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Misrepresented and Misunderstood: The Mysterious $p$ Value …Part 1
Ethan A. McMahan, PhD

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Over thirty years ago, when I joined Psi Chi as an undergraduate student, I never imagined that I would one day have the privilege of serving as President. I also, at that time, had no clue about the amazing support structure that keeps our 800,000+ member organization successfully running. Thinking that some of you might be similarly unaware, my goal is to share with you a quick “behind-the-scenes” look at the organizational framework of Psi Chi as well as a glimpse into our exciting future.

Student Members, Faculty Advisors, and Chapter Officers

You probably already know that we are an international organization, with members around the world. Not only do students from many countries join U.S. chapters where they are studying, we currently have chapters in 22 different countries or U.S. territories. We are comprised of undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and thousands of other lifetime members. Members join through an individual chapter that is housed in a college or university and guided by a faculty advisor. According to our Constitution, the faculty advisor is someone chosen “by the chapter in consultation with the department.”

The faculty advisor works closely with the chapter officers. Our Constitution specifies “at least three (3) Officers representing the functions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer elected from among its student members.” (See https://www.psichi.org/page/constitution for the full Constitution.) These chapter members, officers, and advisors are at the heart of all we do; yet, the scope of this society extends far beyond the local chapter.

Vice-Presidents and Regional Steering Committees

Our global society is divided into six regions. Every two years, each region has an election where that region’s chapters vote to select a faculty advisor (or other active Psi Chi faculty member) to serve as Vice-President (VP). The regional VP is in charge of representing Psi Chi at that region’s psychology convention. For example, the Southeastern VP is responsible for the Southeastern Psychological Association Convention, and the Midwestern VP is responsible for the Midwestern Psychological Association Convention. The VP coordinates the regional research awards and travel grants, as well as planning speakers and activities for the convention.

Like all levels of Psi Chi, the VP works as part of a larger team. Each VP recruits faculty advisors, and sometimes even student members, to participate on their regional steering committee. The steering committee members help with a variety of tasks, such as reviewing for awards and grants and giving ideas for convention events. At the regional convention, the steering committee members might lead a session, introduce a speaker, or help with the Psi Chi exhibit booth. Because the committee members are recruited from different schools, VPs have input from around the region to inform their decisions and best represent the diversity of those members.

President-Elect, President, and Past-President

Psi Chi is also supported by three executive members who each serve a three-year term—one year as President-Elect, one year as President, and one year as Past-President. Every year, chapters around the world vote for the person who will enter the three-year rotation as President-Elect. People who have previously served as VP for two years, within the past 10 years, are eligible to run. Candidates must be nominated by a Psi Chi chapter in order to be considered for the final election slate.

Each presidential role has specific responsibilities. For example, the President-Elect organizes programming for the upcoming American Psychological Association (APA) Convention, while the
President organizes programming for the upcoming Association of Psychological Science (APS) Convention. The Past-President is in charge of soliciting and managing nominations for the next presidential and VP searches. Each president is chair of at least one committee, serves on multiple committees, and attends two regional conventions to help support the VPs of those regions.

Board of Directors and Executive Director
The President also oversees the Board of Directors (BoD), comprised of the three presidents and the six VPs. The BoD is tasked with managing the society’s assets and budget in a way that supports the mission and purpose of the organization (see https://www.psichi.org/page/purpose). To accomplish this task, every BoD member serves on, or chairs, at least one committee (e.g., Awards Committee, Grants Committee). During quarterly meetings, the BoD members give oral and written reports to update the rest of the team about their regional and committee activities. Often the BoD members will propose a motion pertaining to a regional need or a new initiative for BoD vote. At our recent meeting, the BoD was able to celebrate the completion of fundraising for the Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship Fund for Women of Color, which led us to discuss our existing scholarships and our goals for future scholarships. These BoD meetings are characterized by passionate, but collegial, conversations that reflect how seriously we take the responsibility of Psi Chi’s membership and success.

In addition to the three Presidents and six VPs, the BoD includes the Psi Chi Executive Director (ED) as an “ex officio” nonvoting member. Whereas the other positions are temporary and elected, the ED is a permanent staff member and leader of the organization. The ED plays two important roles: functioning as a big-picture visionary for the society and managing the paid staff members who support the organizational mission and goals. The ED is involved in all aspects of the organization, including being a liaison between the elected BoD and the staff in the Psi Chi Headquarters. Instead of being a voting member of the BoD, the ED provides information and insight to the BoD to guide the decision-making process.

Staff of Psi Chi Headquarters
Although you might have been unaware of the BOD, my guess is that many of you have interacted with our fabulous staff members. These are the friendly voices answering the phone when you call Headquarters with questions about membership or grants. These are the people who make sure you have a wide selection of Psi Chi merchandise and that your order gets shipped (https://www.psichi.org/page/Merch_ITM_Grad).

These are the seemingly tireless copy editors and graphic artists who produce our Psi Chi publications and social media material (https://www.psichi.org/page/news).

The staff are in year-round, paid positions with very specialized responsibilities. We have Directors of Communication, Finance, Information Systems, and Membership Services. Each of these areas have corresponding support staff with decades of collective service to Psi Chi. Having worked closely with this team, I can tell you that we are blessed with an outstanding and committed staff that cares about you and our organization.

The Future: Our Search for a New Executive Director
Now that you have peeked behind the curtain, so to speak, and seen the tremendous scaffold upon which Psi Chi functions, I want to give you a glimpse into the future. Our current ED, Dr. Martha S. Zlokovich, is retiring after 15 years of exceptional service. During her tenure, the organization has transformed in many ways. To name just a few accomplishments, Dr. Zlokovich clarified our mission and purpose, developed our first scholarships, created new member awards and advisor support systems, converted application and review systems to online formats, spearheaded our social media presence, managed our multimillion-dollar budget, and strengthened collaborative relationships between Psi Chi chapters and with other professional organizations, such as Psi Beta, the Community College National Honor Society in Psychology, etc. Dr. Zlokovich also started advisory boards for diversity, global, research, and faculty support initiatives. Under her leadership, we expanded from a national to an international honor society in 2009. Dr. Zlokovich worked with the BoD to strengthen Psi Chi policies for the Bod, staff, and chapters. It was she who initiated the Bod’s work on establishing a well-defined succession plan for her position.

Starting this fall, we will be searching for our next ED. The new ED will only be the third person to hold this particular, prestigious position since the BoD hired psychologist Virginia Andreoli Mathie in 2004, and clearly, there are “big shoes to fill.” The search committee is in place, and the job advertisement will be released in early fall. The time is bittersweet. We say goodbye to a respected and accomplished leader while looking forward with excited anticipation to our next leader and new directions. I hope that you share in that excitement. You are part of a vibrant, diverse, and ever-growing organization, standing on a legacy of strength and being one of our building blocks for the legacy of tomorrow.
Welcome to the fall edition of Psychology in the Headlines! In this edition you are going to read about Will Smith’s infamous slap of Chris Rock at the Oscars, how major United States psychological associations responded to the U.S. Supreme Court’s overruling of Roe vs. Wade, gender neutral parenting, and the launch of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the United States. As you can see, a lot has happened in the psychology world over the summer!

As this is the fall edition, I have been reflecting on autumn and the change of seasons. My spouse absolutely loves fall with its changing colors, spicy scents, and cooler (but not yet cold) temperatures. For those of us in academia, fall is much like the New Year. The beginning of a new academic year brings with it a chance to start something new, whether this be new classes, a new school, a new program, or just restarting programs that lay dormant during the summer months.

A psychological reason why fall has a unique feel to it is the return to a more structured schedule following the freedom of summer (Sweet, 2021). As summer ends, it is common to hear people say, “I’m ready to be back on a schedule” or “I’m looking forward to having a more predictable routine.” We can learn a lesson about building greater psychological health from the feelings of comfort that come from fall’s return to predictable routines.

Creating small, predictable routines in our lives can improve both our psychological health and our daily success rate. Recent evidence demonstrates the success of preperformance routines on athletic performance (Shin, 2021, a case study with a single baseball player) and music performance (Hawkes, 2021). James Clear’s bestselling book Atomic Habits (2018) centers around the idea of setting small, daily, automatic routines that create momentum toward completing those larger, more meaningful life tasks. So, just as we appreciate fall for providing us a natural reminder to return to a routine, we can purposefully create small daily routines, such as those that occur upon waking up or right before bed, that can help provide psychological comfort throughout our day.

References
The American Psychological Association and Group of Six React to the Overturning of Roe v. Wade

Shawn R. Charlton, PhD
University of Central Arkansas

Ashlin Charlton
Brigham Young University (UT)

The United States Supreme Court’s overturning Roe v. Wade on June 24, 2022—and thus significantly changing the legal status of abortions in the United States—was one of the biggest national events in the United States during summer 2022. Because of the historical, psychological, and emotional significance of this event, we believe it must be mentioned in a column titled Psychology in the Headlines. However, 400 words cannot do justice to the magnitude of this event. Therefore, we elected to focus this headline on the response of the American Psychological Association and the Group of Six to the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling. These responses became central to how many news outlets responded to this event (e.g., Ables, 2022; Mikhail, 2022; Neammanee, 2022). The APA’s press release (June, 2022) opens with the following statement:

The American Psychological Association expressed deep concern and profound disappointment in response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision eliminating the constitutional right to abortion.

In line with the APA’s representation of the psychological community, their statement identified two major concerns with the Supreme Court’s decision: (a) a lack of attention to decades of psychological science on the issue of abortion and (b) the potential psychological and mental health impacts of this decision including the communities that are likely to be most impacted by this ruling, including “...those living in poverty, people of color, and sexual and gender identity minorities, as well as those who live in rural or medically underserved areas” (APA, 2022).


The response of the APA as highlighted above was echoed by the response of the Group of Six, an organization that represents medical doctors in various fields in the United States. In their response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision, a press release authored by the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Physicians, and American Psychiatric Association stated that:

Our organizations, representing over 400,000 physicians and medical students, condemn the Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, striking down the protections afforded to people in need of abortion care for five decades.

The Group of Six statement had two similarities to the APA’s press release. First, like the APA’s, the Group of Six statement highlighted the role of evidence-based decisions in treatment and care. Second, the Group of Six mentioned how this ruling can potentially increase inequities in health care. In addition to highlighting some of the same concerns, the Group of Six press release identified two unique issues: (a) the potential impact this ruling can have on the patient-provider relationship and (b) concerns with how this ruling will impact federal and state-level involvement in health care decision-making.

The exact impact of the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 24 ruling will not be known for years. However, the APA’s and Group of Six’s immediate responses to this decision provide clear evidence of the position of psychological professionals and psychological science at the time of this ruling.

References


More Than Just a “Daddy’s Princess” or “Mamma’s Boy”

Chandani Rana
Springfield College (MA)

When the gender-creative parents of theyby (they+baby; a baby raised without typical social gender constraints) Zoomer were asked if they only buy green clothes, they replied that neither clothes nor colors have a gender (Myers, 2020). The concept of raising a theyby first received popular media attention in 2011 when a Toronto couple decided to raise their newborn, Storm, as a theyby (Compton, 2018).

The foundation of gender rigidity gets established in early childhood, and children start showing gender-conforming behaviors through their appearance, toy preferences, sports, peer preferences, etc. (Halim, 2016). Sandra Bem’s gender schema theory (1981) provides a sociocognitive framework for how people form ideas of what it means to be masculine or feminine from an early age. Even after four decades, Bem’s Gender Schema Theory remains relevant and provides a strong framework to understand how children view the world through socialized gender roles (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2016).

Theybies are raised far from such binary systems with the philosophy that this provides them the opportunity to explore and later to identify (if they want to, whenever they feel ready) with a gender or as agender. Proponents of this approach to child-rearing believe that such freedom of expression allows theybies space from gender rigidities and social expectations, providing opportunities to develop a unique approach to viewing gender identities. Gender creative parenting styles aim to allow individual gender exploration, discovery, and identity formation. This approach to parenting works to avoid the imposition of traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity while providing the child a platform to create their own gender identity.

Gender-neutral parenting has many supporters. However, this approach to child rearing is a new concept that goes against many established parenting expectations and gender norms. Some people believe the child may grow up to be a confused adult, who may struggle to fit into society. They also argue that it is almost impossible to escape from/avoid such gender norms as the child is a part of the social structure, and it is a good idea for them to learn cultural and social norms to have a better sense of identity.

As social/cultural norms accommodate greater flexibility in parenting and as psychological science better understands gender identity formation, we hope to see greater diversity and tolerance of children’s gender identities, leading to more children with healthy individual identities, and with full tolerance of others’ identities and lifestyles.

References
Why Did Will Do It? Biological and Developmental Influences on Aggression

Vinita Puri, PhD, MSW, RSW, MPhil, BA
Walden University

People everywhere saw Will Smith strike Chris Rock at the Oscars. This shocking moment has spiked an interest in understanding the complex behavior of aggression—a topic that psychologists, criminologists, sociologists, and biologists have been trying to solve for many years! So what is aggression and what causes aggressive behavior?

Aggression refers to a range of behaviors that can result in both physical and psychological harm to oneself, others, or objects in the environment. People with structural abnormalities and neurochemical imbalances are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, than those without (Raine et al., 2000; Rutter et al., 1998). In recent years, neuroscientific studies have confirmed that several regions of the brain, including the amygdala, hypothalamus, and periaqueductal gray are involved in recognizing an acute threat and generating an emotional response (Sanchez et al., 1998). Damage to the prefrontal cortex is associated with reduced cognitive capacity and a triggered limbic system response and malfunction of the ventromedial and orbitofrontal subregions of the brain (Raine et al., 2000). There, regions have been associated with higher levels of impulsive behavior, with deficits in the withdrawal system, a system that promotes retreat from aversive and dangerous situations and a lack of emotional intelligence (Rutter et al., 1998).

Raine and colleagues (1998) conducted the largest and most thorough study to date, in which they used positron emission tomography (commonly called a PET scan) to compare brain activity in 41 convicted violent offenders to activity in 41 age matched control subjects. They found that the people convicted of murder had reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex and increased activity in subcortical regions such as the thalamus. This finding fits nicely with previous research showing that the damage to the prefrontal cortex impairs decision making and increasing impulsive behavior. It was demonstrated that protein synthesis can significantly impact executive functioning—sustained attention, behavioral flexibility to changing contingencies, working memory, self-regulation and inhibition, abstract decision making, and planning and organization.

Imbalances in certain hormones, like testosterone and cortisol, and neurotransmitters, like serotonin and dopamine, may also be linked to aggression (Rutter et. al., 1998, Teicher et al., 2003). These imbalances can occur for several reasons, including genetics, substance use, experiences of trauma, malnutrition, poor maternal care, and stress (Kaufman et al., 2000). Stress management during pregnancy could reduce pregnancy-induced hypertension and hypoxia to the fetus. In addition, healthy parenting programs may help parents to understand the effects of their discipline on their children’s mental health. Research on childhood trauma demonstrated a significant correlation with hyperactivity, aggression, and violence (Sonuga-Barke et al., 2008).

In sum, aggressive behavior refers to a range of behaviors that can result in both physical and psychological harm to oneself, others, or objects in the environment. Biological and environmental factors can influence the onset and trajectory of aggression and violence. Prevention and intervention (e.g., maternal care, prevention of brain injuries) of cognitive disorders can improve long-term outcomes for individuals at risk for aggression and violence (Sonuga-Barke et al., 2008).

References


988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Launched in the United States

Shawn R. Charlton
University of Central Arkansas

While most of these headlines focus on impactful psychological research, this headline is more about a major national event with great potential to impact mental health providers across the United States. In a potentially great step forward in mental health services and intervention in the United States, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline hotline went live on July 16, 2022. The new 988 number is similar to the established 3-digit 911 number for contacting emergency services but focuses instead on connecting individuals with mental health crisis counselors. Prior to July 16, the United States provided a National Suicide hotline through a 10-digit phone number (which remains available). Mental health professionals are excited for the launch of the easier to remember 988 Lifeline.

As suggested by its name, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline can be reached by dialing or texting 988 anywhere in the United States. An online chat is also available at 988lifeline.org. Any United States veterans who call the Lifeline can press ‘1’ if they would like to be connected with the Veterans Crisis Line.

In an FCC news release regarding the launch of the Lifeline, FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel was quoted as saying:

All across our country, people are hurting. They need help. The good news is that getting that help just got a lot easier. Starting tomorrow, 988 will be available nationwide for individuals in crisis, and their loved ones, to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline more easily…This cross-government effort has been years in the making and comes at a crucial point to help address the mental health crisis in our country, especially for our young people.

Researchers identified increased suicide rates associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in countries across the globe (for example, Bangladesh: Daria & Islam, 2022; Japan: Watanabe & Tanaka, 2022; Nepal: Acharya et al., 2022; Spain: de la Torre-Luque et al., 2022; see Orellana & de Souza, 2022, for an example of the complex relationship between COVID-19, suicide rates, and age groups in in Brazil).

I encourage readers to familiarize themselves with the resources available through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by visiting the FCC’s information page at https://www.fcc.gov/988-suicide-and-crisis-lifeline or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s information page at https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988. In addition to information on the Lifeline, both of these websites also provide social media toolkits to facilitate sharing information about the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

References


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alliant.edu/cspp
Hello, dear readers! I am going to start off this edition of *Contemporary Psychology* by telling you a story. Now, as students of psychology, this is a story that you are likely already familiar with. But, it is a good story and particularly relevant to the following discussion, so I hope you will indulge me. The story is about a man named Phineas P. Gage. Mr. Gage lived during the mid-19th century and worked as a railroad foreman. On September 14, 1848, Gage was “tamping” explosives into a rock wall.1 The tamping rod he was using inadvertently sparked against the rock and ignited the explosives, which then blew the rod Gage was holding up through his face, behind his left eye, and out through the top of the front of his skull. The rod was found 80 feet away. You might think that such an accident certainly killed Gage, but it did not. Gage was remarkably responsive, could speak, and could walk with a bit of assistance. Following treatment and within a few months of recovery, Gage was back to working around the house, socializing, and carrying on with life. But, according to several sources close to Gage, all was not quite right. Many stated that Gage had changed profoundly after the accident, and in particular, that his personality had changed for the negative. Whereas Gage was known to be personable, hardworking, and responsible prior to the accident, he had become vulgar, impulsive, and dishonest following the accident.

It should be stated that there is some controversy regarding the extent of change in Gage’s personality and functioning, and most sources indicate that his condition improved over time (MacMillan, 2002). With that said, the case of Phineas P. Gage stands out as one of the most provocative examples of how the brain and behavior are interrelated. Gage suffered tremendous and irreparable trauma to his frontal lobes, and he seemed to change as a person in result. This highlights the fact that our behavior, personality, and psychological functioning originate in the biological, neurological, and physical systems of our body. What is psychological is at once also biological. We are biological machines, and how we think, feel, and behave reflects the operation of our machinery. But, the nature of the relationships between our biology and our behavior is only beginning to become well-understood. Thankfully, there has been a recent (non-tamping-related) explosion in the field that examines these relationships, and many scientists, researchers, doctors, and other professionals continue to push the boundaries of what is known about the body and the mind. What is this field? This field is biopsychology.

**Wait! Don’t You Mean Behavioral Neuroscience?**

Well …sort of. Behavioral neuroscience is a more contemporary name that you (and many others reading this paragraph right now) may be more familiar with. Some folks treat biopsychology and behavioral neuroscience as synonymous, while others use the term behavioral neuroscience to refer to a more specific subfield of biopsychology. Actually, the field we are talking about has at various times gone by several names, including: biopsychology, behavioral neuroscience, biological psychology, and psychobiology. I am going to use the term biopsychology, but just to make sure there is no confusion, let’s go ahead and define precisely this field with several names. Biological psychology is the science that deals with the biological basis of behavior, thoughts, and emotions and the reciprocal relations between biological and psychological processes (Breedlove et al., 2010). As you can imagine, this is a very broad field that addresses several more specific topics, utilizes many different methodological approaches, and includes several different domains of inquiry. For example, behavioral neuroscience (mentioned above)

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1 Tamping is used when one needs to blow through a hillside or some other barrier to make way for a railroad. It involves setting explosives into the wall or barrier. To do this, one uses large metal rods to tap explosives into pre-drilled holes in the barrier and then packing sand, rocks, and/or other inert material in the holes behind the explosives using the same rod. You then light the fuse and run away very quickly …provided that the explosives don’t go off prematurely … which as Gage found out, they sometimes do.
is often defined as a branch of biopsychology that focuses on the specific neural circuitry underlying behavior. Cognitive neuroscience is another branch, focusing on the specific neural circuitry underlying cognition. Other branches include clinical neuroscience, psychopharmacology, and behavioral endocrinology, among many others.

Let's Destroy It to See What It Does
Biopsychology has a long history. Its roots can be traced back to antiquity, with none other than Plato and Aristotle philosophizing on the relationship between the mind and body. This tradition carried on for many years, and a number of other well-known thinkers (e.g., Descartes) addressed how the mind and body interact. Biopsychology emerged as a scientific discipline in the 18th and 19th centuries as medical doctors and researchers became more familiar with neuroanatomy. The “Father of American Psychology” himself, William James, wrote in his Principles of Psychology, that a science of psychology should be based on a firm understanding of biology. And, in the early 20th century, the fields of psychology and biology were married, at least in name, by Knight Dunlap who first used the term “psychobiology,” wrote a book called An Outline of Psychobiology, and was the first editor-in-chief of the journal Psychobiology (Dewsbury, 1991). Although the name of the field has changed since then, this was the first instance of biopsychology being identified as an independent scientific discipline.

Much early research in biopsychology focused on determining localization of function in the nervous system. This is just a fancy way of saying that the research was focused on determining which parts of the brain do what (for example, we now know that primary visual processing occurs in the occipital lobes). A methodological characteristic of biopsychological research, both then and now, is that the researcher will often permanently or temporarily alter some component of the nervous system and look for a corresponding cognitive and/or behavioral effect. So, when determining which parts of the brain do what, researchers would often alter a specific part of the brain to see what effect that had. Nowadays, we can alter parts of the nervous system using a variety of approaches (see below). But, our options were limited in the early years, and it’s possible they even limited the area of the brain to see corresponding effects…and that is just a fancy way of saying that we destroyed particular areas of the brain to see what happens. It sounds medieval now, but numerous scientific breakthroughs were made via studies that used lesioning. If you are concerned about this approach, it should be noted that in the vast majority of cases, these studies were conducted following strict ethical codes, and these methods were only used in appropriate situations.

A Mature Biopsychology
Now, the field of biopsychology is rich and diverse. Indeed, most anything that is psychological can be (and is) studied using a biopsychological approach. For example, the study of sensation and perception, learning and memory, motivated behavior, affect and emotion, language, consciousness, judgment and decision making, and many more areas are commonly studied by biopsychologists. Moreover, biopsychologists use a number of different methods to study the things that they are interested in. Some of these methods involve decreasing neural activity through lesions, pharmacological interventions, and/or other means to see corresponding effects. Other methods involve increasing neural activity through electrical stimulation, transcranial magnetic stimulation, and chemical intervention to see what effects that has. And, the field has been particularly invigorated by the use of advanced brain imaging technologies. Through the use of electroencephalography (EEG), positron emission tomography (i.e., a PET scan), and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), we now know much more about brain function than we did even a few years ago. Additionally, developments in fields related to genetics have enriched our understanding of how genes impact behavior. It is not an exaggeration to say that biopsychology has matured (like all biological systems do) into a vibrant and exciting area of investigation.

You might then be asking yourself, how does one get into this field? Well, note that most biopsychologists are PhD-level researchers and/or medical doctors, so an advanced degree is needed. You can start during undergraduate training by taking courses in biology, anatomy, psychology, neuroscience, and other related disciplines. An undergraduate degree in one of these areas is preferred. The burgeoning biopsychologist should then attend a graduate program that focuses on biopsychology. Given how broad the field is, you might be entering a program that is more specialized, depending on your particular interests. For example, you might be attending a program in physiological psychology, behavioral neuroscience, clinical neuroscience, behavioral genetics, or any other branch of the biopsychology tree. Again, it really depends on what you are interested in, and these interests will be developed through your early studies. So, get at it. Take some courses related to biopsychology. Read some books related to biopsychology (see below for a few good options). For fun, watch movies related to biopsychology. Although mature, biopsychology continues to grow, and you should decide to pursue a career in it, you will no doubt find yourself quite busy for the foreseeable future.

Further Reading


References


Ethan A. McMahan, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Western Oregon University where he teaches courses in research methods, advanced research methods, and positive psychology. He is passionate about undergraduate education in psychology and has served Psi Chi members in several ways over the last few years, including as a faculty advisor, Psi Chi Western Region Steering Committee Member, Grants Chair, and most recently, as the Western Regional Vice-President of Psi Chi. His research interests focus on hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to well-being, folk conceptions of happiness, and the relationship between nature and human well-being. His recent work examines how exposure to immersive simulations of natural environments impact concurrent emotional state and, more broadly, how regular contact with natural environments may be one route by which individuals achieve optimal feeling and functioning. He has published in the Journal of Positive Psychology, the Journal of Happiness Studies, Personality and Individual Differences, and Ecopsychology, among other publications. He completed his undergraduate training at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and holds a PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Wyoming.

1 It strikes me that (to my knowledge) nobody has ever pointed out this oddity: Our eyes are on the front of our head, but we process sensory information from our eyes in a brain region located at the back of our head. That seems wildly inefficient…neural signals having to travel all the way to the rear before being processed. This one time, my “friend” threw a baseball to me. Although I was looking, I did not react quickly enough, and the ball hit me in the face and gave me a black eye. I blame an inefficient nervous system…and, of course, my friend.

1 I recommend the following: Inside Out (2015), Memento (2000), and Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004).
What Makes a NICE Research Collaboration?

Kelly Cuccolo, PhD  
Alma College (MI)

Zane Zheng, PhD  
Lasell University (MA)

Collaboration is an increasingly important factor in scientific endeavors, offering a variety of benefits that range from increasing citation rates of an article (Wuchty et al., 2007), helping to solve larger scale problems and questions, and when teams are diverse—reducing ethnocentrically biased research designs and results interpretations (Pratto & Stewart, 2012). Collaboration, despite its benefits, can be challenging as collaborators must find each other, be able to remain organized and communicate effectively about a project’s status, and balance out differences in time zones, working styles, and personalities (Freshwater et al., 2006). These challenges are potential roadblocks to collaboration that might otherwise enhance the quality of research or expedite the process of scientific discovery.

One way to get around the challenges is to create an initiative that connects interested collaborators, solicits ideas, monitors progress, and addresses issues along the way. In other words, the primary task of the initiative is to coordinate the most difficult components of collaboration, so that collaborators can focus on doing what they do the best. For this task, the initiative needs to possess three distinctive qualities: being credible, being transparent, and being responsive. Credibility ensures that trust is in place for a collaboration to be initiated. Transparency helps streamline the process of setting the goals and guidelines for others to follow. Responsiveness makes it easier to keep everyone updated about progress and resolve issues that may arise. At Psi Chi, a committee is devoted to serving the needs of collaborators from the perspective of a middleman, a committee whose members are scholars passionate about helping others to collaborate. This committee also has a nice name: Network for International Collaborative Exchange, or NICE.

Psi Chi’s NICE is an initiative aimed at promoting cross-cultural research among Psi Chi members and non-Psi Chi members across the globe. NICE is a crowdsourcing initiative that establishes a team of researchers to answer a specific research question (for more information on NICE: Crowd and the process, see Cuccolo et al., 2021). NICE: Crowd has a core project manager (the NICE Chair) and planning committee that first elicit project proposals in the form of preregistration templates from Psi Chi members and nonmembers. Projects are evaluated by NICE planning committee members via a standardized rubric that assesses factors such as the projects’ cultural sensitivity, methodological rigor, and data collection feasibility. For instance, the planning committee considers how the proposal addresses how cultural context creates complete pictures of psychological processes, the validity of measures proposed for use across cultures, the feasibility of the project for labs with varying resources, and long-term impact of the work. The planning committee meets after evaluating all proposals to agree on a project for the upcoming academic year. Once a project is selected, and project authors are notified, the NICE: Crowd planning committee begins with outreach to garner a “crowd” of contributors to participate in the project, usually by means of serving as a data collection site.

Outreach is usually done by sending emails to various organizations and listservs, with a specific focus on potential contributors outside of the United States. As contributors join the Crowd, the NICE: Crowd Chair and planning committee work closely with project authors to ensure contributors have all the materials needed to implement the study at their site. The NICE: Crowd thus relies on open science principles to ensure that participation in the project is accessible to as many potential contributors as possible. Along this vein, the NICE: Crowd Chair and planning committee will assist contributors with the translation of materials, obtaining ethical board approval, and other logistical elements of running the project as needed. Upon the completion of the U.S./European academic year, data cleaning, statistical analyses, and manuscript writing begin. The NICE: Crowd Chair and planning committee help facilitate the creation of teams that allow contributors to work on parts of this process in which they are experts, or that are
particularly exciting to them. For example, there may be an editing team, a statistical analyses team, a team focusing on writing the introduction, etc. The NICE: Crowd Chair and planning committee will then facilitate communication across teams to ensure approval of the completed manuscript. Finally, once the manuscript is published, the data become open access! This allows other researchers to ask unanswered questions using a large cross-cultural dataset, but also fosters continued collaboration between contributors.

The protocols and procedures for the NICE: Crowd to use when initiating a project were developed by the first NICE: Chair (Kelly Cuccolo) and key members of Psi Chi (Drs. Jon Grahe, Martha Zlokovich, and John Edlund), and Psi Chi’s Research Advisory Committee, and are continually modified to fit the needs of the selected project. The NICE: Crowd Chair and planning committee have always aimed to make the process as collaborative, inclusive, and stress-free as possible; this is done through collaborator involvement at every step of the process and representation from people at different academic levels (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, faculty) and of different backgrounds. Standardized protocols and communication have seemed to be core factors that have sustained NICE and allowed it to grow. In a small survey of 2018–2019 contributors, 12.5% reported they had a significantly more positive experience with NICE: Crowd compared to other projects, and 50.0% indicated they had a slightly more positive experience with NICE: Crowd compared to other projects. When asked about what made the experience with NICE more positive, clear participation guidelines, expectations, and frequent communication (from the Chair and planning committee) were most common elements of responses. Contributors also expressed that the NICE could be improved through additional opportunities for networking among the NICE Crowd contributor network. Taking this feedback into account, the NICE Crowd has added increased opportunity for collaborator communication through collaborator updates/spotlights via a newsletter, and virtual meetings for communication instead of updates strictly via email.

NICE: Crowd started in 2018 with approximately 30 contributors from seven countries. Through outreach, networking, and building relationships with collaborators, 133 contributors from 18 countries collected data in the most recent iteration (2021–2022 NICE: Crowd project). Additionally, data points (responses) prior to data cleaning more than doubled from the first project in 2018 (approximately 4,000) to the latest iteration of the project in 2021 (approximately 9,000).

Looking into the future, several initiatives can make collaboration more accessible. First, we can make the topic of collaboration more readily available. For example, given the replication movement for open science, some collaborative efforts may focus on replications. The Collaborative Replication and Education Project (CREP) is one such initiative. The CREP is an initiative that engages in replication efforts of highly cited empirical psychological research with the aim of (a) increasing high quality replications, and (b) providing empirical research training for psychology students (to learn more about CREP, see Wagge et al., 2019). Through multisite replication efforts, we can gain a better understanding of the validity and applicability of the original published results. Those interested in advancing psychological science through replications, or those looking for ways to train students in research methodology, may look towards the CREP. Collaborators interested in cross-cultural work, or undertaking collaborative work focused on novel research proposals, may look towards the NICE. The benefits of collaboration are numerous. Since collaborators do not have to come up with their own topic in this case, projects may get off the ground more quickly. Second, through structured initiatives we can expand the group of collaborators to include more people. Psychology has become increasingly more interdisciplinary and therefore would benefit from contributions from people with different backgrounds. As such, we need to explore ways to reach out to scholars and scientists in other fields than psychology to get involved in collaboration. Third, we can make the scale and scope of collaboration more accessible through the use of open science initiatives, and mentoring and networking opportunities. Our priority would be for first-time collaborators to gain some experience through manageable projects, which we hope would enhance their motivation for scaled-up collaboration in the future.

Collaboration comes with a cost (e.g., time, effort, or resource). Although we think that potential benefits of collaboration outweigh the associated costs, there could be individuals who stay away from collaboration due to various considerations. We feel that these individual decisions should always be respected, as collaboration is not, and should not be the yardstick for good or bad science. In other words, although we aim to foster a culture of collaboration among the scientific community, we should ultimately leave the decision of participation to the individual researchers, scientists, and practitioners based on their own circumstances and judgments.

In summary, collaboration won’t look the same for everyone—what is important is finding what works for you and your team. However, clear guidelines for participation, crediting, and communication seem to significantly help sustain a project or initiative over the long term. We are optimistic that, through continued communication and network building, the NICE will continue to grow.

References

Kelly Cuccolo, PhD, is an assistant professor at Alma College in Michigan. She was the first NICE Chair back in 2018 and continues to be involved with Psi Chi through the NICE, serving on Psi Chi’s Research Advisory Committee and as the Psi Chi Faculty Advisor at her college. She is passionate about mentoring and supervising student research in psychology and enjoys helping students gain important skills through doing research. Her research interests include the scholarship of teaching and learning, gender and sexuality, and eating disorder etiology and risk factors.

Zane Zheng, PhD, is an associate professor of psychology and chair of Academic Research at Lasell University in Massachusetts. He is a Psi Chi Faculty Advisor, Psi Chi Evaluato, Psi Chi NICE member, as well as an incoming member of Psi Chi’s Research Advisory Committee. He is dedicated to promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology through teaching, research, and mentorship. He strongly believes in active learning and student-centered pedagogy, where he has developed models of teaching that engage students in exploring psychology as a science and experiencing the fun of research.
Being the first person to go to college in your family is an amazing achievement. Hopefully, many people in your life are celebrating your accomplishment. However, the truth is that if you are the first, all those people cheering you on may not be great resources for the support and insight you will need along the way. Figuring out how to navigate college and all that comes with it is tricky, and it is made even harder when you have to do it alone.

If you are the first in your family to go to college, then you are a first-generation (or first-gen) student. If you feel like you are mostly on your own and didn’t receive a lot of support, guidance, or insights about college, then you are probably a first-gen student too. It is a big advantage to have family members who attended college because they can help prepare you for things such as registering for classes, figuring out housing, applying for student loans, the importance of meeting with guidance counselors, and the various support systems available to students, just to name a few.

The good news is that you are not alone. Recent surveys indicate that about 40% of those entering college and 33% of graduates are first-gen. Colleges have shared that your first-gen status not only likely attracted the attention of the admissions department but probably caused your application to be viewed more favorably. Also, colleges describe students like you as being curious, enthusiastic, optimistic, and able to persevere.

The challenges that await a first-gen student are real, but they are not insurmountable. There are practical steps that students like yourself have shared that helped them overcome the obstacles. The following tips are not just for first-generation students but for anyone who feels like they are alone or lack support while they navigate the full college experience.

1. **Find your people.** Attempting to navigate the challenges and stress of college alone is very difficult. You will need a support system that you can trust and that will be there for you when you are confused, frustrated, and even want to quit. Your new friend group can serve a lot of important roles in your college life. They may have answers to elusive questions; they can
validate your feelings about things being confusing, hard, or frustratingly unclear; and sometimes they can simply be a healthy reminder that college is difficult and requires lots of hard work. Keep your eyes open for a small group of students who are looking to make friends and then hold on to them like they are a treasure. Everyone needs a support system, so the more the merrier when it comes to having good people on your side.

2. **Stay in regular contact with your academic advisor.** Advisors should be the first source of answers to confusing questions about schedules, classes, prerequisites, class sequences, degree requirements, and a whole host of other things related to taking classes and graduating. Your college advisor’s job is to help you navigate the nuances of the department or program that you are studying in. They would love to get to know you and make things as easy and clear as possible. One of the things we often hear is that students feel like they are bothering their advisor or are a burden to them. Nothing is further from the truth. Get to know your academic advisor and stay in touch as much as you can.

3. **Take full advantage of faculty office hours and TA study sessions.** There are numerous reasons this is a really good idea. It is a great way to get to know your professors, which can be harder than you think. Office hours and organized study sessions with a teaching assistant are the best place to ask your questions, and you will be pleasantly surprised at the insights that are often shared about exams and grading rubrics. Another reason this is important is that successful navigation of college is made easier with a good mentor. A mentor is anyone who can provide you guidance and direction not just about the class but about the program, the major, and what jobs or internships are important too. Faculty members and more advanced students who are teaching assistants fill this role nicely.

4. **Join, join, join.** Since you are trying to surround yourself with a great support system, joining clubs and organizations that reflect your values is a wonderful way to meet likeminded people. Clubs with regular meetings help structure your time and provide needed breaks in the monotonous routine of going to class and studying. When you join something there is also a sense of belonging that is important for first-gen students’ success. When you feel like you are part of the fabric of the community, you are more likely to invest in it. It is important to know that you belong and are important at your college or university.

5. **Consider an on-campus job.** A part-time job can be beneficial in several ways. First, it never hurts to have a little extra money because college is expensive. However, the real benefits from an on-campus job are that you are likely to meet a lot of new people that you would never normally cross paths with. Students from other residence halls, advanced students, ones with different majors, and most importantly different backgrounds. Meeting and becoming friendly with a wide array of people on campus is another way to develop a deep feeling of belonging. As an added bonus, there are sometimes perks like early registration and employee discounts.

6. **Stay connected to your family and friends from home.** We have discussed how important it is to develop a new support structure in college, but it is equally important to keep connected to the people who are most important in your life. Many of them may not be able to directly help you with school-related issues, but they can absolutely share their love and appreciation for what you are doing. Don’t be afraid to share that you are making friends and staying busy; they just want the best for you even if it means having a little less of your attention.

Being a first-generation college student is a great honor. To give yourself the best chance of being successful, you will need to push yourself a little bit outside your comfort zone, but it can be fun and good for you. Making new friends, getting involved on campus, and seeking out advice and mentoring are all ways to get involved and develop the confidence that you belong right where you are. Congratulations and welcome to the start of a life-changing experience.

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.

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FALL 2022 EYE ON PSI CHI
Research methods and statistics are complicated and often not intuitive. As a professor of research methods and statistics, it is my job to teach complex concepts and procedures to my students, and, understandably, my students frequently run into difficulty understanding some of these concepts. In fact, there are a few topics that nearly all students seem to have difficulty with. Perhaps the most difficult to learn and, consequently, the most misunderstood of these topics is the \( p \) value. To illustrate, here is a totally fabricated but typical exchange between a student and myself:

Me: What do the results of your analysis tell you?
Student: Well, they say that my research hypothesis is correct.
Me: Okay. Where in your results is it indicated that your research hypothesis is correct?
Student: My \( p \) value is less than .05, so I have a big, statistically significant effect.
Me: So, you have concluded that your research hypothesis is correct because your \( p \) value is less than .05?
Student: Yes.
Me: …what’s a \( p \) value? Like, what does the “\( p \)” stand for?
Student: (blank stare)
Me: …take your time …
Student: (blank stare)
Me: Okay, we’ll come back to that. How about this? What does the number mean? What exactly are you quantifying with the \( p \) value?
Student: (exasperated) I DON’T KNOW. All I know is that it should be below .05!

... and so on. Perhaps some of you read the above and thought to yourself “what’s the problem?” But that, my friends, is precisely the problem. Many students and, indeed, many professionals have only a superficial and often incorrect understanding of what a \( p \) value is. To address this problem, in this edition of my wildly entertaining and totally accessible column on research methods and statistics, we are going to discuss the \( p \) value. And, we are going to start at a very basic level.

The “\( p \)” Stands for Probability

Decisions in scientific research are based on probability, not certainty. Probabilities are central to the research process. And, the “\( p \)” value is a probability. Or, more precisely, it is a numerical indicator of the probability of something. So, let’s dive in to probabilities.

Let’s say that my two daughters are arguing about who gets to use the hair straightener first. This is a common occurrence around my house, and I find their arguing tiresome, so I step in and tell them that we will let fate decide. I pull a coin from my pocket, ask each of them to pick a side, and then flip the coin. My question to you, dear reader, is what is the probability that the coin will land on heads? If you said one out of two, you are correct. I am currently out of gold stars, but if I had one, I would stick it on your shirt. “One out of two” is the correct answer, because …and this is important …the probability of any event/outcome is the proportion of the number of events/outcomes that meet your stated criteria and the total number of possible outcomes. In the case of the above coin flip, only one side of the coin has a head on it, but there are two sides of the coin, one with a head and another with a tail.¹ So, there is only one outcome

¹ That is, of course, a joke. To my knowledge, no coin has an actual tail imprinted on it.
that meets your requirement (heads), but two possible outcomes (heads or tails). Thus, the probability of getting a heads is one out of two. Easy peasy (lemon squeezy). Or, how about this, what is the probability of randomly selecting an ace from a standard deck of playing cards. If you said 4 out of 52, you have earned another gold star. This is because in standard deck of playing cards, there are 4 cards that meet your criteria (an ace) and 52 total cards. In other words, there are 4 outcomes that meet your criteria out of 52 possible outcomes. Now, let me tell you one more thing about probabilities in general. You can express them as I have above (e.g., one out of two), but you are more likely to see them expressed as fractions (e.g., ¼), percentages (e.g., 50%), and most commonly as decimal values (e.g., .5). Notably, if the probability of some event is 1 out of 20, we could express that probability as 1/20, 5%, or... you got it, .05.

You’re Not Testing Your Hypothesis
Okay, a p value is a probability. What is it a probability of? To answer that question, consider a typical research study. Perhaps the study you are imagining is one you have conducted yourself. And, when conducting this study, you are likely addressing some hypothesis. The hypothesis that you are interested in is your research hypothesis. So, you collect a bunch of data, run some analyses, and make a decision about your hypothesis based on the results of these analyses. As noted above, research decisions are made based on probability, so you look at the p value to inform your decision. Now, here is the tricky bit. You, as the researcher, might assume that you are testing your research hypothesis. You might assume that the analyses that you are conducting directly address your research hypothesis... that the p value that you are looking at tells you the probability that your research hypothesis is correct. But... and this is important... it doesn’t. Your analyses do not directly address your research hypothesis. Your p value is not the probability that your research hypothesis is correct. In fact, you are not testing your research hypothesis at all.

Remember that most commonly, researchers want their p values to be less than .05 (or some other small value). In other words, they want the probability of some outcome to be low. Of course, if you were testing whether your research hypothesis is correct, you would not want the probability of it being correct to be low. You would want the probability to be high. If you were directly testing your research hypothesis, you would want a high p value that gives you confidence that your research hypothesis is correct. Right? Right. But, you are not testing your research hypothesis. You are engaged in hypothesis testing, however, and you are therefore testing some hypothesis. That then begs the question: What hypothesis are you actually testing? And, why do you want the probability associated with this hypothesis to be low?

All Good Scientists Ask “Am I Wrong?”
In most studies, researchers are actually addressing two hypotheses: (a) the research hypothesis and (b) the null hypothesis. The research hypothesis is what we were talking about above. It is the hypothesis that researchers typically state in their studies; that among two or more variables, there is an effect, a relationship, a dependency, etc. The null hypothesis states that there is no effect, no relationship, no dependency, etc. In other words, the null hypothesis addresses whether the research hypothesis is wrong. For example, you might believe that social media exposure negatively impacts mental health. So, you design a study where some participants are exposed to social media, some are exposed to “not social media,” and you then measure everyone’s mental health. Your research hypothesis might state something along the lines of “participants who are exposed to social media will show lower mental health scores than those who are not exposed to social media.” In this case, you are predicting a meaningful difference in mental health between two groups. Conversely, the null hypothesis would state that there is no effect of social media on mental health, and correspondingly, you should not expect to see a difference between your two groups. So, the null is basically saying that the research hypothesis is wrong... that you, dear researcher, are wrong.

Now, get ready to be surprised. Are you ready? Here it comes. When conducting a study, when engaged in hypothesis testing, and when running your analyses, you are actually testing the null hypothesis. In other words, you are trying to determine if you are wrong. Crazy, I know. But, more accurately, you are actually trying to determine whether the pattern of results observed in your study is consistent with the null hypothesis. Using the above example, if you were to run your social media study and then found that your social media group and your not-social media group were similar in terms of their mental health, that finding would be consistent with the null. If, on the other hand, you found that your groups were different, that would be inconsistent with the null.

Researchers typically prefer that the pattern of results observed in their studies be inconsistent with the null, because that suggests that the null is untenable and should be rejected in favor of another explanation, such as that provided by the research hypothesis. To use a little bit of professional verbiage, researchers want to be able to “reject the null.” If the null is rejected, then that provides evidence, albeit indirect evidence, that the research hypothesis may be correct. That last part is particularly important, and the take home message is this: In research, you are testing the null, not the research hypothesis. Your analyses directly address whether your data is consistent (or not) with the null. The research hypothesis is only indirectly addressed, based on what you find concerning the null.

But... That Seems Backwards
You, dear reader, have now probably lost a little confidence in the research process. You might be asking yourself, “Why in the world would we test a hypothesis that states that there is no effect... that states that I am wrong??” Well, admittedly, it does seem a bit backwards. But, there is a strange logic in testing the null. Specifically, the null gives us a precise value to compare our results to. And, that value is 0.

Remember that in all hypothesis tests, we are comparing our results to an expected value. The math in our analyses requires this. The null hypothesis states that there will be no effect, no difference, no relationship, etc., so the expected value for any effect, any difference, any relationship will be zero. Continuing our example from above, if there is no effect of social media on mental health, then when you conduct your study, there should be no difference in mental health scores between your social media group and your not-social media group. The difference between the two groups should be zero, zilch, nada. But, if we find that there is a non-zero difference between our two groups, whatever that difference may be, that suggests that the null is incorrect and
If there is a low probability that you obtained the thing together, your null hypothesis states that there is no effect.

The null hypothesis often does not provide a clear expectation of what the results should be if the null is true. And, when running your analyses, your results indicate that the size of the difference is larger than expected. This would not be consistent with your hypothesis, and you would have to reject your research hypothesis...yet an effect still seems to exist.

I’m going to stop here before we get too far into the weeds, but the bottom line is this: We test the null hypothesis because it provides a clear expectation of what the results should be if the null is true. The research hypothesis often does not.

Well Then, What Is a p Value?

And now we are at the point where we can address what a p value is. In the context of research, where you are engaged in hypothesis testing, the p value is the probability of obtaining your observed results if the null hypothesis were true. To bring everything together, your null hypothesis states that there is no effect. If there is a low probability that you obtained your results when, in reality, there is no effect (i.e., if the null is true), then we reject the null. Why don’t we use the alternative hypothesis to determine our expected value (you ask)? Because that expected value is often hard to determine, and/or it may be the wrong expected value even when an effect exists (I answer). Again, the math in your typical analysis requires a quantitative value to test against. You may suspect that there is a difference in mental health scores among those who use social media versus those who don’t, but do you know how big that difference is? Typically, we do not and thus can’t provide a value to test against. Or, let’s say that you have an idea of the size of the difference, and you use a value that represents that difference. But, when running your analyses, your results indicate that the size of the difference is larger than expected.

This would not be consistent with your hypothesis, and you would have to reject your research hypothesis...yet an effect still seems to exist.

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So, now you know what a p value is. I hope that you have found this enlightening...so enlightening in fact that you want more information about the mysterious p value. If so, don’t worry. This is Part 1 of a series on p values. Next time, we will dive in further.

Until then, dear readers.
EVERY YEAR, Psi Chi recognizes two individuals for publishing the best diversity-related article in *Eye on Psi Chi* magazine and *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*. Congratulations to the latest recipients, each of whom received $600 to recognize them for publishing well-written, competent, relevant, original, and impactful articles!

We sincerely thank Macmillan Learning for sponsoring this award. Below, the two recipients explain why writing their articles was important to them. Take a moment to reflect on their dedication to creating equality and helping people honor and celebrate their identities.

**Read Dr. Almond’s *Psi Chi Journal* article:**

“Angry, Frustrated, and Silent: Women’s Responses to Microaggressions Within the Discipline That Coined Microaggressions”

Our research addresses the gender gap within psychology: a field with a preponderance of women, yet more than half of professors, advisors, and supervisors are White and male. In academic and workplace settings, we found early career women silent, angry, and frustrated with the intersectional microaggressions they encountered. Doctoral advisors made comments about race, gender, pregnancy, and religion. A boss tried to "out" their queer employee, and a male supervisor told his student he would "inject her with empowerment." We uncovered the strategies employed as well as the emotions involved, which can inform and improve academic and workplace settings. For example, making space to express valid feelings of mistrust and anger. These data are impetus for dramatic changes to organizational practices, like hiring. People in positions of power need to reflect and support, not insult, and demean, the changing composition of psychologists. Organizational taskforces have asked that psychologists turn their scholarship inward to address and assess our disciplinary norms and practices for decades. In their 2021 public apology, APA resolved to prioritize workforce development and enhance the visibility of psychologists from diverse backgrounds. We thank the *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research* for their timely recognition of our research article.

**Read Dr. Mbilishaka’s *Eye on Psi Chi* article:**

“PsychoHairapy: Brushing Up on the History and Psychology of Black Hair”

My moral compass and cultural responsibility centers my attention on issues of diversity in psychology. As an undergraduate studying psychology at an Ivy League school, I never had the opportunity to take a psychology class taught by a Black psychologist. However, I was able to conduct literature searches and read their articles. I cited research articles written by Black psychologists about race and culture to ground my self-understanding and relate to topics that confronted the people with whom I was the closest. I know that my research and writing can reach students who need to know more about our culture too. Writing about the topic of Black mental health in hair care spaces has given me an opportunity to offer creative solutions to mental health access, balance the voices in psychology, expand who has access to training in psychology, and connect me more deeply to the community that I serve.

**Are you wondering how you can step up to create a more socially just world?**

Learn about *Psi Chi Diversity Article Awards* and consider submitting your own diversity-related articles this year. Submissions are open year-round!

For other strategies to support diversity issues, visit our *Diversity Matters online resource*. 

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*Psi Chi Awards and Grants*

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Dr. Amanda L. Almond is an associate professor of psychology at the City University of New York-New York City College of Technology. Her research focuses on microaggression, women, and racial minorities. She utilizes feminist research methods to study racial and gender microaggressions as well as patient-provider interactions. In the classroom, Dr. Almond uses pedagogies aimed at retaining women and racial minorities in pursuit of STEM degrees (e.g., interdisciplinary teaching and place-based learning). Her professional goals are to engage people in dismantling systems that demean and promote environments where health can flourish.

Dr. Afiya Mbilishaka is a clinical psychologist, hairstylist, and hair historian who uses hair as an entry point into mental health care. She is an alumna of the University of Pennsylvania and Howard University. Dr. Mbilishaka is the founder of PsychoHairapy LLC and Ma’at Psychological Services.
Schools and the students who attend them are all unique. Accordingly, general advice may not always be the best advice for everyone, especially for students of diverse backgrounds who may face unfair challenges or may unknowingly have access to special programs of support. For this issue of the series, our three graduate school experts focus on tips for graduate school students with diverse backgrounds in order to help level the application playing field and create a safer and more beneficial graduate school environment for all who may apply.

What challenges might students from diverse backgrounds face while applying to graduate school?

Jocelyn: For many students, applying to graduate school is a daunting task and can be overwhelming. Just knowing where and when to begin is challenging. Some students may feel they are not “good enough” or don’t have the skills needed to succeed in graduate school and don’t apply. This may be particularly so for students from diverse backgrounds or underrepresented groups. Such students may succumb to “imposter syndrome” and experience self-doubt, which may lead to self-sabotaging behaviors that negatively impact chances of success. For example, behaviors such as procrastination can lead to incomplete or less competitive applications. Acknowledging this possibility can aid in preventing such behaviors from occurring. Among other challenges, students face not understanding the graduate school application process. If you are interested in graduate school, it is important to start early and know the steps involved in the application process. Starting as early as your sophomore year if not before is important. Do your research. Talk to and establish relationships with faculty and graduate students from diverse backgrounds, take advantage of information through organizations like Psi Chi. Other challenges involve not having the requisite research skills or other experiences needed to be a competitive applicant. There are many undergraduate research programs, volunteer opportunities, fellowships, and grants designed to help students from various backgrounds enter and obtain funding for graduate school.

Julie: In building on previous responses, there is still a diversity discrepancy in the psychology workforce. Bailey (2020) reported, although Blacks make up 13% of the U.S. population, they account for only about 5% of the psychology workforce and 10% of psychology students. The ratio of psychologists and Hispanics is even more uneven: While Hispanics make up 18% of the population, they represent only 4% of the psychology workforce and 12% of psychology students.
Huff (2021) reported, “As of spring 2020, 43% of students pursuing a psychology doctorate identify as part of a non-White population, according to data provided by 955 doctoral programs through APA’s annual survey.” (survey: https://www.apa.org/education-career/grad/survey-data/demographics-data) While the numbers are improving, there is still work to be done. There are not well-defined pipelines for psychology training/careers from high school, through undergrad, to graduate school. This can make it hard to learn of and obtain the needed experiences to become a competitive applicant.

Mitch: So many, unfortunately. Admissions processes may rely too heavily on markers of potential that assume all have had equal access and opportunity to prepare for graduate school, or that there are a sufficient number of professors studying topics or populations that diverse students may be especially interested in researching. Microaggressions also may occur during the admissions process, and some applicants may feel like there are few department members who look like them, or share an identity class, when they visit for an interview. But I believe that in most all departments, faculty, students, and staff are earnestly learning about biases, assumptions, and barriers that need to be addressed within the admissions process, and working to eliminate them. The field so desperately needs to expand so we can understand all human behavior and represent far more perspectives than those that have dominated science for the past century of our discipline. Please be persistent and know that we need you!

Are diverse graduate students more likely to be overlooked during the application process? If so, what can they do to prevent this?

Jocelyn: This is an interesting question. Of course, we all have unconscious biases that may influence our perceptions and actions. For example, empirical studies show that hypothetical job applicants with ethnic names may be at a disadvantage when applying for jobs. This may also be true for students attending Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) applying to graduate programs at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). There may be biases about the quality of education received from MSIs that may unintentionally influence the application review process. While disappointing and for some a deterrent, it can be overcome. When applying to graduate school your application should stand out. What’s your story? How does your story fit into your short-term and long-term career goals? How do your academic, research, and other experiences fit into the graduate program of interest? This is your time to “shine.” Also, be sure to ask for assistance in writing your personal statement, maintain a strong academic record, be actively engaged in your department/university/community, get research and/or applied experiences, apply early, and know your recommender. Letters of recommendation from a faculty member who knows you and what you are capable of is important. Paying attention to these details and more will increase the likelihood of your application not being overlooked.

Julie: Agreed, unconscious or conscious bias, microaggressions, and lack of mentoring can all be potential roadblocks to being a successful graduate school applicant. I’d encourage applicants to get involved in local, state, and national psychology organizations to obtain mentorship. Also, don’t overlook the immense knowledge of new graduate students. Those in their first years of graduate school can provide excellent coaching about the realities of the process and their lessons learned. Also, do thorough research of the programs you want to apply to and write your application to the areas of focus of that program and their faculty.

Mitch: Hopefully not so much anymore. Since the pandemic began, there has been a deep consideration of admissions practices that were less feasible in lockdown, including standardized tests and in-person interviews. This prompted many programs to begin considering new ways to evaluate applicants’ potential and an opportunity to achieve greater diversity among admitted students. Moreover, many programs have begun offering diversity weekends before the official start to the admissions process to help students learn about the field, how to successfully complete applications, and for faculty to become better acquainted with diverse students who may previously have been overlooked. Preliminary data suggest that these programs have been beneficial for both applicants and departments offering them.

Are there any particular questions that diverse students should ask during graduate school interviews with regard to safety, support, or inclusion at a particular program?

Jocelyn: It is important for students to feel a sense of safety and belongingness if they are to succeed in graduate school. Among the questions that diverse students may ask are:

- **What support systems are available to diverse students at this institution?** Knowing that the graduate program provides supportive services meeting the needs of diverse student populations is important. Depending upon the program, expect to be in graduate school a minimum of 2 years and up to 5 or more years if pursuing a doctoral degree. Having resources that create a safe space and place for students where they feel welcomed can aid in succeeding in graduate school.

- **What is your program’s approach to diversity, equity, social justice, and inclusion?** This is an important question. As a student, belonging to a graduate program fostering an inclusive culture where all people are welcomed, valued, empowered, and heard, engenders confidence and belief that, as a diverse student, you matter.

Julie: I would add:

- **Could you share information about support from this graduate program related to involvement and leadership opportunities related to diversity, equity, social justice, and inclusion in local, state, and national groups/associations?**
diversity a goal only among diverse scholars? Do other students in the department feel safe, valued, and included within the department? Although faculty, students, and staff may be in different places in their allyship, do all seem invested in growth, learning, and listening? And perhaps more important than the answers to any question you ask; how does your gut feel when you meet with faculty, students, and staff. As a graduate student, five years is a long time to be heavily immersed in any environment unless you feel inspired and respected.

**Do you have any tips for students who might find themselves isolated from others who share similar backgrounds with them while in graduate school?**

**Jocelyn:** Most universities have organizations dedicated to students from diverse backgrounds. Some organizations may be off-campus (e.g., religious and cultural groups, professional associations). Getting involved with these organizations can provide a sense of belonging, purpose, and fulfillment. This is important as students from historically underrepresented groups can feel isolated if they are in a homogeneous program. If such organizations or groups do not exist, start one with other students who share similar backgrounds or interests. For example, start with study or writing groups with other students.

**Julie:** As mentioned earlier, get involved in local, state, and national psychology-focused organizations. Many organizations are focused on supporting diverse groups in psychology (e.g. American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association, Asian American Psychological Association, The Association of Black Psychologists, National Latina/o Psychological Association, Society of Indian Psychologists, and Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race; links to each can be found here: [https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/associations](https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/associations), while others have boards and committees focused on diversity within the larger organization (e.g., The APAGS Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (APAGS-CSOGD) [https://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/csogd](https://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/csogd)). These groups often offer mentoring opportunities and a place to build community within the specialty of psychology.

**Mitch:** Find a community online, in professional service organizations, in other departments on campus, or in the town in which your graduate program is located. Most diverse students feel that their graduate school climate leaves something to be desired, but the field is changing, and one day, you may be the mentor who is helping others feel less isolated because of the support you will provide!

**How should diverse graduate students handle any microaggressions or misunderstandings with fellow students or faculty?**

**Jocelyn:** Microaggressions or misunderstandings can make students feel uncomfortable and have the potential to be harmful. These verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights communicate negative attitudes about and toward underrepresented, stigmatized, or culturally marginalized groups.

How to respond really depends on the situation and the individual(s) involved. Determine the best course of action for you. According to an article in the Harvard Business Review, consider the 4 D’s: **Discern, Disarm, Defy, and Decide.** **Discern** if the microaggression is important enough for you to address right away and if so, be respectful of how you express your concern. Confronting the microaggression **disarms** the person who committed it and holds them accountable. However, this has the potential to make the individual feel uncomfortable as it may create cognitive dissonance and make salient unconscious biases. If you choose to **defy,** you give the individual an opportunity to reflect on the statement by asking for clarification. Ultimately you **decide** if you wish to respond at all. Whether you choose to respond or not, it may be wise to talk to a trusted faculty member, mentor, close friend, or confidant about your feelings prior to reacting.


**Julie:** Responses to these events depend on the comfort and safety of the person receiving the discrimination. Find allies within your program, this could include faculty, students, and/or administration. Harness their support to help you take care of yourself and identify the healthiest course of action for any given situation.

**Mitch:** It is not fair to ask diverse students to swallow their hurt and anger so they can educate others. And yet, diverse students have probably already done that in so many contexts throughout their lives. It is so important to have a mentor (on campus, or elsewhere) to help you feel what you deserve to feel, and support you when you express yourself in whatever way you choose. You have a right to take care of yourself and you are not expected to handle this well. The education you get in graduate school goes beyond research methods or clinical skills. It’s an education in learning professional skills too, so if you are not able to handle this in the way you want in Year 1, that is ok. Allow yourself the grace to make mistakes, learn, and grow. Most important is that you have someone to talk to, to vent, share frustrations, and help you decide together what actions you can take. Most all campuses have an ombuds-person who can be there for you to talk anonymously, help you navigate toxic environments or offensive situations, understand your rights, and be your advocate.

**What special support or programs could diverse students benefit from while in graduate school?**

**Jocelyn:** Many universities have DEI programs and support groups for students from diverse groups. Such programs include student organizations for BIPOC students, resources for LGBTQIA, international, neurodiverse students, and students with disabilities to name a few.

**Julie:** Examples of such groups can be found:

- Many APA Divisions ([https://www.apa.org/about/division](https://www.apa.org/about/division)) have student-focused groups with relevant resources. For example, here is a link to Division 38, the Society for Health
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**Mitch**
Networking, networking, networking. There are so many professional societies with resources, groups, connections, and opportunities to help diverse students deal with unique challenges that nondiverse students rarely even think about. But probably most important is finding that lifetime mentor who will be there for you at a moment’s notice if need be, and have your back always.

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**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 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. Dr. Turner-Musa is married with one daughter.

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**Julie Radico, PhD, ABPP,** works as a behavioral health specialist and associate professor in Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center’s Family and Community Medicine Department. She is Board Certified in Clinical Health Psychology. 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. Currently, Dr. Radico serves on the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Council of Representatives and Committee on Division/APA Relations (2022–2024).

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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.*
With this issue, *Eye on Psi Chi* magazine enters its 27th volume as it acts as the companion bookend to *Psi Chi Journal* for all Psi Chi publications. The Journal, which began several months earlier in 1996, serves the research and graduate track community as the *Eye on Psi Chi* primarily supports the professional development of our members. When reviewing the type of content published in the *Eye* in 2009, I saw the need for a column that offers advice to students who are not pursuing a graduate degree but immediately looking for a job after obtaining their undergraduate degree.

In most cases, what we learn in college can be totally different than what we are asked to do in our first job. Therefore, undergraduate students need realistic insight about the workplace in order to begin a successful career. That’s when the wisdom of Dr. Paul Hettich stepped forward and it was the beginning of a wonderful collaboration for Psi Chi.

Paul wrote his first article in the *Eye* entitled “How to “Ace” Your Freshman Year in the Workplace With C’s: Culture, Competence, and Consequences” (Hettich, 2010). It became immediately clear to me this was exactly the information that students need to excel in the workplace. Paul’s unique perspective along with his passion to bridge the understanding of what colleges teach and employers need, is the best preparation for students’ professional development. He succinctly captures the disconnect in this quote: Adaptability is a quality employers seek in new hires. I have encountered some graduates who adapted well and others, having entered with limited experience and unrealistic expectations, who described their experience as “a slap in the face” or “hitting a brick wall.” (Hettich, 2010, p.32)

I count myself very privileged to collaborate with Paul over the course of 12 years. His articles about the basic skills students need remain relevant (maybe, even more so) despite all the changes in the past decade. I know our friendship will not end with his departure from the column, but your exposure to his insight in future magazine issues will.

That’s why I am excited to introduce Dr. Diane Safer—a lifetime Psi Chi member and another strong advocate for helping students understand what is needed in today’s skills market. In upcoming *Eye* issues, she will continue the Wisdom From the Workplace series that Paul started, sharing her insight and her biggest message to students: “be proactive in your career and take responsibility for your own success” (D. A. Safer, personal communication, July 18, 2022). With 20 years as a business professional to working in career services, Dr. Safer will broaden Paul’s bridge of safe transitions from college to careers in exciting new ways!

—Susan
Before entering academia over 50 years ago, I served as an Army personnel psychologist, program evaluator in a federally funded education R & D lab, and corporate applied scientist. These “real-world” experiences enriched my subsequent teaching and administrative responsibilities immensely. However, I frequently heard frustrations expressed by bachelor's graduates and employers alike about the great disconnect between college and corporate cultures, and the lack of support for those entering their critical transition.

When I retired from teaching and decided to continue speaking and writing about transition issues, Psi Chi's Director of Communications, Susan Iles, provided strong backing for a column in Eye on Psi Chi titled Wisdom from the Workplace. Now, after 12 years and 38 articles as author or coauthor, plus coediting Psi Chi’s eBook of past articles with Susan and Bradley Cannon (An Eye on the Workplace: Achieving a Career With a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology), I have chosen to retire from this column. It has been a true pleasure and an invigorating learning experience to have served as a conduit of information and advice to psychology majors and teachers from the rapidly changing, increasingly complex, and exciting world of work. I am very grateful to colleagues and friends who contributed their expertise as coauthors or as interviewees (my Delphi Oracle professionals: Cam Helkowski, John Jameson, and Jon Keil), colleagues who shared feedback (always positive), and especially Susan Iles and her staff for their continual support, expertise, and patience.

However, Wisdom From the Workplace continues under the very capable and highly experienced Dr. Diane Safer who has published numerous articles for and spoken widely to scientists preparing for the workforce. I am confident that you will enjoy and benefit immensely from the wisdom she brings to you from the workplace. Please welcome Dr. Diane Safer.

—Paul

Diane A. Safer, PhD, is the inaugural director of career and professional development for biomedical sciences PhDs and postdocs at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, NY. She is also assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Services and education director for the Montefiore-Einstein Cancer Center–Cancer Research Training and Education Coordination program. At Einstein, Dr. Safer spearheads the design and implementation of career services programming for all PhD trainees. Throughout the year, she leads, organizes, and collaborates to offer 50+ career exploration, personal growth, and professional development seminars and workshops. In addition, Dr. Safer is involved in many institutional endeavors, including postdoc recruitment, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and PhD orientation, as well as serving on a number of institutional committees.

A former business professional with more than 20 years of experience as a research and information consultant for public relations firms serving healthcare and biotechnology companies, Dr. Safer ran her own information consulting company for 10 years before moving to career and professional development. Before Einstein, Dr. Safer worked at The College of New Rochelle (New Rochelle, NY) and at Yeshiva University (New York, NY).

Dr. Safer is a proficient cultivator of relationships and enjoys developing programs to help those eager to launch their careers, advocate for themselves, or grow professionally. She particularly enjoys brainstorming new ideas for creative programs. She has developed and teaches a course for Einstein’s Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) and Einstein Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP) called, Becoming A Professional. She also teaches Professional Development Skills for Future College Students, as part of High School Summer Science Odyssey for the Einstein–Summer High School Program, and for the Montefiore-Einstein Cancer Center High School Program.

As a dedicated career services professional, she is actively involved in key professional career organizations, including the Graduate Career Consortium (GCC), where she has cochaired the Mentoring Committee for the past three years, the National Postdoc Association (NPA), the National Association of College and Employers (NACE), and the Metropolitan New York College Career Planning Officers’ Association (MNYYCCPOA).

Dr. Safer completed her BA in psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and earned her MA (studying cognitive processes that do not require language) and PhD (studying motivation & goal pursuit) in social psychology at Columbia University in New York, NY.

Reference
Developing a profitable career plan is not the time to stroll aimlessly with the belief that a meaningful blueprint will miraculously appear. In the same way that selecting a graduate degree and program should take reflective energy, developing a viable career map may take more vivacity than an afternoon stroll or a leisurely day sail. Strategic planning for a career needs both short-term and long-term foresight and planning. With this in mind, would utilization of an MA for a four-day workweek with an annual income exceeding $100,000 have appeal? Would those earnings seem more enticing if constructed in an eight-month university schedule? Although a traditional private practice providing counseling and psychological services for multiple clients requires licensure, office space, and malpractice insurance, a carefully cultivated university and community college teaching “practice” with multiple affiliate faculty teaching contracts can be equally lucrative, and does not require office overhead. For this article, we provide a window into a viable, nontraditional career plan involving multiple affiliate university and community college teaching engagements. Although many classically consider affiliate (adjunct/part-time) teaching contracts to involve one or two classes, this narrative explores multiple teaching engagements assembled to craft a full-time career avenue. To support and illustrate our narrative, we share a case study of a professional who has walked this unique path, as well as questions and answers drawn from our presentations on graduate education, employment, credentialing, and university teaching.

Although a Licensed Psychologist [PhD/EdD/PsyD], a Licensed Professional Counselor [MA], or a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist [MA] may dream of a traditional private practice providing psychological services, most would agree that a $100,000 yearly income can be viewed as successful! Can you put aside the dream of a sleek, expensive, office? Are you sufficiently self-secure not having your identity revolve around the cache of a private practice? Can you recognize that the elimination of office overhead, office expenses, license fees, and malpractice insurance can be viewed as positive cash flow? Can you envision replacing a
client base with multiple university and community college, affiliate teaching contracts? Can you think "outside of the box" of the traditional career your advisors possibly suggested? If you answer affirmatively, you might be intrigued by this career route.

In truth, some professional options are undervalued. One way to expand your thinking is to consider career planning as similar to a navigational chart. Just as a ship or airline routing is not always direct, so too, career planning is not always marked by a straight course. Similar to ships navigating around a rocky shoal, or an aircraft maneuvering around turbulence, a career can benefit from flexible planning. After all, adaptably amending a navigational course may provide a more fruitful track to an exciting new destination.

The Current State and Bright Future of Part-Time Teaching
Modern universities and community colleges often offer in-person, virtual, as well as hybrid avenues for teaching. Many use affiliate (adjunct or part-time) faculty at greater levels than many people are aware. From fall 1999 through fall 2018, as faculty positions increased to 1.5 million, affiliate part-time positions comprised approximately 700,000 posts in postsecondary institutions of higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Between multiple teaching modalities and numerous entrepreneurial opportunities, multiple affiliate contracts can equal many private practice revenue streams. Although multiple (part-time) teaching contracts may evoke a unique status, it can be profitable and offer autonomy.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) indicates that there are 1.5 million faculty in the United States. This represents an increase of 40% in the past 20 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Germane to this work, approximately 70% of faculty are in nontenure track positions: part-time positions are plentiful (American Association of University Professors, 2018). Similarly supportive to this career path, the Occupational Outlook Handbook and the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a) noted that positions for postsecondary education teachers are projected to grow faster than average from 2020–2030. In fact, the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020b) indicates that the states with the highest employment levels of psychology posts are California, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. Between the projections of need, availability of positions, pay, and classes that are covered by being a part-time lecturer (PTL), this career path is poised for opportunity.

Comparing Part-Time and Full-Time College Teaching
Both full-time tenured and part-time affiliate faculty enjoy the same campus. Still, while full-time faculty can enjoy pleasant offices and societal stature, part-time teaching faculty may need a home office or must feel comfortable using the PTL or shared offices that are often available. With COVID-19, this shared space may seem less desirable. Most likely, applicants will need to live somewhat near each university, but not always: Distance teaching knows no borders! If one views the contract career pathway as a rubix cube (if one likes puzzles), this journey can be both financially and intellectually rewarding.

Equally significant, affiliate teaching may require a cognitive reframe as the status may seem less equitable. The issue of status that is often associated with an affiliate PTL, in some respects, is a self-driven belief. One may believe that, because they tend to only teach one or two courses, including an introductory course in psychology, they are not a vital facet of the university mission and community college system. This is not accurate! Although a lecturer or affiliate faculty might not have an office or may share office space, the important contributions for students is no less important than that of full-time faculty. Status as a part-time influencer can provide a significant impact on a student’s life, while offering a lucrative income.

Contractual or PTL Teaching Entails a Different Conceptualization of Success
Affiliate college teaching need not and should not feel like any kind of failure. Failure is when one either does not achieve one’s goals or “crashes” when life becomes challenging. Many successful entrepreneurs achieved success by finding alternative pathways to goal achievement. Fundamentally, too many students, faculty, and families fail to recognize multiple definitions of success. The case study included in this article (see next page) details an MA practitioner who elected this path in lieu of a traditional private practice. She has earned more than $100,000 annually for years! In fact, in several years, she netted $130,000! If one’s end goal is financial and/or career flexibility, you’ll enjoy reading this case, which will squeal success with multiple metrics, while outlining a career pathway few understand.

Although a lecturer or affiliate faculty might not have an office or may share office space, the important contributions for students is no less important than that of full-time faculty. Status as a part-time influencer can provide a significant impact on a student’s life, while offering a lucrative income.
The Case Study

Stephanie was in her mid-twenties when she earned her master’s degree. With an MA in clinical mental health counseling, she envisioned a career providing direct services to children and planned to acquire her credential as a Licensed Professional Counselor. At that point, as she contemplated a PhD in counseling psychology, she accepted an invitation to teach an undergraduate Health Psychology class. Soon, another opportunity was received teaching Introductory Psychology. Seeing the competition for faculty posts, balanced by a growing awareness of the challenge and expense in cultivating a clinical practice, she found that these multiple offers of affiliate, part-time, teaching offered an interesting alternative. Quickly she began to balance multiple affiliate university and community college teaching positions, comprised of both private and public institutions. As she “stitched” together psychology classes taught in person and online, she:

Key Work Strengths From This Type of Academic Schedule

• Shaped a unique four-day work week,
• achieved financial stability combined with flexibility,
• no longer worried about lost revenue when patients canceled or failed to arrive as she enjoyed guaranteed pay with each class contract,
• began to enjoy enhanced flexibility with summer and winter respites during university and community breaks,
• found that the four classes she taught between two state universities and community colleges also offered health insurance and retirement savings as benefits unknown to many PTLs, and
• found in the union contract that she was eligible for funding for a conference presentation via professional development funds.

Her reframe evolved a new definition of success, causing her to view her work as a successful “teaching practice” equivalent to a clinical private practice minus the overhead. She also:

Semester Teaching Realities

• Shaped a 10-class-a-semester schedule,
• solidified a $100,000-a-year income,
• developed a mix of “100- and 200-level” classes,
• fashioned a 4-day-a-week teaching schedule,
• found variable pay ranging from $4,000 to $6,500 a class,
• gained the opportunity to teach summer and winter terms for additional income,
• began to blend online, in-person, and hybrid classes,
• developed a personal Kanban workboard of teaching and work tasks, and
• pursued a hybrid PhD for personal fulfillment and to solidify online skill sets.

Knowing that work can change, Stephanie approached her teaching contracts with this perspective. Change was not viewed as “bad” in her eyes, because she thrived through an attentiveness to cultivating teaching contracts. At times, she had too many contract class requests! This is a successful case study, which readers might consider as a standalone career pathway, or as an avenue to blend with a traditional clinical practice. Here’s our call to action: Open your mind to an alternative career path—you decide.

Questions and Concerns

Many universities strongly utilize affiliate part-time teaching faculty. The Great Resignation is influencing faculty shortages at colleges and universities as well. Half of all educators are likely to resign or retire early, and there has been a 16.5% increase in posted positions in the education sector (Varghes, 2022). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), part-time positions comprised approximately 700,000 posts in higher education. Still, this is not new. Between 1990 and 2012 there was a 121% increase in adjunct faculty (AIR, 2013). Further, unknown to many, there are schools where tenure is less common. One of the original drivers of distance learning, Southern New Hampshire University’s online programs teach hundreds of thousands of students annually and is founded on the basis of contract faculty. As is known to many, multiple masters and doctoral programs augment full-time faculty with part-time affiliate faculty. While Southern New Hampshire University is on the East Coast, on the West Coast, the APA-approved PhD and PsyD programs at Alliant International University—one of the largest clinical doctoral programs in the country—use a cadre of esteemed, well-credentialled, talented contractual faculty.

In this case, Stephanie crafted a financially solid career teaching undergraduates. She has no office overhead, needs no malpractice insurance for teaching, works four days a week from Monday to Thursday, and has not taught more than 143 days a year—less than most public-school educators—while maintaining an eight-month teaching schedule. With ample vacation time, her health insurance and retirement are provided through one school where she teaches on multiple campuses. A balance between work and hobbies, with financial and health needs met, she was pleased!

We believe this to be a successful career. Here are some selected points to show this:

1. Can part-time time teaching match the income of a private clinical practice?
Yes. We have met multiple workshop participants who have crafted lucrative teaching practices. Many boast an income that can rival a traditional clinical practice. Although most have had to maintain an attentive eye to ensure their department chairs recognize their interest and skill sets, and while many are reticent to speak of this success, many are successful. Most note that two keys to success were (a) a willingness to initially gain
teaching experience in classes that were not always a preference and (b) a desire to cultivate a résumé reflecting teaching and experiences needed by individual departments.

2. Can part-time teaching be blended with a private practice?
Yes! One participant with a PhD in clinical psychology in one of our workshops noted that he could either teach full-time with a part-time clinical practice or enjoy a full-time clinical practice and teach part-time. After reflection, noting benefits of each option, he elected a full-time clinical practice and teaches part-time, therefore eliminating the need for scholarship and service. Another practitioner taught multiple undergraduate classes in the morning as his clients came in the evenings to his office.

3. Can a PhD overwhelmed by tenure match a salary of approximately $90,000?
Yes! One participant with a PhD in developmental psychology noted that, after two years in a tenure track position, the autonomy of part-time teaching seemed preferable to the stress of tenure. She felt subjugated by tenure and realized that, although scholarship was necessary, it was overwhelming to her nature. The downside to part-time teaching was a need to explore health insurance, but with insurance through her spouse, this was not a necessity.

4. Can an MA in school psychology or research teach undergraduates without a doctorate?
Yes. Many part-time faculty hold masters’ degrees and, in many community colleges, the majority of faculty do not hold a doctorate. Although many graduate programs prefer or require a doctorate, many universities employ affiliate faculty with an MA to teach undergraduate courses. We have also met individuals with multiple masters’ degrees who are able to teach a vast array of classes.

5. Can an MA teach in a university without holding a license or certification?
Yes. Although a clinical psychologist most typically holds a license, and a school psychologist state certification, university undergraduate psychology faculty largely do not possess certification. That said, certain programs, such as in clinical or school psychology, may prefer a candidate with a license or certification, but this is not common when teaching undergraduates or when teaching in such areas as research and statistics, or social or developmental psychology.

6. Can both traditional and nontraditional degrees lead to university teaching?
Yes. The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) indicates that there are 1.5 million higher education faculty in the United States. With approximately 70% of faculty in non tenure track positions (American Association of University Professors, 2018), part-time positions are plentiful and diverse. We have spoken with individuals with both traditional and nontraditional PhDs who have cultivated successful teaching careers.

7. Will employers value traditional and nontraditional MAs and PhDs?
Yes. Although there is a “pedigree” factor (or bias) about university status, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis created a moment wherein virtually every university in the U.S. provided online and hybrid education. Thus, there was a moment of inflection when the acceptance and validity of distance education shifted as schools offered online and hybrid courses and saw the benefit and flexibility of this learning modality and its associated degrees. Still, not all faculty perceive degrees equally. Similar to how the MD degree is sometimes viewed as superior to the DO degree, each individual must craft choices based on individual goals. PhD, EdD, PsyD? Brick and mortar or hybrid degree? Weigh the choices. Weigh your demands. Weigh your decision.

8. Are there teaching opportunities at community colleges?
Yes. Woodruff (2018) indicated that the Bureau of Labor Statistics projected employment for community college professors to grow 15% from 2016–2026. This is not new data. Fain (2014) noted that Statistics from the Center for Community College Student Engagement found that 45% of undergraduate students are at community colleges. For those seeking part-time teaching, community colleges remain an important venue full of endless opportunities.

9. Are there advantages to multiple affiliate, part-time teaching contracts?
Yes. We have discussed selected advantages that come with being an affiliate, part-time faculty member. However, there are a number of other advantages often unrecognized. As affiliate faculty, the focus is on teaching without scholarship and without a need to attend department meetings or provide service. Also, if teaching online, there is no need to drive to the institution, as teaching can be delivered with an internet connection, so faculty can save gas, money, and time. This can allow an enviable flexible lifestyle. Are there advantages. Yes. And the autonomy itself may be compelling.

10. Can an affiliate part-time position lead to a full-time position?
Yes. A department chair may need faculty

One significant hidden benefit to part-time teaching is that by teaching part-time, faculty can experience an engagingly diverse student body. This diversity crosses differing schools and may include demographic lines embracing gender, age, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and geography.
12. Are there hidden benefits to being an affiliate professor?
Yes. One significant hidden benefit to part-time teaching is that by teaching part-time, faculty can experience an engagingly diverse student body. This diversity crosses differing schools and may include demographic lines embracing gender, age, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and geography. Thus, teaching on multiple campuses one is exposed to multiple viewpoints that can benefit personal and teaching development.

Reflections
This article included a case study of an MA graduate who developed what we term a part-time "teaching practice" generating an income of over $100,000 annually! Although this may seem remarkable, the reality is that we have spoken with several successful teaching entrepreneurs with both MA and PhD degrees. Many have taught in wide-ranging areas, including Introductory Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Evaluation & Measurement, Human Development, as well as in Clinical Psychology and School Psychology. In fact, Stephanie subsequently pursued a PhD largely to complete a personal goal, rather than for a professional need. In her case, with a successful teaching practice, she chose a hybrid degree in order to maintain her income. Certainly, the personal satisfaction with achieving the PhD outweighed any professional cache that came with completing that goal. Further, she chose not to seek licensure for a private practice as she increasingly enjoyed the autonomy of her "teaching practice," with months open to travel and pursue personal interests. Her salary is solid, and the fringe benefits she receives from her contracts provides stability and security. She feels she is as successful as if she had developed a traditional clinical practice.

Truly, then, don’t stagger under the belief that a successful university or community college career must necessitate a tenure-track appointment, which may require a doctoral degree. Often, this misperception is what results in individuals not being able to see alternative routes to goal achievement and success. Although not discussed in this piece, many university positions—such as in advising, counseling centers, and university affairs—possess neither doctorates, nor tenure. Consider how and in what way you might propel your career in the trajectory that can support the life to which you aspire. For many, we often cobble together a career with less planning than ideal. For now, as you consider your options, and as we all explore life changes due to COVID-19, we hope this material might stimulate your thinking. Our desire is to help you think nontraditionally in regard to career planning. Just as there can be joy in learning, the process of career planning and development can be equally joyful. We wish you success in your journey.

References

Tony Crespi, EdD, ABPP, is a professor of psychology at The University of Hartford. He holds credentials as a Licensed Psychologist, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Certified School Counselor, Certified School Psychologist, and he holds Board Certification from the American Board of Professional Psychology. He is a past president of Trainers of School Psychologists, a Fellow of the American Academy of School Psychologists, and a Clinical Fellow of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

Michael Amico, PhD, is a professor of psychology at Housatonic Community College. Armed with multiple Masters' degrees in Counseling and Clinical Psychology, he earned his PhD in General-Experimental Psychology. With a background including teaching in both online and hybrid formats and with interests in both traditional and nontraditional delivery models, he is deeply involved with the Board of Directors of the New England Psychological Association.
ON BEHALF of the Psi Chi Faculty Support Advisory Committee and its entire membership, it is my pleasure to inform you that three faculty members were selected as the recipients of this year's Psi Chi Professional Development Grants for Teachers of Psychology! This is exciting news and recognizes various forms of their professional activities: sharing of knowledge and expertise, providing support and encouragement to our members, identifying opportunities and resources, and serving as a professional role model. Their work exemplifies high-quality teaching training accomplished with effort, motivation, and knowledge of various fields of psychology. We congratulate them and wish them continued growth and success!

This new grants program supports faculty members with the development or purchase of education materials and/or training by covering the costs of books, conference attendance, workshops, licensure preparation, and professional activities, such as teacher training. All members who hold a current, psychological teaching position, such as graduate teaching assistants, are eligible. The upcoming fall 2022 deadline is October 31, and an additional round will take place each spring.

Explore all of Psi Chi's Faculty Resources

Psi Chi has many support materials for faculty to aid in their teaching, research, and mentoring. Watch webinars, listen to podcast episodes, read articles, and more!

Jeffrey D. Bowen, PhD
Johns Hopkins University (MD)

Jeffrey D. Bowen, PhD, is a senior lecturer at Johns Hopkins University and the P.I. of the SPARC (Social Psychological Analysis of Relationship Cognition) Lab. He has been a member of Psi Chi since his undergraduate days over a decade ago and currently the advisor for his local chapter. He teaches courses in research methods, data analysis, and psychology, and social media. He is an avid user of R and of bridging methods across fields and specialties in psychology.

Elizabeth Campbell, PhD
Whitworth University (WA)

Elizabeth Campbell, PhD, is a licensed psychologist, marriage and family therapist, and certified career counselor. As an associate professor at Whitworth University and private practice therapist, she specializes in counselor training and career development. She is author of Helping Skills Training for Nonprofessional Counselors and 101 Career Myths Debunked.

“This grant serves to meet the need for bachelor's level mental health practitioners trained in empathic, ethical, theoretically derived, and empirically supported care at the nonprofessional level. On behalf of myself, my students, and our community, thank you for providing the resources needed to share this important training with other universities.”

Jillian Dawes, PhD
The Citadel (SC)

Jillian Dawes, PhD, is an assistant professor of psychology at The Citadel in Charleston, SC, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses and serves as the Psi Chi Chapter Advisor. She received her PhD from Oklahoma State University in educational psychology, with emphases on applied behavior analysis and statistics. Dr. Dawes' research and clinical interests include academic and behavioral intervention and consultation, specifically the selection of socially valid practices, assent-based practice, and the use of data-based problem solving to identify and select highly efficient academic skills interventions.
How I Cope With Autism:

Tips for Succeeding in Educational Settings

Gregory Hollenbeck
Grand Canyon University

When I was three years old, I was diagnosed with autism. I did not learn how to speak until I was either four or five years old. I was sent to a school for children with special needs due to my language delay. After attending that school with special needs and kindergarten, I was in special education and had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) until I was in college.

Even though I was always a smart person and wanted to learn the facts and information I was obsessed about, learning in school was not always easy. It took patience, determination, and persistence for me to come from attending special education classes to pursuing a doctorate degree in psychology with an emphasis in cognition and instruction at Grand Canyon University (GCU). During first, second, and third grade, I had a special education teacher who was very stern and held her students to a high standard. Even though I did not like her stern attitude at the time, it eventually worked in my favor when I was older. This teacher’s stern attitude taught me appropriate social skills and how to behave in a classroom setting. Had I not learned classroom etiquette as early as I did, I would not be where I am today.

For fourth and fifth grade, I transferred schools and attended a different special education class. I remember that the teacher had a wall of historical figures who had served as United States presidents, from George Washington to Bill Clinton. Because of this wall, I was able to remember, for example, that James Buchanan was the 15th president of the United States. During these years, I was able to befriend those who had the same struggles and trials that I faced with having autism and other learning disabilities. In sixth grade, I was moved from special education to attending a resource program until I graduated high school. Resource is a program where students are in special education, it is more advanced learning than special education but less advanced than general education. During my time in resource, I struggled with making friends and was bullied more frequently than when I was in special education. Other children would either make fun of me for my mannerisms or find me peculiar in the sense that they did not want to be my friend.

Pro tip #1: One strategy I have found to be helpful for focusing on classroom assignments that I am not interested in is to find something interesting about a boring topic that you might like.
Seventh grade was a time when I felt as if the bullying was at its worst. Seventh and eighth grade are challenging times for children who want to fit in with their peers and must cope with hormonal changes. Branje (2022) stated that adolescents could endure a multitude of issues, such as internalizing problems, socializing, externalizing problems, and substance use. During these years, I encountered children who found me annoying and were honest about it. One of the aversions other students had with me was that I struggled with laughing at inappropriate times.

My resource English teacher wanted me to go on Ritalin because she suspected that I had attention deficit disorder (ADD). Ritalin is a medication usually prescribed to children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; Anonymous, 2001). In the United States, even though 40% of students at certain schools at the time were prescribed the drug for ADHD, some parents expressed concern that it was given inappropriately to naturally rambunctious, but otherwise, healthy children (Anonymous, 2001). I remember that I had an aversion to taking any medication regularly during my childhood because in my previous mindset, it meant that I would be considered unwell. In eighth-grade year, my resource English teacher called an emergency meeting with my mother, the school psychologist, and other school officials to discuss my predicament at the time. Prior to the meeting, the school psychologist concluded that Ritalin would not be the right medication for me to take due to the possible side effects of Ritalin and the possibility for me to develop a psychotic disorder on the medication.

Although, I had better resource teachers in high school than in middle school, I still struggled with social situations and how to cope with harassment. During high school, I received better grades in my classes after my freshmen year, and I had teachers who believed in me and what I could do. Throughout high school, there was one teacher who carried my IEP and helped me reach my academic potential, and served as a mentor. An IEP is a meeting special needs students must have with involving the parents, teachers, and the school psychologists. When I received straight As during my senior year in high school, my IEP carrier was proud of me for all my hard work during high school. Although I received better grades during high school, my graduating class was the first class that had to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CHSEE) to graduate from high school. I failed the first two times I took the CHSEE because it was an intimidating exam. The third time I took the CHSEE, the teacher who delivered the CHSEE told us we were allowed to go back and look through the material to get the correct answer. Because of this, I was able to revisit sections that had confused me and be able to get a satisfactory score on the exit exam. Although my senior year was academically an easy year for me, there was another challenge I had to face concerning my mental health.

I was 17 years old when I saw a psychiatrist for the first time because of anxiety. I told the psychiatrist about the issues I struggled with and was prescribed a medication called Lexapro. Coskun (2012) discovered that most preschool children who were prescribed Lexapro showed improvement in anxiety symptoms, as well as improvement in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Although Lexapro did work for my anxiety, it unfortunately, caused me to develop major depression. I was 17 years old when I not only had to confront my anxiety, I also had to confront my depression. As soon as the psychiatrist learned that the Lexapro gave me suicidal thoughts, he decided to rescind the medication and prescribe me Prozac. It was also during the time I was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome. I received the diagnoses of Asperger’s syndrome before the change in 2013 when Asperger’s syndrome joined the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnoses. As soon as I learned about the symptomology of Asperger’s syndrome, I decided to learn how to improve on the struggles that come with the diagnosis.
As an individual newly diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, I discovered social struggles that I had not been aware of in the past. The American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2004) stated that social interactions and social communication are core impairments of those with Asperger’s Syndrome. In community college, I had an epiphany that made me realize why people bullied me or found me strange. As soon as I learned about the social struggle associated with Asperger’s syndrome, I decided to improve on these issues. Although I did try to improve on my social skills, there were instances of social etiquette that did not come naturally to me like it does for most individuals. In community college, I joked about a serious topic, and one of the students at the college told me not to discuss religion and politics in public settings. It was a difficult lesson for me to learn, but I am thankful that I learned this lesson. Community college was a difficult time for me to make friends not because of bullying, but because college is different from a high school setting in the sense that there are no cliques or peer groups to join.

Despite being on academic probation, I did not give up. I decided to retake the class I received a D in and received a better grade. I even received an F in an American sign language class, and when I retook that class, I received a B to replace the F. Mason et al. (2012) stated that few people with ASD have pursued a college education, but college institutions have experienced increased enrollment of those with ASD in recent times.

Once I entered college, the learning atmosphere and education plan was different from what it was in high school. For the first time, I had to pick for myself which classes I would take each semester. I decided to see the guidance counselor in the disability office every semester to make sure I was following the requirements for general education. I was on academic probation one semester because I received a D in one of my classes. Despite being on academic probation, I did not give up. I decided to retake the class I received a D in and received a better grade. I even received an F in an American sign language class, and when I retook that class, I received a B to replace the F. Mason et al. (2012) stated that few people with ASD have pursued a college education, but college institutions have experienced increased enrollment of those with ASD in recent times. In my third year of community college, I attended classes with teachers who taught the classes in a way that I was able to understand and received better grades since then. Community college was a time that

Pro tip #4: Reach out to a trusted adult when you are struggling with your mental health.

Pro-tip #5: Visit your college’s disability office to ensure success in college.
I had to get used to studying for exams by reading the textbook and reviewing what the teacher would put in the exam. Learning how to read the textbook, as well as reading for pleasure, helped me succeed in college. Because of learning how to enjoy reading, I graduated with a 3.1 grade point average (GPA) from community college with three associate degrees in 2010.

I attended Biola University from 2010 through the fall of 2014. Because Biola University had rigid academic standards for their students, I had to learn to adapt to the school’s standards. Although I never failed any classes there, I still struggled in the classes I took until my third year because the teachers had instructions for assignments that I was not used to until then. The exams at Biola University were the most difficult aspect to adapt to because the exams were meant to be challenging. Even after my third year at Biola University, I still attended classes that were challenging and required adaptation. It was not until my last two semesters at Biola University that the worst grades I received would be Bs and my best grades were either As or an A-. Despite my academic struggles at Biola, I was finally able to make friends who would not judge me or be angry with me for my social quirks and struggles associated with Asperger’s syndrome.

I attended Brandman University (now UMass Global) from 2016 to 2019 for my master’s degree in psychology. The original plan was for me to become a counselor, but I eventually had to come to terms with the fact that, due to my Asperger’s diagnosis, it would be difficult for me to catch red flags that other counselors could easily catch in their clientele. So instead, I decided for my doctoral degree to attend a doctoral program in general psychology with an emphasis in cognition and instruction.

As a doctoral student, I volunteered as a research assistant for one of the professors at GCU. I also decided to volunteer as a research intern for Center for Research on Addiction and Brain Health (CRABH). These were the best experiences I had, and it helped me improve my presentation skills and my writing. In conclusion, the advice I could give to other college students who may have Asperger’s syndrome as well as any other neurodivergence is to never give up on your goals. If you must take a smaller class load than other students, patience is an important virtue to have.

Perseverance, patience, and hard work are the virtues that helped me get to where I am in my educational journey.

References

Gregory Hollenbeck was born on August 11. Gregory earned three associate degrees (Humanities, Social/Behavioral Sciences, Math & Science) from Mt. San Jacinto College. After community college, Gregory attended Biola University and earned his bachelor’s degree in psychology in 2014. In 2019, Gregory earned his master’s degree in psychology. Currently, Gregory is attending Grand Canyon University for his doctoral degree and is working on his dissertation. Gregory was originally interested in pursuing a counseling career, but eventually realized he is more interested in cognitive psychology and conducting research over counseling.
Psychology internship matching statistics have slowly improved in the past couple of years; however, some highly qualified candidates will still not match to a site. Not matching in Phase 1 can feel gut-wrenching, and the feeling of failure at times might seem impossible to overcome. However, it is essential to remember that it is actually more common than you'd imagine. This nerve-wracking experience can be quite detrimental to a student’s self-esteem, and the devastation that follows may have candidates questioning their options on how to move forward in their academic careers. Students may feel as if they have to put off their careers for another year, while others might see it as a sign to throw in the towel. Ultimately, this all leads to the collective questions of prolonging the wait of obtaining their degree and becoming psychologists.

Let’s remember that not matching does not have to mean your professional career is over. Yes, the news may feel unbearable; however, it is crucial to gather your thoughts, focus on goals, and ultimately establish what a good fit looks like for you. The following are some helpful tips to use no matter the route you choose to take following Phase I of the match process—whether it be applying in Phase II, obtaining a postmatch vacancy, or taking the year to refocus and continue working on career goals.

**Allow Yourself Time to Grieve**

The application and interview process for a predoctoral internship is time-consuming, emotionally taxing, and physically exhausting. Receiving the news about not matching after such an arduous process takes a toll on an individual’s mental health. During that moment, students should take time off to grieve the loss and process the news of not matching to a site. Strategies such as using emotion-focused coping may assist the student in identifying and dealing with possible depression, anxiety, anger, or guilt felt during this time.

**Reach Out to Your Support System and Ask for Guidance**

During this time, it might be helpful to reach out and spend time with family, friends, or mentor/s. Students may even feel that speaking to a school advisor, counselor, or therapist may aid with processing negative emotions and reflecting on how this may have impacted them moving forward in their careers. Although at this moment, it may seem as if you want to self-isolate and not face others, which is understandable, remember that others might also be unaware of how to approach the subject and are just attempting to provide support.

University advisors may be able to discuss potential options for career goals and even provide insight into possible sites to consider in the following rounds of the match process. Make sure to talk about site benefits and options for targeting your career goals. Some mentors and advisors might be willing to conduct a mock interview and provide feedback. If this is offered, do not hesitate to agree to one. This way, advisors or mentors will be able to present the student with feedback for moving forward in their internship interviews. For some, it may even be beneficial to have a mock interview with a professor or clinical supervisor they have not worked closely with. This will aid with providing more of a “first impressions” feedback. Although this is an option for some students, it is important to recognize that others may not have access to a
supportive mentor to aid with this process. Some students, including myself, found it helpful to reach out to sites where they had interviewed to ask for feedback. This may seem daunting to do, but if they are able to provide feedback, you will be able to possibly identify areas of growth within your application and interview. This will ultimately disclose further options to consider during the next phases to come.

The Numbers Game
Yes, it does feel disheartening not to match, but remember that there is a noted imbalance in the matching system leaving limited spots for exceptionally qualified candidates. Although it may seem difficult, do not interpret not matching as a deficit on your behalf. Per the American Psychological Association (APA), they are continuously working on creating more internship positions (FitzGerald, 2013).

Create a Plan and Consider Options Previously Unexplored
Once you feel you are emotionally ready to attempt the match application process again following Phase I, try focusing on your options. This is where problem-focused methods come into play. When creating a plan to move forward in your career, think about how you want to approach your phase II or postmatch vacancy strategy and how you will accomplish your goal. Search for new openings or added sites on the National Matching Services website for Phase II and read over the “late-breaking news” section of the APPIC to stay up-to-date with site news. The late-breaking section of the APPIC site page is updated periodically, and sites often post additional information regarding their application review process. At this time, some sites may be newly added to the list due to previously limited funding, or other sites may not have filled all their positions. During Phase II, you will find great sites that might not have matched with an applicant, making them a potential option that may not have been considered previously in Phase I.

In addition, these following phases may require students to be more flexible regarding their geographical location. Nonetheless, it is imperative to consider if there are sites that may be in locations previously unexplored that offer training to continue developing and enhancing professional goals. At this time, it is essential to recall that goodness of fit is the main component in finding internship placement. Furthermore, Phase II and postmatch vacancy is offered at no cost to the student if they originally paid the match registration fee and applied to at least one site in Phase I. That being said, this is an opportunity for students to apply to a more significant number of sites without enduring the financial burden of application costs.

If you are set to take a year off to refine your clinical skills, that is perfectly fine. This time may be used to focus on growing as a student clinician in areas where opportunities may not have been readily available previously. One year off can be used to complete supplemental clinical hours, tackle additional assessment and report writing experience, and complete pending research projects.

Time Management and Organizational Skills
It is crucial to remember that following Phase I, Phase II comes around rather quickly. There is only a six-day period following Phase I where you are able to review all site brochures and materials and submit your application. Unlike Phase I, you are no longer required to submit supplemental documents (i.e., work samples, reports), saving you some time by not having to submit additional materials. Although many students may feel they need additional time to process not matching in Phase I, it is vital to practice time management techniques to ensure the deadline for Phase II applications is met. Set aside a couple of hours daily to read brochures and study site requirements. Give yourself a goal of the number of sites you want to review and how many cover letters you will write per day. With this goal in mind, you will be able to map out how much time you will need daily to apply to all the sites that may be of interest. Remember, Phase II is an opportunity to explore sites you may have been hesitant to apply to in Phase I. Friends, mentors, advisors, tutors, etc. may be essential sources to reach out to for a fresh pair of eyes to review your materials, making sure there are no grammatical errors and providing possible suggestions for enhancing your application. Be mindful and don’t wait until the last minute to reach out for help. Provide your mentors and or advisors with a couple of days to review your materials.

Accreditation
Remember, although some states may not require students to complete an APA-accredited internship for licensure, others may require it. Be sure to review your state’s licensure requirements before applying to sites not accredited by APA. Additionally, completing an internship in a nonaccredited APA site may also limit opportunities for employment in the future. Although this may seem discouraging, it is important to note that exceptional internship sites are not accredited, which will provide you with an array of training opportunities.

Everyone’s journey during the predoctoral match is different; however, the anxiety and fear continue to be a collective experience. The most important aspect to remember when reading this article is that those who do not match in Phase I are still equipped with the experience and qualifications expected of an intern. Not matching is not indicative of skills, qualifications, or worth as a student clinician, and it is important not to let this experience define all the hard work already completed. The additional time students take to self-reflect and reapply may aid in creating stronger candidates for the following rounds of the match process.

References

Denise Carballea is pursuing her doctorate in clinical psychology with a concentration in neuropsychology at Azuza University (AU) in Miami, Florida. She is a Certified Brain Injury Specialist (CBIS) and is a member of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) Education Task Force. Denise is currently a student liaison for the Florida Psychological Association (FPA)-Broward Chapter and Legislative Affairs and Public Policy (LAPPB) Liaison for the Florida Psychological Association-Division of Graduate Students (FPAGS). Most of her clinical experience has focused on working with individuals with cognitive impairments and emotional difficulties following a brain injury. Her primary area of research focuses on neurorehabilitation following brain trauma, specifically traumatic brain injury (TBI). Denise is interested in contributing to the field in areas involving rehabilitation.
Gender equality in education has been a topic of discussion for many decades. Although there are significant gender gaps in educational access and learning achievement, women remain disadvantaged. Years of research point to financial hardship, geographical isolation, minority status, early marriage, and caregiving as critical barriers to female students meeting educational goals (Evans et al., 2016; Sallee & Cox, 2019). Student parents compose a significant proportion of the student population at colleges across the United States and Canada (Sallee & Cox, 2019). “Nearly one-third (30%) of all currently enrolled college students (including those pursuing a bachelor’s degree, associate degree, certificate, certification, or other industry certification) report that they are parents of minor children or caregivers to adults” (Rothwell, 2021, para. 2). These students are balancing a workload, caregiving responsibilities, and educational endeavors. It is essential to carefully analyze these factors and create strategies that provide real solutions to empower students to complete their graduate studies successfully.

Felicia Wilson, PhD, LMSW | Sara Strayer, PhD, LMSW | Megan Lindsey, EdD, LISW-S, LCSW
Alliant International University-CSPP
Graduate students report a connection between being stressed and low academic performance, with a high number of students, 50–75%, failing to complete their graduate degree (Allen et al., 2021).

Challenges and Implications
Graduate students may enter the classroom with several challenges that include academic struggles, role-life balance concerns, and overall stress and mental health conditions. For some, those challenges include being a caregiver to aging family members or children, which adds to feeling overwhelmed. Family caregivers who manage work, rearing children, and caring for older adult loved ones are known as The Sandwich Generation (Evans et al., 2016; Pew Research Center, 2013). At the same time, these individuals are applauded for their sacrifices to support aging family members and children. The strain of this responsibility is often unaddressed by educators.

Educators often see the manifestation of caregiving strain when students struggle with completing coursework. Without supportive services and resources, graduate students are ill-equipped to manage graduate coursework and caregiving responsibilities. At this point, an overwhelming amount of frustration occurs, which often causes the student to disengage from work, school, parenting duties, and caregiving responsibilities. These responsibilities can cause emotional, physical, and financial stress (Pew Research Center, 2013), therefore, academia must recognize the vulnerability of graduate students as they manage multiple roles and have resources to facilitate a positive educational experience that supports the whole student.

Evidence suggests that multiple roles can create adverse outcomes, such as “time squeeze, negative emotional spillover, and unrealistic expectations” (Evans et al., 2016, para. 1). When role balance strain feels overwhelming, the graduate student must decide how to best balance their life. When this happens, a caregiver may remove unnecessary things from their life to restore balance. Although this can be daunting, many students decide it is necessary to take time away from graduate school to balance the rest of their life responsibilities. Woolston (2021) reports the need for schools to “pay special attention to the needs of graduate students, many of whom face unusual pressure from having to keep up with their work and family obligations while navigating a career” (p. 171). Graduate students report a connection between being stressed and low academic performance, with a high number of students, 50–75%, failing to complete their graduate degree (Allen et al., 2021).

Educators must take notice of these factors to better support and equip graduate students for successful graduate studies. The impact of not considering how family caregiving adds to role strain imbalance and overall stress factors contributes to graduate students feeling overwhelmed and undersupported.

Although women train for careers, their learning is often organized around caregiving responsibilities (O'Shea, 2015). These students often must choose between providing care, their education, employment, rest, or social activities, among other opportunities (Schumacher, 2018). As a result, student caregivers are more likely to consider withdrawing from classes, being delayed in moving toward a degree, and leaving school. These factors may contribute to lower educational achievement and future workforce participation, as well as increased stress and burnout, creating burdensome costs to students, families, and society (The Associated Press-National Opinion Research Center, 2018; Rothwell, 2021).

Solutions for Faculty
The Council on Social Work Education (2022) states that its vision is “to ensure a well-educated social work profession equipped to promote health, well-being, and justice for all people in a diverse society” (para. 2). Educators must consider how to successfully develop graduate students to be champions of and for those they will serve. It is illogical to think a graduate student can be overwhelmed, stressed, experience role imbalance, and positively engage in the educational experience.

Clarity in program and course development are paramount. When designing
a program, the question must be, how does this course develop a well-rounded professional with a skillset that can create change in the field? Courses must be developed with a goal of active learning that challenges and develops the student to be a change agent. Busy work is not an effective tool.

Educators must communicate clearly to students regarding the workload requirement, expectations, and available resources. At no point should educators view students as numbers. When students are adequately prepared and understand the rigor of graduate studies, they are responsible for effectively utilizing resources to support them throughout their academic journey.

To address emotional and mental health strain, advisors must be keenly knowledgeable about the program components and burnout factors that impact students. “A positive advisor relationship has also been shown to be related to degree completion, decreased time to graduation, decreased intent to leave a graduate program, and overall program satisfaction and success among graduate students” (Allen et al., 2020, p. 1141). Academic advisors who are passionate about supporting students are an integral component and play an important role in student success, there are several steps students can take on their own to pave a path to graduation, including increasing their academic, psychological, and social well-being. These factors may help students to fully engage and get the most out of their education and also be useful in achieving success in the workplace after graduation (Cuevas et al., 2017).

Students who actively engage in their education, through the level of work and effort they put into learning, help to shift their focus from stress to achieving their long-term goals. This process may require students to actively participate by regularly attending classes and office hours, asking questions, and interacting with classmates and instructors. Being an engaged student also requires minimizing distractions outside of the classroom, applying time management strategies to navigate and fulfill tasks and responsibilities, and implementing planned study breaks and self-care to stay energized and on task (Cuevas et al., 2017).

An optimistic perspective or growth mindset can increase psychological well-being and student success by reframing negative experiences and remaining persistent in the face of challenges. This perspective creates a narrative about challenges “as temporary setbacks that can be overcome with renewed effort or different strategies” (Cuevas et al., 2017, p. 83) and contributes to increased resilience to meet difficult experiences. With hard work and trying out different techniques to address challenges, students may be able to maintain progress towards their goals despite setbacks or stressors (Cuevas et al., 2017).

Finally, developing and maintaining positive relationships contributes to social well-being by increasing connectedness with others. Social connections help students to feel supported and to be able to navigate multiple roles through sharing, delegating, or outsourcing role demands. Social connections also help to provide a sense of community, share resources, and increase general well-being. Developing social connections involves reaching out to request support, negotiate support, or accept the required level of support (Cuevas et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2016).

Solution for Students

While education systems and faculty play an important role in student success, there are several steps students can take on their own to pave a path to graduation, including increasing their academic, psychological, and social well-being. These factors may help students to fully engage and get the most out of their education and also be useful in achieving success in the workplace after graduation (Cuevas et al., 2017).

Students who actively engage in their education, through the level of work and effort they put into learning, help to shift their focus from stress to achieving their long-term goals. This process may require students to actively participate by regularly attending classes and office hours, asking questions, and interacting with classmates and instructors. Being an engaged student also requires minimizing distractions outside of the classroom, applying time management strategies to navigate and fulfill tasks and responsibilities, and implementing planned study breaks and self-care to stay energized and on task (Cuevas et al., 2017).

An optimistic perspective or growth mindset can increase psychological well-being and student success by reframing negative experiences and remaining persistent in the face of challenges. This perspective creates a narrative about challenges “as temporary setbacks that can be overcome with renewed effort or different strategies” (Cuevas et al., 2017, p. 83) and contributes to increased resilience to meet difficult experiences. With hard work and trying out different techniques to address challenges, students may be able to maintain progress towards their goals despite setbacks or stressors (Cuevas et al., 2017).

Finally, developing and maintaining positive relationships contributes to social well-being by increasing connectedness with others. Social connections help students to feel supported and to be able to navigate multiple roles through sharing, delegating, or outsourcing role demands. Social connections also help to provide a sense of community, share resources, and increase general well-being. Developing social connections involves reaching out to request support, negotiate support, or accept the required level of support (Cuevas et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The ultimate goal is to assist graduate students in completing a degree that will change their lives and the lives of each client they encounter. Understanding students’ concerns, role imbalance, and overall stress and emotional factors helps both educators and students to be proactive in pursuing academic success and overall well-being. Together, educators and students can navigate the educational process to graduation and the beginnings of a successful professional career.

References


Felicia Wilson, PhD, LMSW, received her doctoral degree in human services, master of social work degree, master of business administration, and bachelor of social work degree. She is a licensed master social worker in the state of Georgia. She also holds a certificate in Contemporary Theory in Addictive Behavior and is a Certified Professional Life Coach. Wilson has worked as an assistant administrator/director of social services in a long-term care facility, as a therapist with abused children who were victims of sexual exploitation, as a director of customer services with a healthcare technology company, and a home care agency social worker. Her research interests include family caregiving, caregiver burnout, job burnout antecedents, and prevention.

Sara Strayer, PhD, LSW, (she/her/hers) is the director of Field Education and assistant professor in the online Master of Social Work program at Alliant International University. She has received a PhD in social work, a master of social work degree, bachelor of social work degree, and a bachelor of arts in Spanish. She is also a licensed social worker and a certified child welfare supervisor and certified child welfare direct service worker. In addition, she has completed trainings in advanced and Spanish speaking forensic interviewing from The National Children’s Advocacy Center.

Megan Lindsey, EdD, LISW-S, LCSW is the program director for Alliant International Universities Master of Social Work Program. Dr. Lindsey has served as social work educator since 2013. Prior to joining the academy, she was the clinical director of a large outpatient mental health agency. Her teaching concentration centers on the fundamental professional skills of graduate-level social work practice, group work, research, policy, and field classes. Dr. Lindsey’s research focuses on food insecurity among college students and challenges related to retention and degree progression. Dr. Lindsey has served as the research coordinator implemented multiple ongoing research projects. Most recently, Dr. Lindsey and student team members have explored food insecurity using photography.
PhD and PsyD programs in clinical and counseling psychology have recently undergone profound changes in their admissions. Historically, approximately 90% of doctoral clinical and counseling psychology programs required Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores and in-person interviews for admission (Goldberg et al., 1992; Kuncel et al., 2001; Norcross et al., 2018, 2020). And the percentage of incoming doctoral students had never matched the racial composition of the country or the population they professed to serve (APA, 2019; Callahan et al., 2018). But the COVID-19 pandemic and recent racial justice protests, ignited by such events as the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, have dramatically altered those three admission processes, probably permanently.

The fourth upheaval is not a sudden development, but rather a continuing pattern, part of the changing face of American psychology (Howard et al., 1986) or the “feminization” of psychology (Ostertag & McNamara, 1991). Male students are steadily decreasing in numbers relative to female students in health service psychology.

We have systematically tracked these four upheavals in the admissions of American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited doctoral programs in clinical and counseling psychology, which are by far the most popular subfields in psychology. The PhDs and PsyDs awarded in these fields account for more than 65% of all doctorates awarded in psychology each year (APA, 2019).

Over the past 32 years, we have repeatedly surveyed all APA-accredited programs about their admission requirements, student characteristics, faculty attributes, and interview policies (Norcross & Sayette, 2022). In 2021, for example, we emailed our survey to the training directors of all 247 clinical and 72 counseling psychology programs accredited by APA. We received responses from 309 programs (97% response), and these data are used throughout this article.

Here, in brief, are the four upheavals and how they likely impact future applicants to these doctoral programs. That is, how they may impact you and your peers.
1. Fewer Programs Requiring GREs

The general Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is a 3-hour and 45-minute computer-based standardized aptitude exam that aims to predict student success in graduate school. The GRE’s format is familiar to some students as it closely resembles the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The GRE has three sections: Verbal Reasoning (V), Quantitative Reasoning (Q), and Analytical Writing (AW). The first two sections are multiple-choice while the last one has a written format.

Traditionally, the vast majority of doctoral programs required students to complete and submit their GRE scores as part of their admissions process. In 2010, for instance, more than 80% of clinical psychology doctoral programs required the GRE (Norcross et al., 2010).

During the initial years of the COVID-19 pandemic, many programs temporarily suspended that requirement, and other programs made the test optional.

Now, the number of programs that require GRE scores has decreased substantially. In 2021, approximately one-third of APA-accredited doctoral programs required GRE scores, one-third were test optional, and the remaining one-third did not consider GRE scores as part of the admissions process. In other words, more than half of APA-accredited programs were not mandating submission of GRE scores this year.

Many of these changes in GRE policies were intended to increase student diversity and to address COVID-19 restrictions. The Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (2021), for example, formally voted to discourage its programs from posting average GRE scores of accepted students on their websites in an effort to encourage more racial minority students to apply.

Not only will students have to decide whether to submit their scores but also if they even take the test. If students are applying to multiple PhD and PsyD programs, including those that require the scores, then we recommend taking the GRE.

When GRE scores are optional, we advise applicants to consult with their advisors in making the most beneficial decision. That decision often comes down to three main points: (a) if the GRE scores are above the average of the previously accepted scores for that program, then they should be submitted, though other considerations (e.g., enhancing diversity) may influence the decision making; (b) if the GRE scores are average, it depends on the strength of the applicants’ other credentials; and (c) if the GRE scores are below average for that program, then students should not submit their scores (Norcross & Sayette, 2022).

This transformation poses advantages as well as disadvantages for applicants. One advantage is not needing to prepare for, pay for, and take the GRE. That saves time and money in an already demanding application process. Another advantage occurs for those students who do not perform well on standardized exams, such as the GRE.

At the same time, not having GRE scores forces admissions committees to place more emphasis on other variables in reaching decisions. Research consistently shows that, for competitive doctoral programs in psychology, these are research experience, preadmission interviews, letters of recommendation, personal statements, and grade point averages (APA, 2019; Littleford et al., 2018; Norcross et al., 2005). Of course, applicants who tend to perform well on standardized examinations are relatively penalized and may be disappointed.

2. More Students of Color Attending

The percentages of racial minority students attending doctoral programs in clinical and counseling psychology have been historically underrepresented compared to the general population. That’s true of virtually all subjects in graduate school, not only psychology (National Science Foundation, 2021).

However, the percentage of racial minorities enrolled in clinical and counseling programs is steadily increasing—from 16% in 1993 to 35% in 2021 for clinical psychology and from 24% in 1993 to 73% in 2021 for counseling psychology (Norcross et al., 2018, 2020; Norcross & Sayette, 2022). That’s right: This last year, one-third of incoming clinical psychology doctoral students and about three quarters of counseling psychology students identified as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, & People of Color).

Representation of students of color in the psychology doctoral pipeline in clinical and counseling psychology has obviously improved. At the same time, inequalities in representation remain evident in both race and other marginalized populations (e.g., sexual orientation, people with disabilities, lower socioeconomic status). About 40% of Americans identify as an ethnic minority (Census Bureau, 2019), while 35% of new clinical students self-identify as such. Therefore, more progress in student representation is needed to fulfill psychology’s goal of proportional representation and health care equity (APA, 2021).
3. **Interview Formats Becoming Flexible**

Make no mistake: The preadmission interview is still required by the vast majority of doctoral programs in clinical and counseling psychology. Unlike most other subfields of psychology, admissions committees want to meet you, assess your interpersonal skills, and your fit with their program. The interview continues to be mandated by 92% of counseling and clinical psychology programs.

But the interview format has undergone renovation. Only 9% of clinical programs and 0% of counseling programs in summer 2021 planned to conduct interviews in person (Norcross & Sayette, 2022). Rather, most programs (36% clinical, 58% counseling) made the interview format flexible, giving applicants the choice between an in-person or a virtual format. The remaining programs plan to conduct their interviews only virtually (18% clinical, 16% counseling) or were unsure of how to proceed with the preadmission interview (37% clinical, 26% counseling).

The good news is that these changes have decreased the financial burden on applicants, saving them the expense of traveling and lodging for each program's interview. The changes also permit applicants with invitations to interview at multiple programs on overlapping days, the opportunity to interview at more programs.

The bad news is that, by general consensus, several hours of videoconferencing does not provide the same degree of exposure and experience as actually visiting the program in-person for a day or two. Students will devote at least four or five years to their doctoral studies on campus, so you should travel at some point to the program when accepted, as your finances permit. Depending on the program, you might obtain some funding to defray the costs of such a visit once you are accepted, but before you decide to enroll.

Remember: the dual purpose of the preadmission interview is for the program to check you out and for you to check them out. Perhaps right now it seems presumptuous to contemplate evaluating a doctoral program—you will be probably delighted just to be asked to interview! But an on-campus visit will provide you with decisive information on choosing which program to attend eventually. You will investigate clinical opportunities, faculty members, student life, research facilities, housing options, local communities, and the like.

4. **Male Students are Decreasing**

Health service psychology was the inequitable province of White cisgender men for decades. Not until the 1970s or 1980s did the gender of admitted students begin to resemble the population at large (Howard et al., 1986). Since that time, however, the vast majority of doctoral students in clinical and counseling psychology have been women.

The percentage of women enrolled in APA-accredited clinical psychology programs continues to gradually increase over time, from 67% in 1993 to 79% in 2021 according to our studies. Likewise, in counseling psychology programs, the percentage of women increased from 65% in 1993 to 73% in 2021.

Such trends prove corrective in one sense, but ironic in another. American psychology has clearly grown more diverse and representational in students’ cultural identities over time, but at the same time, less representational of the male gender. We vigorously encourage qualified students across all gender identities to apply to clinical and counseling psychology programs.
In Closing

Clinical and counseling psychology doctoral programs have transformed their traditional admission processes. The first three upheavals, by all accounts, directly result from the COVID-19 pandemic and the international reckoning on race. More than half of APA-accredited programs no longer require GRE scores, expensive in-person interviews have given way to flexible and less expensive options (particularly videoconferencing), and the percentage of racial minorities in health-service psychology has consistently risen. In fact, students of color represent approximately half of the new students in APA-accredited clinical and counseling psychology programs.

Noble efforts to enhance gender representation in the psychology pipeline and emerging patterns in health care employment (Adams, 2010; Shannon et al., 2019) have led to a proportional dearth of male students in health service psychology. Our hope, in bringing attention to this matter, is to inform and reassure applicants of all gender identities that clinical and counseling psychology can be for you, too.

Exciting times are ahead. Ensure that you know what these upheavals mean for you and your application.

References


Christina B. Carachillo, BS, earned her undergraduate degree in neuroscience with a biochemistry minor at the University of Scranton where she was a research assistant in the Psychology Department. She is currently a medical student at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

John C. Norcross, PhD, ABPP, is Distinguished Professor and Chair of Psychology at the University of Scranton, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the SUNY Upstate Medical University, and a board-certified clinical psychologist. He coauthors the Insider’s Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology.

Maria N. Rocha is a senior at the University of Scranton and a research assistant in the Clinical Psychology Lab there. She is majoring in psychology with a concentration in lifespan development.

Michael A. Sayette, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh with a secondary appointment as Professor of Psychiatry at the School of Medicine. He has conducted research on applying to graduate school for decades and has directed graduate admissions for Pitt’s clinical psychology program.

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What do you think of when it comes to testing intelligence? Although IQ is often the primary concept on people’s minds, there is actually much more to intelligence—from short-term and long-term memory to crystallized and fluid intelligence.

Are there negative consequences of overlooking other aspects of intelligence beyond “IQ”? Dr. A. Nayena Blankson is a researcher and Professor at Spelman College (GA) who has dedicated her work to understanding intelligence and achievement, especially in Black children. Recently, she presented on her theory of intelligence, SPIRAL (Specific Processes of Intelligence and Relationships in Academic Learning) as Psi Chi’s Distinguished Lecturer at SEPA 2022. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to speak with her for an interview on the work she presented at that convention.

In this interview, she answers questions about the problems with general intelligence and IQ as the main predictors of mental development. She also addresses her new theory regarding cognition and achievement, as well as standardized testing. Finally, in hopes to inspire future researchers of cognition, Dr. Blankson discusses her previous experiences as a student, researcher, and professor.
In intelligence research, how does IQ make it difficult to see intelligence as a predictor of achievement?

Theories of intelligence have been around, progressing, for a long time—over 100 years. Many of these theories stem from Spearman in the 1900s. He proposed that there was one aspect of intelligence: general intelligence, from which others then developed their own theories. This is part of the reason why there’s a concept of IQ as only one factor of intelligence, which the research doesn’t really support. Although theories for different aspects of intelligence exist, the focus in a lot of research remains on the idea of one, general intelligence. This hinders one’s understanding of the different processes of intelligence that can lead to achievement. Intelligence is seen as a variable that can be controlled. Given that intelligence is one of the strongest predictors of achievement, it makes sense to study intelligence, but not necessarily as one and only one factor.

Could you explain your SPIRAL theory and how this theory can guide future research on cognition and achievement?

SPIRAL combines different theories and builds on those theories. One of the theories of intelligence is the extended theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence, which was developed or written about by Cattell who proposed that there are two aspects of intelligence. Later on, John Horn—who was my graduate school mentor—and others, extended the theory so that there are at least eight different intelligences under the extended theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence.

Fluid and crystallized intelligence are the types of intelligence that are commonly seen in undergraduate textbooks, so many students will learn about fluid and crystallized intelligence. However, they may not learn about other aspects of intelligence, such as short-term working memory, long-term working memory, visual processing skills, or auditory processing skills. All of these aspects are part of the extended theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence. So, the SPIRAL theory, refers to specific processes of intelligence, relationships, and academic learning.

The specific processes of intelligence refer to the idea that we should examine these specific areas of intelligence, rather than only general intelligence and IQ. The relationship part of the theory refers to the idea that children interact with their environment, so they form connections between home and school. They have relationships within the home, as well as relationships within the school that help them in their learning. This part of the theory is built on Bronfenbrenner’s model about the importance of context. We should consider the context of these situations where we are studying various aspects of development. Children have teacher–student relationships, which can affect children in their learning. Similarly, the children’s parents can be engaged in the schools, showing a connection between the home and school environment. All of these things that Bronfenbrenner talked about in his bioecological model are also part of the SPIRAL theory. From discussions with John Horn when I was in graduate school, SPIRAL was created out of how we would talk about intelligence and the idea of intelligence developing in a spiral, but this theory was built with an extension to achievement.

So, when individuals are developing, they might have more developed aspects of intelligence than others. For example, the level of crystallized intelligence that a child has might influence the interactions they have with their teacher in school, and then that interaction might influence how they learn in school, as well as the further development of that crystallized intelligence. For instance, a child’s reading skills can impact their math achievement, and it goes on and on in a spiral form. As you know, spirals can be loose or they can be tightly coiled, indicating that for some, their development in certain areas might occur faster than others. In terms of development, if their “spiral” is tightly coiled, then their spirals continue building, leading to an increase of intelligence in certain areas. Others might have more loosely coiled spirals. This can mean it takes them a little bit longer for certain areas of achievement to develop.

Development can differ for individuals across different domains. One individual might have a certain kind of spiral structure for their reading achievement, but a whole different kind of spiral structure for their math achievement, depending on the specific processes of intelligence and the different relationships that we are examining.
Things have to change higher up in the academic chain to change how we use these test results for the betterment of our children.

How does IQ testing differ from SPIRAL testing, or is there no kind of test for SPIRAL?

There isn’t necessarily a test for SPIRAL, but hypotheses can be developed based on a theory, and then tested. The difference is that SPIRAL encourages individuals to really focus on the specific processes of intelligence, rather than lumping them together as one.

Would you say then that IQ testing is dangerous or maybe unnecessary for students?

No, I wouldn’t say that, because IQ testing or intelligence testing is part of SPIRAL. The difference between IQ and SPIRAL is when the different aspects of intelligence are lumped together as one IQ score, rather than a crystallized intelligence score, a fluid intelligence score, or a visual processing score, for example. The concept of only one IQ is what should be cancelled, but I don’t think that the testing of intelligence itself should be cancelled. People think of intelligence and they might commonly think of IQ, but intelligence testing has a long history. A lot of negative things have happened because of intelligence testing—the outcomes and the conclusions that people have drawn have negatively impacted the lives of many people. However, what I would like to promote is a positive use of intelligence testing to really understand more about what’s going on with the development of individuals, especially children. What’s hindering them in their development and what can help them to reach their full potential?

For example, before some children go to school, they appear very smart, but then when they go into school, they may not do as well as expected. Why is that? We can look at different aspects of intelligence and try to better understand what’s going on with the child, as well as the relationships that the child has in their home and school. But to say we’re not even going to consider intelligence testing at all might lead to a lack of understanding in what is needed to improve children’s achievement.

In terms of testing, have you thought about how IQ and SPIRAL may affect the future of standardized testing?

As for standardized testing, the uses of the tests can be very important. There is often a lot of testing in the U.S. school system. Children are being taught, “Okay, we’re going to take this test. We’re going to study for this test,” but the time to really understand the purpose of the test and how the test can be used is not built into this system well. Tests can help us really understand what’s going on with individuals. Where are they succeeding? Where are they not succeeding? How can we improve in these areas? The current system goes from one test to another, and the time for really using the learned information is not there. It’s important that time is built in for stakeholders (teachers, principals, etc.) to really process the results of these tests, and understand what the results mean.

It’s also important to understand that testing involves an understanding of basic statistics. As a requirement of understanding the meaning behind testing scores, statistics is very important to testing, but is a topic that some people just don’t want to touch. Administrators need an understanding of statistics in order to determine what changes should be made according to test results. So, I’m not against testing, but the use of the tests is what needs modification in some cases. Once those test results come back, they can be used to help modify learning methods and syllabi or curricula.

It’s not an easy process and seeing the results can show you how there needs to be more active changes in the student curriculum. Educators need more time to apply the results and be ready to change what they are teaching by using the test scores from these standardized tests, which is far from easy. For example, teachers have set things they have to teach and standards they are trying to meet in order to meet school district or state test goals and desired outcomes. However, during the course of a school year, if teachers get certain test results, then there should be room in the curriculum to modify what they are teaching. There should be space to modify classroom content in the best interest of the students who are in that specific classroom.

Going back to SPIRAL, here is how standardized testing and curriculum adjustments relate. The SPIRAL process involves thinking about these student-teacher relationships when we get test results. If we’re going straight to the next topic and not really understanding what just occurred, then students might not have the opportunities to learn what they could have, had we really looked at these test results. It’s not easy; teachers do a lot. As a professor, I understand what I do, but these kindergarten through 12 grade teachers are doing so much. They are restricted sometimes because of mandates from higher-ups about these test results. Things have to change higher up in the academic chain to change how we use these test results for the betterment of our children.

Along with all of your other duties with teaching and research, you’re the director of the Cognition and Temperament Lab. Do you work on SPIRAL at your lab, or do you work on it in another lab?

That’s a great question! So, SPIRAL is a theory I put forth based on research I’ve done over the years. Some of that research is conducted in the Cognition and Temperament Lab. Currently, the lab is studying the link between cognition and achievement in Black children, and the role of classroom quality in that link. The children in this study started in 2014 when they were in pre-K, and then we studied them again in kindergarten. The first part of the study was funded by the National Institutes of Health, specifically, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The second part
of the study, which started in 2018, is currently funded by the National Science Foundation, and we are studying these same children who are not in their later elementary school years. I’m working on these ideas related to SPIRAL in the lab and have undergraduate students who are working with me on the project. They are able to pull out bits and pieces of the data to come up with their own independent project ideas.

Only recently have I connected the work done in the Cognition and Temperament Lab and other papers that I have worked on, to what John and I talked about years ago when I was in graduate school. It’s been an interesting development for me to think about what I learned back then to what I’m seeing now. As previously mentioned, my students get an opportunity to use the data from the lab in their independent projects or thesis projects. They are then able to present their work at different conferences.

What made you decide to focus your research on cognition, intelligence, and emotion?

When I was in undergrad, Herrnstein and Murray had recently published their book, *The Bell Curve*. In that book, they talked about how—going back to intelligence testing—they had reviewed studies and their emotions. Teachers, in the home, their temperament and all the different things that impact children and their achievement, including the extended theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence—I got to really study and understand how intelligence tests are developed.

The process of intelligence testing and the development of intelligence has improved over the years. There are certain things that were not done in the past that we do now, such as testing items for whether they work differently for different groups of people. In the past, that might not have been done, but now it’s done throughout the test development process when we look at individual items and test scores. That was what really sparked my interest in the field of intelligence. Not to mention, I’m interested in achievement and all the different things that impact children and their achievement, including the relationships that they have with their teachers, in the home, their temperaments, and their emotions.

What advice would you offer to psychology students or young researchers trying to break into this psychological field of research, whether it be teaching, cognition, or just in general?

I’ll say one thing that my advisor used to always say, which I think is a modified quote from Lincoln, actually: “Study and prepare yourself. Someday your chance will come.” My graduate advisor would always say that and I think it’s really important because, as an undergraduate, sometimes people ask you what you want to do when you grow up. What do you want to do in the future? And it’s okay not to know, as long as you study and prepare yourself; that’s what’s really important because you don’t really know what’s going to happen in the future. You don’t really know what you’re going to do. Even if you have that plan, you don’t really know what that will look like. And so, to the extent that you’re studying, preparing yourself, staying focused, learn in each and every thing that you do, you will be ready for whatever opportunities arise.

There might be some classes that you’re taking and you’re like, “Oh, I don’t really care about this topic,” but find something you care about in it. Find something that’s valuable to you in each and every thing that you do, even the most mundane of things. You don’t know how all of those things will weave together. For me, I was a psychology major who really wanted to minor in Spanish, until I stumbled into becoming a math minor. I also stumbled into quantitative psychology, although I didn’t know what that was at the time. Going back to that previously mentioned test and measures class, it piqued my interest in the field, but it wasn’t until later in my senior year when a professor told me to look into PhD programs in quantitative psychology. Had I not been studying and preparing myself before I learned about the quant psych field, I wouldn’t have been prepared to apply to those programs. I would have been too late or had to take extra classes or do another year in undergrad. But because I had been focused and learning different things, when the opportunity came, I was prepared for it. So just stick with it and someday your chance will come.

We thank Dr. Blankson for her time and participation and look forward to the future work concerning SPIRAL.

A. Nayena Blankson, PhD, is currently a Full Professor in the psychology department at Spelman College. She graduated summa cum laude with a BA in psychology and minor in mathematical sciences from Loyola College in Maryland. She earned her PhD in quantitative psychology from the University of Southern California.

Carly Breslin is a recent graduate of Connecticut College with a dual degree in psychology and Italian studies. Graduating cum laude with honors in both the psychology and Italian departments, Carly has a background in gender-related research through the Connecticut College Psychology Department and Honors Theses Program. When not trying to figure out life or working, Carly is reading historical fiction novels or playing with her black cat, Isabelle.
Submission Guidelines

With more than 1,180 chapters, Psi Chi members can make a significant impact in their communities. Reviewing Chapter Activities in Eye on Psi Chi is a great way to find inspirational ideas for your chapter and keep in touch with your chapter after you graduate.

Activities are listed in the following categories:

- COMMUNITY SERVICE
- CONVENTION/CONFERENCE
- FUND-RAISING
- INDUCTION CEREMONY
- MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT
- RECRUITMENT
- SOCIAL EVENT

ABBRVIEATIONS

ACHS Association of College Honor Societies
APS American Psychological Association
APS Association for Psychological Science
SEPA Southeastern Psychological Association
RMPA Rocky Mountain Psychological Association
NEPA New England Psychological Association
MPA Midwestern Psychological Association
EPA Eastern Psychological Association
APS Association for Psychological Science
ACHS Association of College Honor Societies

Submission deadlines*

Fall: June 30
Winter: September 30
Spring: December 15
Summer: February 28

*Reports received (postmarked) after the deadline will appear in the next issue of Eye on Psi Chi.

Chapter Activities

EAST

Allegheny College (PA)

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The college hosted the Western Pennsylvania Undergraduate Psychology Conference (WPUPC) on April 30, 2022. The chapter designed the conference logo, chose the keynote speaker, and volunteered throughout the conference. The chapter invited Dr. Daryl Cameron, an associate professor of psychology at Penn State University to speak about his research on empathy, moral decision-making, and compassion. The conference also included 42 student research posters and a number of student oral presentations.

Assumption University (MA)

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: In October 2021, the chapter hosted an information session about the university's Clinical Counseling Psychology and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) graduate programs. Dr. Leonard Doerfler discussed the requirements and typical workload for a graduate student in this program. Dr. Lionello DeNolf described the mission and goals of the ABA program and talked about what undergraduates could do to prepare for graduate school. Following the speakers, the chapter officer team hosted a psychology-themed Kahoot game to encourage socialization and friendly competition.

SOCIAL EVENT: In December 2021, the chapter sponsored a holiday snow globe craft table at the University's annual Winter Fest. Everyone at Assumption was eligible to take part in this activity, so the snow globes ran out very quickly! This activity allowed students to destress during finals week and socialize with their peers while making a fun craft.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: In February 2022, the chapter partnered with Assumption's Career Development and Internship Center (CDIC) to host a resume-building night. During this meeting, Kelly Stairs from the CDIC explained the differences between resumes and CV's and clarified when one should use each format. Students had the opportunity to update resumes and receive feedback from peers and the CDIC on formatting and types of experiences to include. Following the speaker, the officer team gave to-go hot chocolate packets to all members in attendance.

Eastern University (PA)

COMMUNITY SERVICE: In November 2021, the chapter sponsored an event called Stress Less Week. On the first day, members gave out packets with tips to relieve stress and had stations for students to make stress balls. Next, an art night provided students a time for relaxation with art and warm drinks. On Wednesday, an officer played a meditation for the community to practice. For the fourth day, members led a yoga night, and lastly, Friday was a self-care night that encouraged students to use the tips they learned to take some time to rest.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: In February 2022, the chapter sponsored a presentation by Dr. Scott Glassman (director of Master of Applied Positive Psychology Program and Clinical Associate Professor from Philadelphia University) and received feedback from peers and the CDIC on formatting and types of experiences to include. Following the speaker, the officer team gave to-go hot chocolate packets to all members in attendance.

ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Upper left: Conference logo (featuring Allegheny mascot Chompers) designed by Allegheny College chapter’s Sarah Brammell (vice-president).

Left: Assumption University (MA) Psi Chi officers and members at a grad school and psychology Kahoot event.

Below: Assumption University (MA) members excited to strengthen their resumes!
College of Osteopathic Medicine) on research, applications, and career directions in positive psychology.

**INDUCTION CEREMONY:** In March 2022, the chapter sponsored an interactive presentation by Rachel Brandoff (coordinator of the Art Therapy program and assistant professor from Jefferson University) on art therapy.

**Fordham University–Lincoln Center (NY)**

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter remained active in spring 2022, despite the continued New York City lockdown, by cosponsoring two webinars. On March 30, a webinar on “Student Mental Health During COVID-19” took place with seven experts: Dr. David Livert (Penn State), Dr. Walter Reichman (Baruch), Dr. Teresa Hurst (Baruch), Tammy Vosum Cwienkala (Penn State), Preethy Jayant (Easton HS), Jan Humza (Palmer School), and Kevin J. Kelly (Penn State). On April 7, a webinar on “Supporting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers” took place with five experts: Dr. Kim A. Bardowski (Mt Sinai Human Rights Program), Dr. Elizabeth Singer (MSHRP), Carolina Corrales (U/ Utah), Dr. Harold Takooshian (Fordham), and Dr. Tara Pir (IMCES).

**INDUCTION CEREMONY:** On May 6, the spring induction was officiated by Dr. Harold Takooshian and Leo Murillo. Dean Laura Auricchio delivered a message about careers to new members. This segued into a rich dialogue about her diverse life experiences: the family legacy of her great-uncle Luigi (a university Rector in Italy in 1939–43), her mother Elizabeth Williams Auricchio’s PhD in psychology at Fordham, her own thesis for a BA in psychology at Harvard with I-O Professor Robin Ely, her switch to a PhD in art history, her book on Lafayette, and her seamless move from professor to dean.

**Fordham University–Rose Hill (NY)**

**INDUCTION CEREMONY:** The chapter inducted 45 members in the 2021–22 school year! An induction ceremony took place in May to celebrate the honor and hand out Psi Chi certificates to those who could attend.

**La Salle University (PA)**

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter hosted a graduate school information session featuring Dr. Stacy McDonald of Holy Family University. Dr. McDonald explained the difference between various graduate programs and helped members narrow down which type of program is the best fit for them. She explained what the typical graduate school class is like, and what types of assignments and workloads to expect. She generously shared the online version of a textbook that she has her students read as well, detailing the experience of being a psychology major. Members were then given the opportunity to ask any questions they had regarding the internship application process or internship experience in general.

**Lasell University (MA)**

**SOCIAL EVENT:** The chapter tabled outside of Valentine Dining Hall at Lasell University. The chapter provided resources for students to learn about the crisis in Ukraine. The chapter supplied blue and yellow paper hearts for students to write positive messages on.
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter aired the classic film *Good Will Hunting* (1997). Viewers identified counseling techniques and other psychology references in the movie. Pizza, snacks, and beverages were provided. This was meant to help students destress at the end of the semester.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter invited guest speakers from William James College for an informative Zoom meeting. Beth Ragan, BA, RN, Associate Director of Marketing and Outreach, and Marc Abelard, MEd, Director of Strategic Partnerships, discussed education, employment, and training opportunities in psychology.

Marywood University (PA)
SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter sponsored an event that brought Santa Claus to town! Students and members of the community were encouraged to take “selfies” with Santa while they indulged in a hot cocoa bar where cookies were also served. At this event, the Peers on Wellness (POW) club offered an aromatherapy activity table, as well as a decorate-your-own Christmas ornament table.

Quinnipiac University (CT)
SOCIAL EVENT: In fall 2021, the chapter sponsored a booth at the annual Fresh Check Day, an event that gives students an opportunity to engage in open dialogue about mental health and to connect with them with any resources that they may need. The chapter ran the “Elephant in the Room” booth, where students were encouraged to write down their personal elephant in the room related to mental health: something that they struggle with but feel they cannot talk about due to stigma. Common struggles that were expressed included anxiety, body image, and school burnout. All of the elephants were posted on an easel for everyone to look at.

Rochester Institute of Technology (NY)
MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter held a watch party for *Inside Out* (using the Disney Plus group watch). Afterward, a discussion was held about the accuracies and inaccuracies of the movie along with how it intersected with mental health.

Slippery Rock University (PA)
INDUCTION CEREMONY: This semester, the chapter had the opportunity to have a combined induction for new members of Psi Chi and Nu Rho Psi. At this induction ceremony, 16 students were inducted. Nine students were already inducted previously, but never got a ceremony, and seven new members were welcomed into Psi Chi. A guest speaker, Marlene Behrmann, was also present over Zoom to speak.

Dr. Behrmann is a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, who specializes in cognitive neuroscience of visual perception and focuses on object recognition. Dr. Behrmann was able to speak about her recent publications with her colleagues about the complexities of face perception across different species. Following the ceremony, a refreshment gathering took place hosted by a nearby brewery for all the new inductees from Nu Rho Psi and Psi Chi. Inductees and advisors of these two organizations were able to engage in conversation and interact with everyone as they wished.

Towson University (MD)
SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter sponsored a therapy dogs event in March 2022 to help students destress during midterms. The chapter collaborated with Pets on Wheels, a nonprofit organization that provides therapy pet visits free of charge to a variety of locations across Maryland, ranging from schools and libraries to domestic violence and homeless shelters. The chapter’s therapy dog meeting has become a tradition that members look forward to each year and has grown to become one of the chapter’s most anticipated and beloved events.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter held an induction ceremony in May 2022 to inaugurate new members. Twenty-two new members were inducted by the current Psi Chi executive officers, including Devin Fung (president), Rebecca Ray (vice-president), and Jerrica Robertson (secretary). After the induction, the executive officers relinquished their powers to a new group of officers who will be taking over for the 2022–23 academic year. The ceremony also featured congratulatory remarks from Drs. Christina Dardis and Jeffrey Kukucka (advisors).

Trinity Washington University (DC)
SOCIAL EVENT: A social event open to all students was cosponsored with the Psychology Club. The event took place near midterms (fall semester, 2021) and was advertised as “Paint Your Stress Away.” Although socially distanced and masked, students were able to use art to express themselves while enjoying each others’ company and light snacks. This was a great break during the week before midterm exams!

SOCIAL EVENT: For Valentine’s Day, the chapter set up a self-care table in the lobby of the student center. Passersby were invited to fill out a sticky note of something that they had been self-critical about and how they could respond differently to themselves in the future. They posted them on a board with tips on self-care and reminders that self-care is self-love.
CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The chapter hosted the third annual Western New York (WNY) Undergraduate Psychology Conference. Prior years, the conference was conducted remotely because of COVID-19, so this was the first year that the conference was held in-person! There were 22 poster presentations and seven oral presentations. The conference also included lunch, a keynote speaker, faculty judges, and awards for the best presenters. More than 120 students, faculty, and guests from seven different institutions across WNY (Alfred University, Buffalo State College, D’Youville University, Houghton College, Niagara University, Rochester Institute of Technology, and University at Buffalo) were in attendance!

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter’s officers and junior officers spent an evening volunteering together at a local charity. Friends of Night People’s mission is to help the poor, homeless, and destitute in Buffalo, NY, by providing basic needs such as food and clothing. The chapter helped hand out food and drinks at the organization’s soup kitchen and helped clean up afterward. This was a great opportunity to bond as officers and to give back to the community.

SOCIAL EVENT: In collaboration with the Health Promotion office on campus, the chapter hosted a midsemester stress relief event with live music, acrylic painting, and board games. Students were encouraged to come relax and connect with other students. Prepackaged snacks and hot drink mix-ins to make cocoa or tea were distributed to-go so that students could enjoy them at the event or when studying at home.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: Senior members gathered for an induction ceremony before graduation. At this meeting, graduates received their stoles and wore them proudly. They posed outside of McConnell Hall, home of the psychology department, reminiscing the many hours they have spent in that building.

SOCIAL EVENT: On a beautiful spring day in New Hampshire, the chapter held its final meeting of the year. The group gathered outside of McConnell Hall, home of the school’s psychology department. Among the smiles were bittersweet feelings as seniors prepared for graduation. Meanwhile, underclass students were delegated new tasks and elected into new positions.
INDUCTION CEREMONY: To conclude an eventful semester, the chapter held an in-person induction ceremony. Seven new members were inducted, and a new chapter executive board was sworn in. Several psychology faculty and advisors were in attendance, along with family and friends via Zoom. The ceremony ended with a recap of chapter activities as well as a commemoration of graduating seniors. The chapter can’t wait to hear about all the wonderful things these individuals will accomplish!

FUND-RAISER: On February 24, the chapter hosted a campus bake sale. Homemade brownies, chocolate-covered pretzels, and chocolate chip cookies were sold to faculty and students for $2 per item. Over $200 was raised, and all proceeds were donated to Autistic Inclusive Meets (AIM).

COMMUNITY SERVICE: On March 28, officers and members destressed before midterms and showed their thanks to the community in an afternoon of painting and gift making! All items were hand-made individually and sent to the residents of the Sunrise Nursing Home in Staten Island, New York.
students is cleverly titled “Donuts with Docs.” The informal setting of sharing coffee and donuts creates the perfect setting for students to ask and to share their experiences in the professional world of psychology.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter prioritized engaging students and faculty in philanthropic efforts to improve the mental well-being of the community. For Valentine’s Day, the chapter safely gathered to create cards for residents of a senior assisted living facility. Throughout COVID-19, visitation at this facility has been severely restricted. To mitigate the loneliness that can arise from such isolation, the chapter wrote handwritten messages to these residents, reminding them of their value and letting these seniors know the community was thinking of them on this day of care.

FUND-RAISER: Each year, the chapter hosts a fund-raiser promoting self-efficacy and “making your own luck” around St. Patrick’s Day. Philosophers and psychologists agree—luck is what you make it! For the holiday, the chapter sold shamrock cards featuring motivational quotes from the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Helen Keller, Albert Bandura, and Abraham Maslow, encouraging students to pursue their goals with resilience and perseverance. For a fun bonus, they also offered students the chance to make a guess on the number of chocolates in a “pot o’ gold” filled with chocolate gold coins for a chance to win the whole thing!

Kansas State University

FUND-RAISER: The chapter held a hot chocolate fund-raiser during the last week of the fall 2021 semester. Proceeds went to the local emergency shelter.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter held an in-person Mock GRE event in March 2022. Psychology majors signed up and took a practice GRE in the department’s computer lab. Officers and members ran the event, which gave students the opportunity to take the exam in a test-taking environment.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Officers and members worked at a day-long event called Open House at Kansas State University. This university-wide event is held on campus to show community members what each department does. Psi Chi represented the Department of Psychological Sciences—the chapter interacted with community members, demonstrated various experiments, and shared fun brain myths for those visiting the booth.

Top: University of New Hampshire seniors proudly wear stoles before graduation.

Middle left: The University of New Hampshire Chapter gathers for one last meeting.

Middle right: Drury University (MO) Chapter adopts a street near campus.

Bottom: Drury University (MO) members and friends pick up litter near campus.
Lindenwood University (MO)
SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter recently built a large fire pit/arena area that student organizations can check out. The chapter hosted a bonfire this fall, open to all students. About 20 students and faculty attended. Students made s’mores, told ghost stories about scary professors, and even dealt with a security guard threatening to call the fire department. It was a first for the organization to host this type of event, it was not without challenges, but members persisted and had a great time!

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter inducted 14 members this spring in a virtual ceremony. The virtual ceremony allowed more family to join as well as share more background for each new inductee.

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The chapter took eight students to Chicago for 10 separate poster presentations during the Psi Chi sessions at MPA.

Morningside University (IO)
FUND-RAISER: The chapter organized an online silent auction where members gathered donations from departments in the university and businesses in the community. All donations were bundled and added to an online form where students, faculty, and staff were able to bid on the donated items. The silent auction raised $2,047 and half of the proceeds were donated to Siouxland Habitat for Humanity.

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter was able to put on multiple social events throughout the year, but one of the most popular ones was the “Brain Stress Ball” table event on November 17. Members volunteered to sit at the table in the lobby of Morningside’s Olsen student center to give out brain-themed stress balls as well as relaxation methods pamphlets!

Simpson College (IO)
COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter participated in a letter writing campaign. Psi Chi students set up a booth so that all students on campus could participate in writing letters to those in the local nursing home. Students wrote over 150 letters.

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter handed out goodie bags to those on campus for “I Want You to Be Happy Day!”

Western Michigan University
MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter invited graduate students from regional graduate schools to discuss how to apply to and succeed in graduate school.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln
MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: This year, the chapter hosted a question-and-answer event with two of the university’s graduate students: Amanda Baldon and Patrick Duryea. Both attended Psi Chi’s meeting to answer a variety of questions about their experiences as doctoral students in social-cognitive and clinical psychology, respectively. The event was fun, informative, and engaging. Chapter members walked away more confident in their ability to navigate different pathways in psychology and had more personal insight in preparation for their own graduate school applications.

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COMMUNITY SERVICE: Chapter members frequently worked together to accomplish goals. As one example, this spring members made homeless packs—bags filled with hygiene supplies, snacks, and other personal products—that were donated to a local youth shelter. One student officer had prior experience with a similar project, and she provided guidance on the types of items to include. The chapter created an online sign-up sheet to coordinate the donation of supplies and funds to purchase additional supplies. At one meeting, members worked as a team to create over 40 packs and wrote personalized notes to include in each one. Members also worked together to deliver the packs to a local shelter.

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: On April 1, 2022, the chapter hosted its fourth semiannual research conference. A grant awarded by Psi Chi allowed the chapter to give monetary awards to the top three student poster presenters, a gift card as an honorarium to the keynote speaker, and boxed lunches for all conference participants. The keynote speaker presented “Psychology for Climate Action” on how psychologists can fight the climate crisis. Conference attendees included 17 undergraduate students (10 presenters), 14 graduate student judges, four faculty judges, and a few friends and family members of the presenters. Verbal feedback from participants indicated that the conference was a valuable experience for all involved.
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

Adams State University (CO)

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: In April, the chapter sent six members to RMPA 2022 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Support for their trip was provided by RMPA Regional Travel Grants from Psi Chi and by chapter fund-raising activities. Members all participated in the Psi Chi service activity on Thursday morning, presented their research posters, and had fun interacting and relaxing with their peers from other universities.

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: Student members attended RMPA 2022. At the convention, students spent time talking with convention goers about Psi Chi at the sponsored table, attended Psi Chi-sponsored presentations, assisted with set up, and socialized with each other.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Students traveled to Salt Lake City Utah and engaged in service to local social programs. Students volunteered three to four hours at various local shelters that help teenagers who are risk for being homeless or are homeless.

SOUTHEAST

Catawba College (NC)

COMMUNITY SERVICE: In fall 2021, the chapter served the community by hosting a food drive to donate food to the Knox Middle School food pantry. Members made boxes and set them out around campus for a week to collect food and then delivered it to Knox for them to give out to those in need. During the last week of March and first week of April 2022, the chapter also paired with the Student North Carolina Association of Educators (SNCAE) to collect food for a food drive to donate to a local program called Rowan Helping Ministry.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: In fall 2021, the chapter hosted an induction ceremony where they welcomed eight members, and six of them were inducted. It was a casual induction where the group met outside and enjoyed food and drinks and then conducted the actual induction process. There was lots of fellowship among students and faculty afterward. Another smaller induction took place April 12, 2022.

FUND-RAISER: The chapter hosted a fund-raising event on March 16, 2022. The fund-raiser consisted of selling Krispy Kreme doughnuts for one dollar each or ten dollars per dozen. The chapter was able to sell twenty-four dozen and twelve individual doughnuts. Many members helped with getting this event put together and selling doughnuts that were left over from the day of the sale.

Fairmont State University (WV)

FUND-RAISER: The chapter sponsored a bake sale as a follow-up to a Chapter Activity Grant entitled Falcon’s Fight Food Insecurity. The grant provided funds to stock an on-campus food pantry for three months, and the bake sale raised additional funds that kept the pantry stocked for the remainder of the semester.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter engaged in a shopping trip to utilize funds from the Chapter Activity Grant, Falcons Fight Food Insecurity. The supplies were used to stock an on-campus take-as-needed leave-as-able food pantry for three months.

University of Mary Washington (VA)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter welcomed 18 members this spring! The officers informed these students of their eligibility by announcing their selection during one of their psychology courses in order to celebrate their undergraduate successes with all their classmates. The chapter invited the psychological science department’s visiting faculty member, Courtney Ricciardi, to be the
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

students and hard work!

presented professors with Superlatives

a full day of presentations, Psi Chi

sessions and keep the halls quiet. After

Psi Chi members helped moderate the

presentations of their research. Again,

these questions and manage the crowds.

members volunteered to moderate

questions about their posters. Psi Chi

research methods projects could answer

poster sessions and talks. The chapter

a research project during the semester

chapter put on an in-person symposium

summer-long workshop on preparing

summer session, involving a few state

2022, Psi Chi students requested a

INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE:

speaker at the ceremony and share about

what she has learned from her time in the

department. Additionally, during the

ceremony, officers read aloud the

Platonic myth to officially welcome the

inductionees with a fun story.

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The

chapter put on an in-person symposium for the first time since the pandemic.

All psychology students who completed a research project during the semester were invited to present that research in poster sessions and talks. The chapter ran poster sessions all day on April 21, where students who completed research methods projects could answer questions about their posters. Psi Chi members volunteered to moderate these questions and manage the crowds. On April 22, research teams gave presentations of their research. Again, Psi Chi members helped moderate the sessions and keep the halls quiet. After a full day of presentations, Psi Chi presented professors with Superlatives to celebrate their commitment to their students and hard work!

Mississippi University for Women

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: In summer 2022, Psi Chi students requested a summer session, involving a few state university students to attend a free summer-long workshop on preparing for careers and graduate school in psychology. The students voted on which topics would be best to help students who otherwise have no advice on graduate school. The sessions were taught by the Psi Chi advisor, and a student panel of current graduate students in psychology hosted the last summer session. Students from nearby areas were invited as well as MUW students (Ole Miss, Mississippi State, Delta State, and Jackson State University).

Nova Southeastern University (FL)

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter held its first meeting of the spring 2022 semester on January 31, 2022. The theme of this meeting was “Applying to Graduate School in Psychology,” and it was lead by Sophia Perez and Angela Beamer (graduate liaisons). Both graduate and undergraduate students attended this event. Graduate students were asked to share their experiences; grad students spoke briefly about their process of preparing for and applying to graduate programs. Undergrad students asked questions about the application/preparation process. All of the officers worked together to compile an informative and successful meeting.

Regent University (VA)

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter hosted a senior brunch to celebrate graduating Psi Chi seniors! The chapter president reserved the park shelter, navigated conflicts that occurred during reservations and food preparation, and purchased each graduate a unique bouquet. The secretary, operations manager, and events coordinator made each graduate a small token of appreciation and provided food and decorations. Dr. Dimler (advisor) wrote each graduate a heartfelt note of encouragement. The online students especially appreciated an in-person celebration in accompaniment to graduation. The event was a success, and it was a great way to kick off graduation that weekend.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The induction ceremony welcomed 43 new members! The event was live-streamed and held in-person with the officers reading each name aloud and refreshments following the ceremony. Chapter members are especially appreciated an in-person celebration in accompaniment to graduation. The event was a success, and it was a great way to kick off graduation that weekend.

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The chapter sponsored attendance at the Texas Psychological Association’s 2021 convention. The chapter planned housing, ticket acquisition, and transportation. The chapter sponsored four members, who were chosen anonymously based on grammar, reason for attending, and cohesion of their essay contest application. Fourteen members developed their psychology knowledge by attending four keynote speeches. The University of California’s Dr. Tania Israel presented on social justice advocacy. Dr. Kevin Cokley, of the University of Texas, spoke on how psychologists can support Black Lives Matter. Harvard Medical School’s Dr. Martin LaRoche presented on cultural psychotherapy. Dr. Samuel Knapp spoke on intervention improvement.

University of Houston–Main Campus (TX)

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter sponsored attendance at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention walk put on by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. This event raised more money than ever on campus to further suicide prevention research and resources. They had a booth at the event promoting the club as well as the society and walked with over 250 people to bring awareness to suicide prevention.

How to Prepare for an Interview

There are tons of online resources: articles, videos, podcasts, etc.

- Google “grad school interview questions” or “job interview questions” and follow the note
- BeAMS Academic Consulting
- Navigating Academia
- Becoming Dr. Baker
- Andy Stapleton

Above: Yoga Class with members and another psychology organization at Sacramento State University (CA)!

Top right: Mia Tognoli leads a discussion about CVs as a part of interview night at Oregon State University.

Right: Spring 2022 induction ceremony at Sacramento State University (CA).
Oregon State University

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter held an interview night on April 4, 2022, which consisted of a slideshow presentation led by several officers outlining how best to prepare oneself for both graduate school interviews and job-related interviews. Sample interview questions were provided along with ideal answers. Practical considerations including dress and demeanor were addressed. Preparation resources were provided, including YouTube videos and contact information for the university business center. The meeting concluded with members breaking into small groups and engaging in mock interviews, allowing them to learn what it feels like to sit on both sides of the interview table.

University of California, Riverside

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter recently held a high school outreach program called Psychology Winter Camp. Psychology Winter Camp reached out to 70+ high school students. This two-day program was held via Zoom in order to accommodate Covid-19 guidelines. In this outreach program, current college student members took lead as camp leaders and introduced college life as a psychology major to high school students in order to prepare them for the transition from high school to college. When the program concluded, many high school students expressed their interest in pursuing psychology as their major at their respective colleges.

University of California, Santa Barbara

SOCIAL EVENT: Members gathered to celebrate the successful events put on throughout the year. From the Alzheimer’s Walk that raised $1,114 to GRE/grad school workshops to an honors thesis panel, members were able to gain valuable insight into various psychology fields while also growing in a community with other students who share a passion for psychology. They also celebrated graduating seniors—more than 60 members will be going out into the world and making a difference in the psychology world. Congrats UCSB Psi Chi and graduating members!

Whitworth University (WA)

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter had a wonderful year with numerous events and activities. One of the most popular was Whitworth Psych Rocks! The chapter organized and ran multiple social events where they painted rocks with the words, “Whitworth Psych Rocks” on the back. Members then traded and hid them around campus. Throughout the year, people found the rocks and moved them to new spots, sending pictures to the original artist. It helped to build community and engaged members in a new way, reminding everyone that, in fact, Whitworth psych rocks!
Psychological science nerd.

Wear something you’re proud of.
Shop at Store.PsiChi.org

Follow our social account for sales and special discount codes