having a belief about what one’s future might look like vs. a belief in one’s ability to succeed in college. These two are related, but they are also different.”

Regarding optimism about one’s abilities (i.e., whether “I think I can . . . succeed in college!”), Dr. Jaffee shares that literature exists suggesting that an optimistic mindset about one’s abilities is related to success in various domains, including academic achievement. She says, “People who feel hopeful and positive that...
they can do well may be more likely to try harder, seek help when needed, and persist at their work, and all those things will contribute to academic success.”

Dr. Jaffee’s Psychological Science article explored the other kind of optimism about the future and one’s ideas of their future self. In other words, the belief being measured was actually whether high schoolers could envision being college students (i.e., whether “I think I can . . . see myself in college!”) with no regard for whether the student would have the ability to succeed once admitted.

This is where it gets interesting.

Similar to the challenges of proving that Tillie’s optimism helped her reach the top of the mountain, Dr. Jaffee had to rule out many other variables before making the assertion about the power of one’s beliefs of their future self. In this way, she explains, the study involved a careful exercise to determine, “How do we isolate the impact of one’s beliefs from the things that might be correlated with those beliefs and that might be explaining whether adolescents do or don’t go to college?”

As one example, Dr. Jaffee says, “What if the beliefs of one’s future self merely reflect certain realities that are in fact the real drivers of whether someone goes to college or doesn’t? The adolescents who think that they are going to go to college are the ones who test well, get good grades, have high IQ scores, and have a very realistic belief based on their abilities that they are going to go to college. So, what if their beliefs about whether they will go to college don’t really increase their chances of going to college? Instead, what if their abilities are only reflected in those beliefs?”

Dr. Jaffee’s study controlled these variables by obtaining measures of adolescents’ grades and IQ to make sure that those were not predicting whether they went to college as opposed to their beliefs.

Another challenge, which required a more creative solution, was whether one’s beliefs about going to college merely reflect certain financial realities. After all, she says, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds might very realistically say, “I think it is unlikely that I will go to college, because my family can’t afford it.” To overcome this challenge, the study compared beliefs in one’s future self among siblings—brothers and sisters who naturally would have grown up in the same households, in the same neighborhoods, and with the same financial constraints.

Despite their similar upbringings, the sibling participants still differed regarding whether or not they believed that they would go to college. Therefore, through this clever siblings framework, the authors were finally able to eliminate many other variables in order to reach the top of the mountain and explore the primary question posed for the study. (This is the part of the story to pause for an exuberant, “I thought they could! I thought they could!”) Ultimately, they discovered that siblings’ beliefs in whether they would go to college really was predictive of whether they actually attended.

**Small Town Beginnings**

Dr. Jaffee grew up in small town that had good public schools and a local college. Her mother was a first- and second-grade teacher, and her father taught high school math. And so, going to college had always seemed like an natural choice for her. She says, “The college was right there, and I even babysat for college professors. My high school also had an arrangement with the college where students with strong GPAs could take college classes for free during their junior and senior years.”

During college, Dr. Jaffee spent some time volunteering in her mother’s classroom. She says, “I was struck by how early I started to see differences in kids’ trajectories. ‘Luck of the draw’ in terms of which family a kid is born into shapes a lot of those trajectories, and I think that has driven a lot of my interest in these kinds of developmental questions.”

Unfortunately, most kids don’t have two parents who work in education in addition to frequent interactions with a local college. So, for students from lower socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds or families without any college graduates, how does optimism affect students’ likelihood of attending college?

Dr. Jaffee explains, “I imagine that those differences in beliefs about going to college might not be as big as one would imagine. I’m saying that based on another study that we did, where we interviewed 15-year-olds who came from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in Philadelphia about their beliefs about the future. I think we were really surprised by just how pervasively those adolescents said, ‘Yeah, I’m going to go to college.’ ”

“In many cases, when we looked at their grades and their families’ financial situations,” she continues, “it seemed like their assessments were overly optimistic. So, I think probably, on average, there are small differences across the SES spectrum in terms of people’s beliefs about going to college, where kids from lower SES backgrounds are a little less likely to say, ‘Yes, I’m definitely going to college.’ But I don’t think it’s such a big difference across the SES spectrum.”

**Motivating Students to Learn**

Parents, teachers, and students alike have long sought the secrets to stimulate learning and academic achievement. Dr. Jaffee says, “I think there is a lot of power in communicating to children and adolescents from early on that college could be right for them. For kids from more affluent backgrounds, I don’t actually think they really need to hear this message as much because going to college is so normative that there is relatively limited variation in their beliefs about whether they are going to attend. But for kids from genuinely middle-class and lower income backgrounds, I think this message has a little more impact.”

Surprisingly, another thing the study showed is that, for kids of the low end of the SES spectrum, their beliefs of going to college had less impact. According to Dr. Jaffee, “This suggests to me that something more important than beliefs drives the likelihood of those adolescents actually getting to college. In many cases, I imagine that it just the hard financial realities of whether their families can afford to send them. Relatedly, it could be due to attending schools that have relatively fewer resources and have not prepared students so well to be competitive in the college application process, regardless of how much they believe that they are going to go and want to go.”

It goes without saying that Dr. Jaffee is curious to learn more about what is happening at that lower end of the SES spectrum that causes beliefs to be less impactful.

All sorts of attitudes, behaviors, and environmental conditions can influence your academic success. A central characteristic that Dr. Jaffee sees in students who are successful in college is persistence. She says, “You must be able to roll with the punches. Failure is inevitable in college. You are not going to do as well on every exam as you hoped you would do. You are...
going to get critical feedback on papers you write. And the real marker of success at an individual level is how you recover.”

Did you know: In some versions of The Little Engine That Could, Tillie receives a little encouragement from the toys on the train. On this note, let’s conclude with a reminder from Dr. Jaffee about the importance of building a good network of friends and mentors to support your academic journey. She asks you this: “Is there a professor, staff person, or coach in your college environment who can be a source of support and who you feel comfortable asking questions?” It is important for students to keep in mind that faculty want you to succeed. And for faculty, it is important to continually seek ways to promote student success. For a few ideas, Dr. Jaffee suggests structuring courses so that the learning objectives are clear, giving students a little leeway when facing stressors that don’t always align with assignment deadlines, and promoting an inclusive classroom environment.

Reference

Dr. Jaffee’s Developmental Psychology Career Tips…

To Seek a Career
“My biggest piece of advice is to get research experience, so join a research lab and get involved in some research projects as a volunteer. Talk to faculty in your department who are developmental psychologists. Learn more about the kind of research that they do.”

To Choose an Area of Interest
“The undergraduate years are a process of elimination. I think very few undergrads come in as first-year students knowing exactly what they want to do. Look at developmental psychology journals, skim through the table of contents. Think about which titles look interesting to you, and which ones look less interesting. Use that as a sort of a barometer for where your own interests might lie. It is Ok to start doing one thing and then realize that you are not that interested in it, so you start exploring other things. Even within the realm of developmental psychology, you might start out thinking that you are interested in how babies learn language, but after a semester in a baby language lab, you might change your mind. Maybe you discover you are more interested in peer relationships and middle childhood. I think that is a totally normative trajectory to figure out what really interests you.”

To Develop Essential Skills
“A genuine interest in processes of stability and change is essential. Fundamentally, you have to be interested in that in order to be interested in being a developmental psychologist. Beyond that, I think that there are many ways of being successful as a developmental psychologist. There are developmental psychologists whose bread and butter is experimental research. Those folks have to be very clever at designing experiments that rule out all kinds of confounds in order to make the claims that they want to make. There are many other ways of being a good developmental psychologist too, such as observing kids in classrooms or asking people questions through surveys. I think the key is to figure out which way of understanding the world resonates with you. Then, acquire the skills that make you good at pursuing knowledge in that way.”
Please share a little about your occupation.
I hold a managerial position within a child protection service, presently stationed in St. Martin, the Dutch Caribbean. My role primarily involves crafting and refining various policies, guidelines, and training programs tailored for government professionals who are involved in ensuring the safety of children. This encompasses overseeing case management portfolios and the personnel responsible for them.

For instance, we have specific child protection case management policies geared toward addressing emergencies, such as natural disasters. In the event of a hurricane hitting St. Martin, we must be well-prepared and equipped to address several critical questions: What measures need to be in place to guarantee the safety of children if they must take shelter? How can we optimize their well-being and eliminate the risk of abuse while under our care? We also carefully consider the psychological and emotional support that children require during these challenging times. This entails having psychologists or counselors readily available to provide assistance when placing a child in a new environment.

In essence, my work revolves around continuously assessing the impact of our initiatives on children and striving to enhance their protection and well-being.

In what ways do you think a psychology degree helped you prepare for your current position?
My psychology degree has played a crucial role in preparing me for my current position. My initial fascination with the inner workings of the human mind and the motivations behind human behavior led me to pursue psychology. During my undergraduate studies, I built a strong foundation in general psychology, but...
I decided to further my education by earning a master's and PhD in forensic psychology. In my current role, I find myself applying psychological theories and principles to real-world scenarios on a daily basis. I specialize in cultural and social psychology, which plays a pivotal role in my work. I work in diverse contexts, and it’s crucial that I design policies and packages tailored to each specific environment. For instance, when addressing issues like online child exploitation, which is increasingly prevalent due to technological advancements, I cannot assume that a policy effective in one location will work in another. I must thoroughly consider the cultural nuances of each specific context to ensure that the policies I develop are adaptable and appropriate. Psychology has provided me with the essential tools to navigate these complex and sensitive issues effectively.

As an undergraduate, did you already know the graduate track you intended to take? What did the research process look like to find your program?

As an undergraduate student, my primary goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the human psyche. I didn’t know what psychology track I wanted to take, but I knew I didn’t want to be a psychologist. I had a strong desire to contribute to the well-being of vulnerable children, particularly those who often faced neglect or lacked sufficient resources. It wasn’t until after the completion of my undergraduate degree, when I began working with the Red Cross, that I recognized the opportunity to further my impact by delving deeper into psychology.

This led me to research various universities and explore which master’s program would best align with my goals. I understood that a more comprehensive and versatile program would be more beneficial than one highly specialized in a particular area, such as child psychology. I figured that by pursuing a broader psychology program, I could gain a wider set of tools, including those applicable to working with offenders.

After a significant amount of time Googling, I came across forensic psychology. Unfortunately, forensic psychology is not widely recognized in many African countries, so I had to embark on a thorough research journey. Most people I spoke to weren’t familiar with the discipline, and some were surprised to learn that it even existed.

The research primarily involved a significant amount of online searching as I was particularly keen on finding accredited universities, which was essential to ensure that the education I invested in would be recognized. I wanted to avoid the situation of pursuing a course that wasn’t accredited, wasting both time and money. The University of Liverpool, for example, was accredited at the master’s level for forensic psychology, but not at the doctorate level, so while I received my master’s there, I attended somewhere else for my doctorate.

What was the biggest thing that stood out to you when you were looking into forensic psychology?

What stood out to me the most when I delved into forensic psychology was its breadth. It’s a field with a wide range of applications in the real world. Although individuals who study forensic psychology can specialize working with law enforcement on specific investigations, they can also apply it to humanitarian work and development like I do.

During my master’s program, I noticed that the courses were quite specific. There were, of course, modules on criminal psychology and the psychology of offenders, but there were also areas like family psychology and community psychology offered as electives. Even at the master’s level, these diverse courses demonstrated the extensive applicability of forensic psychology in various contexts.

I was particularly excited to see how the knowledge I was gaining could be directly applied to my day-to-day job. Despite the demands of working full-time and studying simultaneously, I could clearly envision how the insights from my university coursework were directly relevant to my work in the field.

What is it like to work full time while pursuing a graduate degree? What would your advice be to others working full time while going to school?

Balancing full time work and school was quite a juggling act for me. I not only worked full time, but I also had a one-year-old child, so I had to manage it all. I pursued my master’s degree online, which was a crucial factor given my situation as a single mother. Attending classes in person after a full day of work simply wouldn’t have been feasible. However, the online
program did have residencies, which required me to be on campus for two to three weeks which I found to be manageable as I could plan in advance.

To successfully work and study full time, my advice to anyone attempting this is to be incredibly committed and exceptionally well-organized. It’s important to inform your employer about your studies, ensuring they understand your commitments. I let my employer know when I needed days off for exams or to concentrate on coursework. The flexibility to attend online classes, particularly in the evenings, made it somewhat easier, although it was still challenging with a baby. I’m grateful that my employer was understanding and supportive. They allowed me the necessary time off when required.

I made the choice to tackle both full-time work and full-time education because I was determined to complete my master’s within a specific timeframe, which was about a year and a half. To anyone considering a similar path, I emphasize the importance of being organized and having a strong social support system, especially if you have children. Having someone to help with childcare can help make the journey more manageable.

What advice do you have for psychology majors navigating a continued degree or career applicable to their major?

First and foremost, if you’re a psychology major wondering how to apply your degree in a nontraditional way, my advice is to discover your passion. What are you passionate about? Psychology is a versatile field that can be applied to various career paths, especially if you’re not specifically pursuing clinical or another highly specialized field. As a psychology major, you have a unique understanding of the human mind, motivations, and behavior, and this knowledge can be valuable in almost any field.

I’ve found that psychology can be a cornerstone for many roles, even in communications and marketing. It all comes down to understanding how people will respond and what their perceptions will be.

In the social sector, for example, psychology is highly sought after because it equips you to work effectively with people. Many job postings either require a degree in social work or psychology. If you’ve pursued psychology, it indicates a genuine interest in working with people and engaging in human interactions. This is highly valued in fields where human connection is essential. Whether your passion lies in working with children, older adults, or any other demographic, your psychology degree will prove to be invaluable. As long as you recognize your passion, you’ll be able to find a job or career path where your psychology degree can make an impact.

Do you have any other thoughts you’d like to share?

I would like to emphasize the importance of applying your psychology undergraduate degree to something you’re genuinely passionate about. It’s important to understand that pursuing psychology doesn’t mean you must become a traditional psychologist. There are various avenues to explore, from social work to school psychology, and so much more. The beauty of psychology is its universal applicability. Almost every field benefits from psychological insights and knowledge. So, my key message is to follow your passion and trust that everything will align.

Neidi de Carvalho is a Child Protection Professional with over 17 years of experience. Early on after completing her undergrad, Neidi decided that she did not want to follow the conventional route of becoming a clinical psychologist. Now with a PhD in forensic psychology, she can analyze better and interpret contexts within which child abuse can occur, both in the physical and online world. Neidi has taken her psychology degree and applied it toward her passion for contributing toward a safer world for children. Consider whether you, too, might benefit from leaving a conventional path. How might the lessons Neidi learned save you time on your own journey?
Advancing Depression Research and Treatment

Interview With Christopher Beevers, PhD

Elisabeth Barrett
Psi Chi Headquarters
What inspired you to tailor your research toward depression treatment?

My journey toward researching depression treatment began with a somewhat indirect path. When I first entered college as an undergrad student, my initial career aspiration was to become a sports psychologist. Having a passion for sports, particularly tennis, I recognized the significance of psychology in the realm of athletics, an area where mental aspects are crucial yet sometimes undervalued. My interest in psychology, coupled with this ambition, prompted me to explore research as a stepping stone toward becoming a sports psychologist.

Although I was keen on sports psychology, the opportunity that came my way was in a different domain. I joined a research lab focused on examining how individuals with depression manage their negative thoughts and emotions. Interestingly, this subject matter wasn’t too far removed from the emotional regulation required in sports. In athletics, one often needs to control and navigate negative emotions and thoughts effectively. As I dove deeper into this research, I became increasingly captivated by the complexities of depression and the potential avenues for treatment and support.

As I continued my work in this lab, I gradually expanded my horizons to encompass clinical psychology. Over a couple of years, I decided to shift my focus toward clinical psychology, and that marked the beginning of my dedicated journey into depression research. Since then, I’ve remained committed to this field and have found it to be both challenging and rewarding. My initial trajectory might have been unexpected, but I discovered a deep passion for depression research, and that is what ultimately led me to pursue it as my career.

What are your thoughts about the historically negative stigma surrounding cognitive therapy, or the taboo history of openly discussing mental health? How do you feel your research addresses this?

The historical stigma surrounding cognitive therapy and the broader discourse on mental health is a really important topic. Fortunately, it seems that the stigma is gradually diminishing, partly due to increased awareness and the sharing of personal experiences regarding mental health challenges. Although I wish my work could more directly address this issue, there are aspects of my research that can contribute to reducing the stigma associated with mental health.

One avenue through which my research can impact this stigma is the development of internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for depression. A significant component of the stigma tied to mental health issues relates to the process of seeking treatment, including the fear of others discovering that one is receiving treatment. Internet-based therapy offers a confidential option that people can access from the privacy of their own homes. It operates much like an online course, aiming to replicate the techniques and skills taught in traditional CBT therapy. Although it can never replace the value of in-person therapy, it serves as a valuable first-line treatment. This approach enables individuals to explore treatment options discreetly, making it a potential stepping stone toward more intensive forms of therapy, if needed. Though not suitable for everyone, it can be a beneficial resource for some individuals.

What makes internet interventions particularly promising is their scalability. Accessing quality mental health treatment can be a daunting task, often marked by long waitlists for providers. Internet-based interventions are designed to make treatment more accessible while maintaining an evidence-based approach. We have conducted numerous clinical trials worldwide, which have demonstrated the efficacy of this treatment in reducing depression and aiding many individuals.

In summary, my research endeavors to contribute to the reduction of mental health stigma by offering a discreet and accessible treatment option for individuals experiencing depression. Although it may not completely eradicate the stigma, it represents a significant step toward making mental health support more attainable and destigmatized.

What would a more intensive treatment look like that one might have to graduate toward?

Intensive treatment, in contrast to the internet-based intervention, would involve a more personalized and hands-on approach. If the internet-based intervention doesn’t prove effective for an individual, the next step might entail seeking face-to-face treatment from a provider. In-person treatment allows for a higher degree of customization to the individual’s specific needs. For instance, some individuals might require more focused assistance with certain aspects of the CBT skills taught online. Although Internet intervention can provide a foundational understanding, it may not suffice for those who need more comprehensive cognitive restructuring or tailored support.

Our research has also aimed to identify the characteristics of individuals who benefit most from internet CBT. It seems that those who derive the greatest benefit tend to be individuals who haven’t undergone extensive prior treatment, primarily grappling with depression without comorbid conditions, and exhibit less severe depression symptoms. This knowledge helps us target the right candidates for this approach. By identifying individuals who are less likely to respond to internet-based intervention upfront, we can expedite their journey to a more appropriate level of care. This strategy prevents individuals from investing weeks or even months in an intervention that might not be effective for them.

The core objective of our work is to equip individuals with the tools and skills needed to better understand and manage their symptoms and thought processes. The ultimate aim is to empower them to regulate their emotional responses in a more self-aware and constructive manner. This approach focuses on teaching new coping skills taught online. Although Internet interventions can provide some assistance with certain aspects of the CBT skills taught, they might not be effective for them.

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Intensive treatment, in contrast to the internet-based intervention, would
mechanisms to deal with the challenges associated with symptoms and cognitive patterns, to enable individuals to achieve a sense of well-being within a time-limited and targeted framework. The goal is to help them overcome these hurdles without the need for long-term treatment.

You and your team conducted a study to see if integrating genomewide SNP data with clinical data improved prediction models of antidepressant treatment, and that the results weren’t significant. Why might that have been the case?

Certainly understanding the reasons behind null results is crucial in scientific research. In the case of our study integrating genomewide SNP data with clinical data to improve prediction models of antidepressant treatment, it is challenging to pinpoint a single cause for the lack of significant findings. Several factors might have contributed to this outcome.

First, it is possible that the effect sizes of the genetic variants we were investigating were quite small. To detect such subtle effects, we would require an exceptionally large sample size, which might not have been the case in our study. We were examining the individual contribution of millions of genetic variants, each making only a minimal impact on the prediction of treatment response. The aggregation of these tiny effects didn’t seem to enhance the prediction model.

Another possibility is that the genetic component’s strength in predicting antidepressant treatment response isn’t as robust as previously assumed. Although prior research had identified some genetic variants associated with treatment response, our study couldn’t replicate those effects, suggesting that genetic factors might play a lesser role than initially thought. In addition to the broad genome-wide approach, we also considered prior research findings that identified genetic variants predicting treatment response. However, this focused approach yielded similar null results in our study.

I strongly believe in the importance of publishing both positive and null findings. Null results are often undervalued, but they are vital for scientific progress. They not only provide a more accurate representation of the true effects but also help prevent researchers from pursuing unfruitful avenues. Sharing null findings contributes to a more efficient and productive scientific system by indicating potential dead ends and guiding future research in more promising directions. It keeps the scientific community open to exploring new possibilities and refining our understanding of complex topics like antidepressant treatment response.

Regarding the file drawer effect, why do you think scientific journals aren’t interested in publishing or sharing research with results that are not statistically significant?

The inclination of scientific journals to prioritize publishing research with statistically significant results has historical roots in the desire to advance our understanding of phenomena by highlighting promising findings. For some time, the prevailing thought was that sharing the most promising results would propel the field forward at a faster pace. However, this approach has inadvertently led to certain questionable research practices. Researchers often face significant pressure to produce positive results, as career advancement often hinges on publishing. This pressure has contributed to instances of questionable research practices becoming more prevalent within the field.

Fortunately, the tide seems to be turning, with more journals now becoming receptive to publishing null results, especially if the research is conducted in an important or highly regarded area of study. Null results can also hold significance, as they help shape a more accurate understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

One promising approach to research publication that I believe could shape the
future of scientific publishing is the concept of “registered reports.” With this model, researchers propose a study to a journal before commencing the research. The journal evaluates the proposal based on its importance and methodological rigor and agrees to accept the resulting paper regardless of the outcome. This results-blind evaluation process removes the pressure to uncover positive results, allowing researchers to focus on presenting what they initially set out to investigate. I believe that this approach has the potential to provide a more accurate depiction of the phenomena under study and reduce questionable research practices, which, in turn, can enhance the replicability of findings and our comprehension of true effect sizes.

The adoption of registered reports as a dominant publishing model may take some time, perhaps over the next decade or more, given the slow pace of change in academia. However, I see it as a positive step forward for psychological science and the broader scientific community, promoting transparency, rigor, and a more comprehensive understanding of research outcomes.

How do you hope to use machine learning to predict your findings on treatment responsiveness? What are the practical implications of your findings on the Attention Bias Modification (ABM) trial funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)?

In the ABM trial, our primary objective is to address the automatic tendency of individuals with depression to focus on negative information. We aim to counteract this automatic inclination by providing participants with repeated practice in shifting their attention away from negative stimuli. The idea is that with sufficient practice, this shift in attention becomes more automatic and effortless, making it easier for individuals to naturally redirect their focus from negative content.

In the current trial, we are taking this concept further by exploring the gamification of these attention-shifting tasks. The goal is to make these exercises more engaging and enjoyable, giving them a game-like quality while remaining true to the core objective of redirecting attention away from negativity. We believe that, by incorporating a game framework, people may be more inclined to utilize these interventions in real-world settings.

In the context of clinical studies, participants use these interventions because they are part of a research study, often receiving compensation for their participation and understanding of the contribution to scientific progress. However, in real-world scenarios, the usage of such interventions might be less consistent. We hope that, by making the intervention more enjoyable and engaging through gamification, individuals will be more likely to utilize it voluntarily. We still aim for it to have a therapeutic effect, reducing their attention to negative information and ultimately alleviating their symptoms of depression.

The NIMH funding supports our efforts to investigate whether this gamified approach to attention bias modification can be both appealing and therapeutically effective. It helps us explore the practical implications and potential benefits of this innovative method for individuals dealing with depression.

How can ABM be integrated into clinical settings for improved detection and treatment of depression?

The integration of ABM into clinical settings has the potential to significantly improve the detection and treatment of depression, primarily within the context of treatment. The focus of our current research, supported by the NIMH’s RO1 funding, is to understand not only the effectiveness but also the specific population for which ABM works best. If we determine that ABM is indeed effective, it could become a valuable tool that mental health providers prescribe alongside other treatments. Although we need to avoid delving too deeply into the technical aspects, the core concept of ABM involves addressing automatic negative thought patterns that can be challenging to overcome in traditional cognitive therapy.

Cognitive therapy is excellent at helping individuals challenge and rework negative thoughts that emerge after that initial automatic negative thought. ABM, on the other hand, targets that initial automatic thought, aiming to reduce the likelihood of such automatic negativity occurring in the first place. It complements traditional CBT and may work synergistically with it.

Ultimately, the integration of ABM into clinical settings could offer a promising and innovative approach to augment existing treatments for depression and potentially help a broader range of individuals in their journey to recovery.

You have mentioned cognitive bias modification (CBM) being an exciting new area of research. What makes it exciting and different from other areas like cognitive behavioral therapy and cognitive restructuring?

Certainly, the field of CBM is indeed an exciting and distinctive area of research, particularly when compared to other approaches like CBT and cognitive restructuring. What makes CBM particularly intriguing is its focused and specific nature. In contrast to CBT, which encompasses various components, such as behavioral activation, cognitive restructuring, belief examination, coping strategies, and even interpersonal coaching, CBM zeros in on a very particular cognitive bias. For example, in our research, we have addressed biases like negative attention bias and self-referential negative processing, which involves thinking negatively about oneself. The key idea behind CBM is to create interventions that directly target these specific cognitive mechanisms and observe whether changes in these biases translate to improvements in depression symptoms.

This approach is compelling because it provides highly specific insights into the relationship between a particular cognitive bias and changes in depression symptoms. If a cognitive bias is indeed causally related to depression, altering that bias should result
in changes in depressive symptoms. In other words, CBM allows us to pinpoint why a specific intervention is effective in reducing depression symptoms. It offers a precise and targeted understanding of the relationship between cognitive biases and depression.

Conversely, if we find that changing a particular bias doesn’t lead to a corresponding change in depression, we gain valuable knowledge as well. It suggests that the bias in question may not be causally related to depression, allowing us to refine our understanding of the complex mechanisms at play in the condition. This focused and empirical approach makes CBM a promising avenue for understanding and addressing depression and related cognitive processes.

How do you go about identifying different biases?

The process of identifying different biases, whether cognitive or otherwise, typically begins with cognitive theories of depression or relevant theories in other areas of research. These theories help pinpoint the specific mechanisms or biases that are thought to play a role in the development or maintenance of depression.

In the context of cognitive theories, common biases may involve memory processes, attention, or interpretation biases. For example, interpretation bias is a prevalent cognitive bias where individuals who are depressed tend to interpret ambiguous information more negatively. For instance, if presented with ambiguous feedback, someone with depression may interpret it as a negative judgment rather than a neutral or positive one. To address this, cognitive training interventions can be developed to test if it is possible to reverse this interpretation bias.

The foundation of this process lies in theory or a conceptual model that identifies a particular bias, mechanism, or factor as relevant to the condition being studied. It is important to note that this framework isn’t limited to cognitive biases and can extend to other factors, including biological processes. Researchers can develop interventions that manipulate these processes to examine their impact on depression or other conditions.

Ultimately, the key to identifying biases and developing relevant interventions starts with a solid theoretical foundation, which guides the research and testing of interventions designed to address these biases or mechanisms.

What are your thoughts on medication management versus cognitive therapy?

I take a pragmatic and evidence-based approach when considering medication management versus cognitive therapy for the treatment of depression. In my view, the most effective treatment should always be grounded in scientific evidence. If a specific treatment has been shown to work through rigorous research, it should be the starting point for addressing a mental health condition.

In many ways, I liken this to seeking treatment for a physical health condition. If faced with a medical diagnosis and given the choice between a well-established, evidence-based treatment and a novel, unproven approach, I would opt for the established treatment. The same principle applies to mental health. If there is strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of antidepressant medications, I consider them a valid choice.

As a psychologist with a background in cognitive-behavioral therapy, I have a natural affinity for behavioral and cognitive approaches. These therapies have demonstrated their efficacy in treating depression. However, I acknowledge that accessing these treatments may not always be straightforward, and patient preference and the availability of treatment options play important roles in the decision-making process. Both medication and cognitive therapy can be effective, and they can also complement each other when used together. The choice between these options often involves some degree of trial and error to determine which approach works best for a given individual.

Factors that might influence the choice between medication and cognitive therapy could include the individual’s understanding of the cause of their depression, whether they perceive life circumstances as contributing to their condition, or suspect a more biological basis for their symptoms. When all else is equal, cognitive therapy may have an advantage in terms of the durability of its effects. Cognitive therapy equips individuals with skills that can continue to benefit them long after formal treatment has ended. On the other hand, medication management might be a preferred option for some individuals or situations.

In conclusion, I wouldn’t discourage someone from starting medication if they believe it’s the right choice for them, as long as the treatment is evidence-based. I place great importance on selecting the...
What would you recommend for individuals struggling with depression, taking into consideration how difficult it can be to access CBT?

I often advise individuals struggling with depression to consider seeking professional help when they experience persistent symptoms. A key indicator can be the duration of these symptoms, which may include feeling persistently sad for most of the day, nearly every day, for an extended period. Although the diagnostic criteria suggest a duration of at least two weeks, in practice, I believe that if these symptoms continue for a month or even two to three months, it may be an appropriate time to consider seeking help. Additionally, if someone experiences thoughts related to suicide or self-harm, such as thoughts of being better off dead or wishing for death, this is a concerning sign that should prompt a need for treatment.

I understand that accessing treatment, especially CBT, can sometimes be challenging. However, there are resources available to help individuals find appropriate treatment providers. Some databases and directories list clinicians who offer evidence-based treatments, including CBT. Beyond online resources, speaking with healthcare providers can be immensely helpful. Your family physician or primary care provider may be familiar with local resources and can guide you toward suitable treatment options. If you reside near a medical center with a psychiatry department, it often hosts providers who specialize in evidence-based treatments and clinical trials. Even if you cannot receive care directly through such a facility, they often maintain referral networks to help you find the right treatment. Connecting with individuals who have undergone treatment can also be valuable. Seek recommendations from friends, family, or colleagues who have experience with mental health treatment.

Finding the right mental health provider may require some patience. Akin to finding a trusted auto mechanic, you might need to consult with a few providers before you find one with whom you feel comfortable and can work collaboratively. It is common to meet with several providers and perhaps undergo initial intake sessions to determine compatibility.

Mental health care can be fragmented, and finding the right provider might take more effort than it should. However, don’t be discouraged if your initial attempts don’t yield the desired results. Help is available, and persistence is often required in navigating the mental health care system. Personal rapport and connection with a provider are crucial in mental health care, and the right fit may require some exploration. Don’t lose hope, as suitable help is within reach.

What advice do you have for undergrads wanting to pursue research in cognitive therapy and the treatment of depression?

My advice for undergraduates wanting to pursue research in cognitive therapy and the treatment of depression is to start early and get involved in research. If you are at a university with active research labs, seize the opportunity to participate, even if the lab’s current work doesn’t precisely align with your interests. Building experience in a lab, regardless of its focus, can open doors to more relevant roles as you become better known within the research community. Here are some key steps and areas to consider:

1. Early Involvement: The longer you spend in a lab, the more you become an integral part of the team. Even if your initial responsibilities seem less exciting, they often expand and become more engaging as the lab gets to know you better.

2. Develop Statistical Skills: If you have an affinity for data, mathematics, and statistics, statistical training is a valuable skill set for research. Statistical training will serve you well if you plan to pursue a research career. It may also open up opportunities in various domains.

3. Graduate Student Engagement: Engage with graduate students at your university. They can provide insights into the graduate school experience and share information about career prospects and life as a graduate student. They might also offer opportunities to participate in research projects.

4. TA Interaction: Interacting with teaching assistants (TAs) for your courses can lead to research opportunities. Many TAs are involved in research within their departments, and building a connection with them may be a pathway into research.

5. Attend Departmental Events: Participate in departmental seminars, workshops, and events related to cognitive therapy and mental health research. These events can help you stay informed about the latest research and provide networking opportunities.

6. Explore Data Science: Since data science plays a significant role in research, consider taking data science courses or exploring this field further. It might not only complement your research skills but also open up new career possibilities.

7. Reach Out to Labs: When you feel ready, reach out to labs of your interest. Many labs welcome enthusiastic undergraduates. Send emails expressing your interest and willingness to contribute. You might be surprised how open many researchers are to mentorship and collaboration.

In summary, getting involved early, developing relevant skills, and building relationships with graduate students and faculty are key steps in your journey toward a career in cognitive therapy and depression treatment research. Don’t hesitate to explore various opportunities and remain open to unexpected pathways into the field.
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

EAST

Rivier University (NH)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter held an induction ceremony on May 1. Members, inductees, and their families were invited to attend. The ceremony and a prayer by Sr. Paula. Then, Dr. Brian Earnsting explained the growing importance of the field of psychology. Officers read from the Psi Chi Ritual in which inductees and new officers were informed of their responsibilities.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter hosted a donation drive for its 2023 Psi Chi Induction Ceremony. Psi Chi inductees, their families, Psi Chi officers, and psychology faculty came together to donate food and personal items to support the campus community. The campus has a pantry named in the honor of Thea Aschkenase (2007 alumna) who was an advocate against hunger. She volunteered to help hungry children and adults gain access to nutritious food. As a Holocaust survivor, she made it her mission to help others and earned her degree in urban studies from WSU.

Worcester State University (MA)

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MIDWEST

DePaul University (IL)

RECRUITMENT: Chapter officers spent the afternoon meeting fellow students and garnering interest in Psi Chi at the Student Organization Fall Involvement Fair. The officers answered questions about the organization, informed students about upcoming meetings and events, and discussed research interests with those who stopped by the table. The chapter connected with lots of students and encouraged them to attend Psi Chi events and join the chapter.

(Left) DePaul University (IL) Chapter’s Illya Sherif (president) and Aiden Rathmann (president-elect) recruiting potential members at the fall involvement fair.  
(Lower-Right) Not even the rain can stop DePaul University (IL) Chapter’s Aiden Rathmann (president-elect) from connecting with students at the college’s fest in the quad.
RECRUITMENT: At the College of Science and Health (CSH) Fest, the chapter joined other CSH departments and student organizations on the quad. In its inaugural year, CSH Fest was designed to increase community and a sense of belonging among the college's members. The Psi Chi officers spent most of the afternoon having conversations with students and faculty, getting to know the CSH community better. Additionally, the officers shared information about Psi Chi’s mission, the application process, eligibility criteria, and upcoming meetings and events with those in attendance.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter hosted its annual Research Lab Matchmaking Event, giving psychology faculty and graduate students an opportunity to explain their current research projects, offering undergraduate psychology students the opportunity to join a lab and gain valuable skills and knowledge as a research assistant. The 13 presenters represented several areas of psychology, including: community, pediatric, cognitive, clinical, cultural, sports, and environmental psychology. The 45 attendees learned about the exciting research projects in the department while enjoying some delicious Chicago pizza for dinner! The event successfully encouraged and stimulated Psi Chi members in scholarship within the field of psychology.

SOUTHEAST
University of Mary Washington (VA)

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter held a Grad Forum including faculty members like Drs. Hilary Stebbins, Marcus Leppanen, Erin Palmwood, Mindy Erchull, and Dave Kolar. Each panel member provided a unique perspective on various forms of graduate-level education from clinical PhD programs to online master's programs. Multiple areas of graduate school admission, like beneficial gap year(s) course-of-actions, CV builder experiences, and what makes a student a competitive applicant, were discussed. The panel also delved into choosing the right graduate program, going over topics like finding adequate program mentors, programs suited for future career outcomes, and receiving the perspective from previous grad students of the same program.
Seniors, look your best at your graduation ceremony with official Psi Chi Graduation Regalia.

Choose from honor cords, stoles, medallions, lapel pins, certificate holders, and even stationery for your thank-you cards. Psi Chi’s platinum and dark blue colors complement most graduation robes and are sure to impress your friends and family on your big day.

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