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We Are Looking Good for 95 ... but Wait Until You See Us at 100!

Shawn R. Charlton, PhD
President

Ninety-five years ago, Edwin Newman and Fredrick H. Lewis, graduate students at the University of Kansas, dreamed up a national student organization for psychology. I doubt they ever imagined the seeds they planted would grow into what Psi Chi has become nor what it has the potential to become in its second century.

To provide some context on what all Psi Chi has accomplished, consider the state of psychology at the time of Psi Chi’s birth. Psi Chi’s official start occurred during the Ninth International Congress of Psychology at Yale University in September 1929. The President of the American Psychological Association James Cattell (1929) gave a talk in which he described the state of psychology in the United States—and thus the context in which Psi Chi was born—in this way (pgs. 340–341):

In the twelve years since the celebration of the twentieth anniversary [1916] of our association [APA], it has grown from 307 members to 540 members and 353 associates, all of who are or have been engaged in psychological work. Of the members only 12 do not have the degree of doctor of philosophy or its equivalent. The universities that have conferred the largest numbers of these degrees are Columbia 155, Chicago 91, Harvard 68, Clark 54, Iowa 42, Pennsylvania 41, Cornell 37, Johns Hopkins 34, Stanford and Yale 26, Washington and Minnesota 15 … I have found the center of productive scientific men to have moved westward from New England to the Central States and onward to Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska.

Dr. Cattell’s summary of psychology in the United States in 1929 paints a picture of U.S. psychology leaving its early childhood, but before the growth spurt triggered by World War II. Newman, Lewis, and other students attending the Congress likely saw their student group within this context of a psychology largely tied to academic laboratories and a small, tight-knit group of psychological scientists.

The context in which Newman and Lewis created Psi Chi and that Cattell described is vastly different from psychology today with an APA membership of 146,522—72.7% of whom hold a doctorate degree, 21.4% a master’s degree, and approximately 64% represent clinical and counseling psychology with less than 2% identifying as experimental psychologists (American Psychological Association, 2022). According to the National Science Foundation (2022), 3,990 doctoral degrees were awarded in psychology in 2022.

Newman and Lewis would be speechless by both how psychology and, even more, by how Psi Chi grew. According to Dr. Martha Zlokovich, recently retired Executive Director of Psi Chi, over 850,000 people have been inducted into Psi Chi as of June 2023 (personal communication, June 1, 2023). The society includes over 1,200 chapters, with chapters in more than 20 countries.

In addition to our membership growth, Psi Chi has grown significantly in the support and opportunity provided to members and the psychological community. Psi Chi awards over $400,000 to members every year through awards, grants, scholarships, and other support mechanisms (Psi Chi, 2023); has an active presence at six regional APA conventions as well as the annual meetings of the APA and APS; publishes a high-quality, peer-reviewed journal and a quarterly magazine; and hosts a website overflowing with information and resources, most of which are free to anyone who visits the website.

Yes, Psi Chi’s first 95 years were fantastic (and we cannot review this success without acknowledging that it is thanks to members, advisors, officers, staff members, and so many others who invested in Psi Chi over the years and worked together to build the Society).

But, the best is yet to come. Psi Chi is well-positioned to both continue into the future and grow in the opportunities it provides. However, the strength of that future relies—just as the success of our past relied upon—the degree to which our members, advisors, officers, staff members, and other stakeholders invest in and engage with Psi Chi moving forward.

So, as we approach the end of our first 100 years, we enthusiastically step into a five-year reflection and celebration of Psi Chi’s history and promise in preparation for launching into our 2nd century. With our eyes fixed on the future, I invite you to renew or expand your engagement with our Society … and offer you four suggestions on how to get started.

1. Reconnect with your home chapter. All members of Psi Chi join through a chapter affiliated with a university. As Psi Chi membership is a lifetime benefit, you remain an alumni member of that chapter. Local chapter officers and advisors are the “boots on the ground” of Psi Chi. Chapter alums reconnecting with chapters provide many benefits to both the alum and active chapter members. For example, alums serve as a guide to chapter members on where individuals from their chapter and their institution have evolved, providing a concrete view of where they can go (this reminds me of Kulik and Mahler’s, 1987, study showing the benefits of a postoperative roommate on patient outcomes). And if you didn’t follow a “typical” psychology pathway, your voice and experience might be even more valuable for your chapter! The journey of chapter alums who actively use psychology in their careers, but are not working in a psychology career, will likely reflect the pathway for the majority of alums from the chapter. Thanks to the ubiquity of videoconferencing post-COVID, geography and transit times are no longer an obstacle to connecting with chapters. (visit here for the Psi Chi chapter directory).

* For an excellent and comprehensive history of Psi Chi, see Hogan & Takooshian’s article in the Eye on Psi Chi written for Psi Chi’s 75th anniversary.
2. **Engage with Psi Chi’s Request a Mentor and/or Ask an Expert programs.** Psi Chi recently launched a mentor program that provides members the opportunity to request a mentor or volunteer to be a mentor. At the moment, the system has many more mentor requests than it does available mentors. The mentoring system—designed by Psi Chi’s incredible Information Services staff—allows for an efficient matching between mentors and mentees and allows for connections beyond the resources available at any individual institution (our UCA students often believe that their only options in psychology are counseling, school psychology, and experimental psychology because that is all they see in our department).

   If you don’t feel that you are in a position to step into a mentoring relationship, you can also engage with the Ask an Expert program. Ask an Expert allows members to connect with the expertise of Psi Chi members from across the Society. The richness and utility of the answers is directly connected to the engagement of experts with the system. Just as there is value in reconnecting with your chapter regardless of how psychology fits into your career, there is incredible value in having mentors and experts who come from a broad background.

   Psychology is application from airports to zoos, so our mentors and answerers need to represent that same diversity. You can get more details on both the mentoring service and Ask an Expert HERE.

3. **Read and contribute to Psi Chi’s publications.** Psi Chi staff and members contribute to a variety of different publications include a journal, magazine, digest, blog, podcast, webinars, eBooks, and the annual report (see the ENTIRE LIST). These publications range from peer-reviewed research to career advice. Articles are written by undergraduate members to professional members. The breadth and representation of psychology in the publications is one of their greatest strengths. Psi Chi’s skilled communications team creates highly professional publications and has created a publication process that is supportive of authors throughout their entire professional journey.

   One particular outlet that I would encourage you consider is the “Psychology in the Headlines” section of Eye on Psi Chi (full disclosure: I’m the editor for this section, but that’s not why I am encouraging it). Each entry in this column is a 400-word (not counting title and references) connection to psychology today (the brevity of these entries is why I am encouraging this column. Writing a full article for the magazine or for the peer-reviewed journal is often inaccessible to professionals outside academia or other writing intensive areas. But a 400-word summary? That’s totally doable). This connection can be a discussion of cutting-edge research, a primer on current-best practices in an area of application, a unique application of psychological science/practice in a professional context, or exploration of how psychology applies to current events and challenges. The best headlines are written by the people who are directly involved in the work or events. These entries provide a great opportunity to highlight the breadth of psychology, to demonstrate the exceptional work being done by Psi Chi members, and to help expand our Psi Chi connections. Learn more about the headlines HERE.

4. **Invest in Psi Chi’s grants, awards, scholarships and other programs.** As a member of the Psi Chi Board of Directors, chapter advisor for the past 16 years, and Psi Chi member for, umm … longer than that, I am proud of the Society’s history and the work that it does to fulfill the mission of “recognizing and promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology.” It is my hope that we can not only sustain what we are doing in our grants, awards, and scholarships, but that we can increase the number of members that we support, the diversity of support opportunities, and the amount of support that is provided.

   Expanding our grants, awards, and scholarship programs requires a stronger relationship between Psi Chi members who are established in their post-training careers, psychology providing organizations and businesses, and psychology affiliated groups. There are opportunities at all of these levels for investing in the future of psychology through Psi Chi’s grants, awards, and scholarships. Not only is there opportunity, but Psi Chi’s infrastructure for supporting member and organizational investment and sponsorship is stronger than it has ever been (those interested in knowing more about these opportunities are encouraged to contact the Psi Chi Director of Development Stephanie Beason).

   The endowed Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for Women of Color is a fantastic example of what can be accomplished when our Psi Chi community comes together to invest in the future. Thanks to the support from members of our community, this scholarship is fully endowed, allowing Psi Chi to award this scholarship into the foreseeable future. Building on the success of the Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for Women of Color campaign, we are now fundraising for the Christian Ladd Hall Scholarship for Mental Health Advocacy. Once endowed, this program will provide a scholarship and a $1,000 grant for a community advocacy program, to an undergraduate or graduate Psi Chi member interested in a career related to mental health advocacy. If you are interested in learning more about the campaign, providing a gift to the endowment fund, or sponsoring the 2024 scholarship, Stephanie Beason or myself would be happy to discuss opportunities and details with you.

   As these four examples demonstrate, there are opportunities to enhance your engagement with Psi Chi in ways that are mutually beneficial. An exploration of the Psi Chi website will show that there are many more ways to get involved and draw benefit from your lifetime membership. If the four options above don’t resonate with you, I am confident you will find your place of engagement on the website.

   Psi Chi’s first 95 years were successful beyond what could have been imagined by Newman, Lewis, and their early supporters. Working together, the next five years can put us in motion toward a second century of even greater member opportunity and support to the discipline.

   As the title says, we are looking good for 95 … but wait until you see us at 100!

### References


Checklists—such as a shopping list, degree completion plan, or even a Lego® instruction manual—can be extremely useful for meeting goals and completing projects. However, the increased efficiency that checklists create can also produce a transactional mindset in which we overlook the value of the journey enroute to the destination. Kind of like a fast-food lunch where we grab a burger or a burrito in the drive thru that we eat while waiting at a stop light on our way to the next set of checkmarks. Sure, we had lunch and gave our bodies some calories to burn, but we didn’t really experience the food (thankfully!), and the meal is certainly not a meaningful experience.

Over my 16 years as a Psi Chi advisor, I have seen many—probably the majority—of our chapter’s Psi Chi members interact with Psi Chi as a transaction (and I was guilty of this when I joined Psi Chi as an undergraduate, so I’m not pointing any fingers). Joining Psi Chi can be seen as a checkmark on the graduate application or the LinkedIn profile (by the way, if you haven’t added Psi Chi to your LinkedIn profile, make sure you do!). Unfortunately, the richness and value of a Psi Chi membership isn’t in the transaction, but the relationship it enables. To really draw the benefits from your Psi Chi membership requires cultivating a relationship with the resources, opportunities, and people that Psi Chi provides.

Thanks to my amazing sales skills (it probably does not surprise you that I am neither a salesperson, coach, nor motivational speaker), I imagine you now want to know how to enhance your Psi Chi relationship. Well, here are three ideas:

1. **Explore the Psi Chi website.** Our Psi Chi website ([www.psichi.org](http://www.psichi.org), just in case) is full of information, resources, and opportunities. As you explore the website, you will find information on upcoming alumni virtual connections, ways to invest in the future of psychology through Psi Chi grants, awards, and scholarship programs, our various publications and podcasts, and other invitations to get involved. Psi Chi Headquarters staff are fantastic, friendly, and waiting to connect with you!

2. **Connect with us at a regional convention.** The six regional conventions provide a wonderful opportunity to build your relationship with other Psi Chi members and its leadership. We have a Psi Chi exhibit booth with information and giveaways at each of the conventions. Stop by and say hi. Not only will you have a chance to meet some of the Psi Chi leadership and receive some fun swag, but you will also learn more about how to strengthen your Psi Chi relationship.

3. **Contact a member of the board of directors to ask about engagement opportunities.** Psi Chi members are eligible to serve on a variety of committees at the regional and society level, serve as reviewers for our grants, awards, and scholarships, and assist with the journal and other Psi Chi publications. In a given year, there are typically more opportunities to become engaged than there are available volunteers. Your regional VP, another member of the board, or one of Psi Chi’s staff members are all available to help you find a place where you fit in Psi Chi.

As you continue to enhance your relationship with Psi Chi, remember that membership is lifetime. So, there is literally a lifetime of relationship awaiting you as a Psi Chi member, regardless of whether your professional and personal journey keeps you directly engaged with psychology (no matter what your professional/personal journey, psychology is directly relevant. Don’t believe me? I’ll buy a gift certificate for a burger or burrito from a fast-food place if you can come up with an exception, just send me your thoughts in an email… and strengthen a Psi Chi relationship at the same time). Your membership in Psi Chi can be both a celebration (check!) and the beginning of a rich, rewarding, lifetime relationship.
Hawaii Fires, Burning Man Floods, and Climate Change, Oh My!
Parker Hamilton and Shawn R. Charlton, PhD
University of Central Arkansas

As the great American musician Billy Joel sings: “We didn’t start the fire. No, we didn’t light it, but we tried to fight it.” (If you know the song, there is a 99.5% chance that you didn’t read that line but sang it in your head—and now have it stuck there). In the present day, we are feeling the literal weight of that word “tried.” The 2023 Hawaii fires, Burning Man downpour, and the ongoing melting of our world’s glaciers are all evidence of the ongoing climate change. Typically, these discussions are the focus of ecologists, environmental scientists, or even biologists, but we are starting to recognize that everyone has a part to play in helping prevent climate change, including psychology. So where does psychology fit? In more ways than one might think. For example, climate anxiety is a real thing, and a psychological concern that is becoming increasingly important (Jarvis, 2023). Counselors have banded together in the past few decades to further grasp the magnitude that environmental anxiety holds, creating the Climate Psychology Alliance North America. CPA-NA aims to help clients and professionals understand that climate anxiety concerns should not be dismissed and that there exists a group of professionals who specialize in understanding the impact of climate change on psychological health.

Additionally, there is growing evidence that, as more events occur in our world related to climate change, psychological processes are affected. For example, climate change has been implicated in increases in road rage and aggressive driving, a decrease in work productivity and motivation, and mood disorder diagnoses and psychiatric hospital admissions (Goldsmith, 2023). Climate change is being observed to have an effect on the mental wellness of children as well (keep in mind, children are the future and will, hopefully, be the ones to solve this climate crisis). As Solomon (2023) describes, Dr. Susan Clayton and colleagues from the College of Wooster have reported that climate change may have an effect on fetal development, including greater risks for anxiety/depressive disorder, ADD, educational deficits, or other psychiatric disorders later in life.

Climate change affects us all, and professionals from many different disciplines can be involved in addressing these impacts. Psychology’s role is to explore the impact of climate change on psychological functioning, develop technologies for helping manage these impacts, and to help address the psychological wellness implications of climate change. As climate change is going to happen, it is crucial that psychologists, counselors, therapists, and others in the field recognize that they can be a meaningful part of the climate change conversation.

References
Physical Activity Intervention Improves Depression, Anxiety, and Distress: A Meta-Analysis Approach

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Because of the time people spend in their workplaces, work environments can either improve team members’ mental health or cause mental health disorders through high stress. Mental health refers to how people think, regulate their emotions, and conduct themselves; mental health disorder refers to a shift in thinking and behavior that disrupts their ability to conduct their daily lives (Mayo, 2023). Mental health disorders affect all demographics across age, gender, religious affiliation, and socioeconomic level.

Discussions of mental illness in the mainstream media have raised awareness, especially after another recent COVID-19 wave. Despite effective vaccines, mental health disorders from the pandemic still linger (Williamson, 2023). According to one study, 1 in 5 American adults suffer from mental illness (NIH, 2022). Treatment for depression alone costs about 71 billion USD (Winerman, 2017); organizations are burdened significantly by the astronomical costs of mental disorders. People avoid discussing mental illness in the workplace due to stigma (Hogg et al., 2023). Some organizations have introduced physical activity as a means of balancing work stress and mental health. Mental health experts rely on clinical interventions, but other types of interventions such as physical activity also deserve attention.

Singh et al. (2023) emphasized the need for physical activity interventions to better treat depression, anxiety, and distress using an umbrella review design. Systemic reviews were considered eligible, including meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials designed to improve physical activity in mature populations and that evaluated depression, anxiety, or psychological distress (Singh et al., 2023). Research selection was duplicated by two independent referees. The results were drawn from 97 reviews (1,039 trials and 128,119 participants). Study populations included healthy adults, individuals with mental illness, and individuals with several chronic illnesses. The study concluded that physical activity is extremely helpful for improving symptoms of depression, anxiety, and distress across a wide range of adult populations, including individuals with diagnosed mental illness or chronic illnesses.

References


Fire Fighters Come to Our Aid, But Who Comes to Theirs?
Shawn R. Charlton, PhD, and Parker Hamilton
University of Central Arkansas

Would you run into a burning building to save a complete stranger without a second thought? If you answered, “probably not” or “it depends,” you are not alone. Now, imagine doing this as a career as a full-time or volunteer firefighter. As can be imagined, firefighting is a career with a high level of stress and pressure that requires an incredible amount of resilience. Nicole Roberts, writing for Forbes magazine in March 2023, described the cost of firefighting in this way:

Firefighting is a brave and noble profession often associated with heroism. But firefighters and researchers are sounding the alarm on the mental and physical effects of the profession, warning that it comes with a severe cost—increased levels of occupational stress that can lead to depression, burnout, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal ideation.

Although there are specialized psychotherapists for PTSD or general career stress, there has been little representation for fire service workers in psychology. This is why, in 2017, Dr. Kristen Wheldon founded the Fire Service Psychology Association. This organization’s mission is to “develop the scientific study and application of professional psychology to meet the needs of the fire service.” Since its founding, the organization has increased to a board of eight advisors and offers several resources to benefit both the organization and fire service worker’s mental health. Interventions within fire service psychology involve peer support programs, posttraumatic stress awareness, resilience training, and critical incident stress management (CISM). The Fire Service Psychology Association held its sixth annual convention in Atlanta in October 2023 (visit here for a sample of the presentations at the conference.)

In addition to the FSPA, another organization that addresses the mental health needs of firefighters is the Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance. The FBHA works to “collaborate, develop and implement behavioral health awareness, prevention, intervention, and post crisis strategies to provide firefighters with an easily accessible and confidential source of information” (FBHA.org, 2023). The FBHA offers workshops to fire departments and other organizations related to firefighter mental health challenges. The organization also provides financial and social supports to the family members of firefighters who die by suicide.

We are grateful to Kristen Wheldon (founder of the First Service Psychology Association) for contacting us this past September. Prior to Dr. Wheldon’s email, we were not aware of the specific needs of firefighters or the professionals and their organizations who are dedicated to addressing these needs. Now that we know about this incredible work, we are excited to encourage everyone we can to spend time exploring the websites for the Fire Service Psychology Association and the FSPA. These organizations are doing fantastic work and represent an area of application and work that could be part of your future.

Reference
You are the driver of your own success. Is this a message shared with today’s college students? I’m not sure. Colleges typically emphasize a variety of aspects to help students be successful, often focusing on academic excellence, exploration of interests, and responsible decision-making. But students need to understand that, from the start of your academic career, in order to grow and thrive in life and career, you must steer and drive your own success.

A steering wheel is a perfect symbolic representation of control, direction, and navigation. Using a steering wheel implies focused intention and a proactive approach to determine the course.

Proactivity is defined as assuming an active, rather than passive, role in doing or accomplishing (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 4th Edition, 2010). It means taking the initiative rather than waiting for things to happen. Being proactive means aspiring to reach goals, remaining resilient in the face of anticipated (and nonanticipated) obstacles, and committing to self-improvement and personal growth.

The opposite of being proactive is being reactive. Imagine driving a car without looking ahead or anticipating road conditions. It’s like navigating to a destination without checking the map,
considering traffic, or planning the route. In a reactive mode, you only respond to obstacles or turns when you’re right upon them. Being a reactive driver can result in mistakes (or worse accidents), lack of control, and certainly more stress.

A proactive driver checks road conditions, plans routes in advance, and acts as navigator. The proactive driver anticipates potential obstacles and makes plans to overcome them. Having a proactive approach implies decision making with intention and aims to avoid potential hazards rather than constantly reacting to immediate circumstances.

“If you’re proactive, you focus on preparing. If you’re reactive, you end up focusing on repairing.” (Maxwell, 2008)

Proactivity is impactful. Proactivity is a fundamental mindset that, in reality, should apply to all aspects of your life, from personal relationships to academic endeavors to professional pursuits. Being proactive has a strong impact on career success and satisfaction. Studies have shown that proactive people perform better, contribute more, and are more innovative (Proactivity at Work: Making Things Happen in Organizations, 2016). Proactive people are more satisfied with their jobs (Seibert et al., 1999) and have better mental health outcomes (Jawahar & Liu, 2015).

Proactivity is a skill you can develop. Fortunately, proactivity is a skill that can be learned and strengthened (Kirby et al., 2002). Research in the psychology literature links proactivity with three key psychological concepts:

• Self-efficacy—believing in yourself and your ability to succeed in a particular task (Bandura, 2017).
• Growth mindset—the belief that skills and abilities can be developed through commitment, focus, and resolution. Mastery of a skill is a journey of continuous development rather than a fixed endpoint (Dweck, 1999).
• Future focus—envisioning yourself in the future, such as imagining your future work-self (Strauss et al., 2012).

By developing these three foundational areas and committing to take the initiative in your approach to tasks and challenges, you can help yourself become more proactive. Let’s explore ways to boost proactivity with these effective approaches.

Five Strategies To Be More Proactive


To advance and excel, you must determine and pursue your goals. A proactive person sets goals. For students on the road to personal development, here is a pivotal suggestion. First, self-reflect and self-assess to identify what you want to achieve. Once you have realized your target, you should establish well-defined and explicitly clear goals for yourself. As you set your goals, make sure these are S.M.A.R.T. goals by asking yourself:

Specific: What exactly am I trying to achieve?
Measurable: How will I know when I’ve achieved it?
Attainable: Can I genuinely achieve it?
Relevant: Does it contribute to my personal or professional growth?
Time-bound: When do I specifically want to achieve this goal?

Once you have set your S.M.A.R.T. goals, break them down into smaller steps. Then, develop an action plan that outlines what you need to do to move to the next step. And, just like athletes whose coaches tell them to picture their triumph, you need to create a mental image of accomplishment and envision your success.

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.” (Covey, 2004)
2. Approach goals with a growth mindset to anticipate obstacles and remain resilient.

Pursuing your goals with a growth mindset will allow you to view challenges, and even failures, as opportunities to learn and grow and will help you recognize that effort and perseverance lead to success and growth. When considering things you don’t know how to do, consider them things you don’t know how to do… yet.

Setting goals and planning ahead equips you with the foresight to anticipate potential obstacles. By considering the possible challenges that may arise along the way, you empower yourself to navigate them with resilience and adaptability. Anticipating setbacks is actually a strategic approach that allows you to prepare in advance. With concrete goals in mind, a commitment to reach your goals, and preparation to deal with obstacles, you not only maneuver to confront challenges head-on but also reinforce your commitment to achieving your goals.

3. Believe in yourself and strengthen your self-efficacy.

You need to believe that you can develop key skills, attain necessary experiences, and reach your goal. Foster your own self-efficacy, your belief in your ability to succeed in a particular circumstance or with a specific task (Bandura, 1977). You can do this in several ways:

- Acknowledge your accomplishments and celebrate all your successes, large and small.
- Surround yourself with people who support and encourage you.
- Find positive role models who can provide guidance and inspiration.
- Challenge negative self-talk by reframing set-backs as learning opportunities.
- Replace self-defeating thoughts with positive affirmations and motivational declarations (e.g., “I am capable of achieving my goals” or “I am resilient, and I can overcome any challenge that comes my way”).

4. Seek opportunities.

Actively pursue pathways by embracing risks and embracing new experiences to forge your unique path. A proactive mindset involves actively seeking and navigating towards chances for personal growth and refusing to passively wait for favorable circumstances. Be the driver of your own possibilities and take deliberate action to create your way, shaping throughways rather than passively waiting for them to appear.

You are more likely to achieve your goals if you plan ahead and steer toward those objectives than if you passively wait for opportunities to present themselves or for things to happen to you. Use your goals as a roadmap for your journey.

5. Envision your future success.

Cultivate a future-focused mindset by envisioning yourself in the future. Take time to visualize your goals and aspirations, allowing a clear vision of the future and your future-self to guide your present actions. By keeping your focus on the possibilities that lie ahead, you empower yourself to make choices that align with your long-term vision, fostering a sense of purpose and direction in your journey.

“The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating.” (Andre et al., 2018)

Just like a road trip, to get to your desired destination, you must plan, prepare, and then navigate towards that destination. So, grab the steering wheel and be the driver of your own success. Without it, you’re a passenger, subject to the directions and destinations of others. With a proactive plan and mindset, making intentional turns and navigating the twists and turns of your personal journey, you direct and drive your own success.

References

Diane A. Safer, PhD, is the inaugural director of career and professional development for graduate students and postdocs and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Services at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, NY. A former business professional with more than 20 years of experience in PR firms serving healthcare/biotech companies, Dr. Safer ran her own information consulting company for 10 years before moving to career and professional development. Dr. Safer is actively involved in key professional career organizations, including the Graduate Career Consortium (GCC), where she has cochaired the Mentoring Committee for the past four years, the National Postdoc Association (NPA), and the National Association of College and Employers (NACE). She completed her BA in psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and earned her MA and PhD in social psychology at Columbia University in New York, NY.
Embracing Diversity and International Perspectives: The Journey of Psi Chi's Diversity Advisory Committee

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The Mandate of the DAC

In an increasingly interconnected world, the need for diversity and international inclusivity in every facet of life has never been more evident. Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology, has recognized this call to action, and its Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) has been at the forefront of championing these values within Psi Chi. The DAC embodies the diverse tapestry of cultures, perspectives, and ideas within psychology. Formed with a vision to reflect the rich diversity of the global community, the DAC’s mandate is to ensure that Psi Chi’s activities, membership, and leadership embody the wide spectrum of cultures, experiences, and perspectives that constitute the psychological community. We aim not only to promote diversity but to integrate it into the very fabric of our organization’s ethos. The DAC aims to nurture diversity within psychology’s science and practice and evaluate how effectively Psi Chi achieves its diversity objectives. Essential to our mission is the commitment to understand and honor the values, belief systems, traditions, and norms of individuals, families, and communities. This understanding demands consistent self-reflection, heightened self-awareness, and a mastery of intercultural communication—keys to ethically and effectively engaging with diverse populations. Embracing this mission requires a multicultural orientation that not only focuses on the understanding of its relevance but also on the attitudes and actions required so that it is a link that connects us throughout the globe.

Why Diversity Matters in Psychology

Psychology, at its core, is the study of the human experience—an experience that is as varied as the many cultures and individuals who make up our world. To understand the human condition, we must embrace a diversity of voices, particularly those from underrepresented and marginalized communities. This inclusivity enriches our research, educational practices, and professional development, ensuring that we address the needs of all individuals. As we aim to fulfill these needs, we acknowledge that one size does not fit all; therefore, a commitment to enlarging our international competencies is a priority.

Diversity and International Focus

In a world rife with systemic oppression, racism, and discrimination, the stakes for human service professionals are incredibly high. Our interactions with each other have profound impacts on their mental health and well-being, particularly when those interactions include marginalization and stigmatization. Psi Chi
champions using research and education to bridge social, religious, and ideological divides, fostering opportunities for growth and understanding. We support programs that are culturally and contextually relevant, and promote participatory action and advocacy aiming to address human rights violations and the mental health challenges that stem from implicit biases and systemic inequality. Psi Chi has always had a significant presence in the United States, but there's a growing recognition of the need to expand our reach, embracing a truly international perspective. The DAC is working to bridge the gap between U.S. chapters and those abroad, facilitating a cross-cultural exchange that benefits all members. Learning from each other could help us not only to expand our outreach but also to recognize that other cultures are most likely to enhance what up to date has been the dominant trend.

As we forge ahead, the DAC remains committed to extending Psi Chi's global footprint. We're in the process of establishing partnerships with psychological associations around the world to facilitate a more robust international exchange of knowledge and ideas.

In pursuing diversity, we also recognize the importance of listening and learning. The DAC is not just about implementing change, it's about fostering an environment where all members feel heard, valued, and understood. This means creating spaces for dialogue, reflection, and education on issues of diversity and international inclusivity. Certainly, this will entail profound evidence of cultural humility that allows us to feel comfortable while being exposed to other cultures that are not necessarily familiar to us. As getting out of our comfort zones is not likely to be easy, it might be the only way to experience the “realities of other realities.”

Evolution of Our Work
Informed by the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles (2016), our work emphasizes respect for diverse cultural customs, beliefs, and experiences. As psychologists, we strive to equalize power dynamics, affirming that access to justice should be universal. Our multifaceted roles as advocates, researchers, mentors, and international collaborators require an ongoing examination of our biases. Professional development should encompass cultural awareness, enhancing our abilities in interpretation, and effective communication—vital for research integrity and collaborative success; nonetheless, it might be easier said than done.

Next Steps for DAC
- We plan to establish an International Liaison subgroup dedicated to forging connections between Psi Chi members worldwide and our U.S. counterparts. The first three members of this subcommittee are the authors of this article: DAC members Drs. Vinita Puri, Gabrielle Smith (Director), and Maria del Pilar Grazioso.
- The DAC will undertake a comprehensive review of Psi Chi’s historical and current policies and practices concerning minority populations.
- We will create a Committee Operating Manual outlining member responsibilities, policy protocols, and responsive measures to emerging situations and requests.
- Our recruitment efforts will focus on enhancing diversity within chapters and the broader organization, including Board membership.
- We are developing expansive online programming, such as webinars and virtual colloquia, concentrating on diversity within psychology.
- A critical reassessment of the DAC’s name, mission, and purpose will ensure they align with our evolving goals and the broader vision of Psi Chi.

Conclusion
The journey toward a more diverse and internationally focused Psi Chi is ongoing. It’s a path paved with challenges and immense opportunities for growth and learning. As members of Psi Chi and the broader psychological community, we all participate in this journey as an opportunity for discoveries that open new possibilities for all chapters. By embracing diversity and international perspectives, we can ensure that Psi Chi remains a vibrant, relevant, and inclusive society for all.

References


Dr. Vinita Puri is the Clinical Director of Resilience Counselling and Coaching Services, which provides a range of specialty mental health services and programs that include mindfulness based training and cognitive psychotherapy. Most recently, she has joined Western State University in California as a faculty member for the MS in psychology program at Western State University (USA). Dr. Puri holds a doctorate in industrial and organizational psychology, a master’s in criminalological research, a master’s in social work, and a specialized honors BA in sociology. At the present time, she is completing her PhD at Walden University in psychology, with a focus on therapeutic jurisprudence.

Dr. Gabrielle P. A. Smith is an experimental social psychologist and associate professor of psychology at Texas Woman’s University (TWU). She holds a PhD in experimental psychology focusing on social psychology, two MA degrees (women’s studies and experimental psychology) from the University of Alabama, and a BA in psychology from Spelman College. Dr. Smith’s research examines the intersection of marginalized social identities, specifically emphasizing race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Dr. Smith’s previous work explores how social identities exacerbate or buffer against social problems for African American women, women in the workplace, and U.S. Black immigrant populations. Dr. Smith is the current Chief of Staff for the Dallas-Fort Worth Urban League Young Professionals, a committee member of the College Board AP Psychology Exam Advisory Board, and the current Diversity Director for the Psi Chi International Honor Society.

Dr. Maria del Pilar Grazioso holds a PhD in psychology, a master’s degree in developmental and educational psychology and a licenciatura’s degree in psychology. She has experience in developmental and learning pediatrics, community mental health, prevention, gender, multiculturalism, higher education, psychotherapy, counseling, and supervision. In addition, she has worked in administrative, research, teaching, clinical, and professional positions in higher education and private practice. Dr. Grazioso co-founded the first Latin American Psi Chi chapter in Guatemala. She has published and been recognized in Guatemala and internationally for her leadership and contributions. She currently coordinates Asociación Proyecto Agilé Guatemala and is an affiliated researcher at Universidad del Valle de Guatemala and Maya Health Alliance/Wuquawkoc.
2024 Distinguished Member of Psi Chi

We are excited to congratulate Dr. John E. Edlund for his selection as the 2024 Distinguished Member of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology! Dr. Edlund was chosen by Psi Chi’s Board of Directors in recognition for his professional achievements in psychology and in the areas of research, service, teaching, and advancing the mission of Psi Chi.

This is truly the highest award available in our organization. In Psi Chi’s 94-year history, it has only been bestowed upon 47 individuals. Other Psi Chi Distinguished Members include Drs. Albert Bandura, Alice Eagly, Elizabeth Loftus, B. F. Skinner, Philip G. Zimbardo, and more.

View the complete list at www.psichi.org/?Dist_Members

John E. Edlund, PhD

Dr. John E. Edlund, social psychologist, is a Professor of Psychology at the Rochester Institute of Technology. He served as Psi Chi’s first Director of Research. In this role, he was instrumental in the creation of numerous resources for Psi Chi members ranging from the comprehensive R support program, to a research measures database, to the research experts and mentoring system. Beyond this, Dr. Edlund helped lead the creation of the Network for International Collaborative Exchange program that has greatly expanded Psi Chi’s research portfolio giving hundreds of Psi Chi members unique opportunities to participate in cutting edge and international research. His interests in improving research are further exemplified by his meta-science research and his edited books looking at advanced research methods and statistics. He is actively involved in his local community, serving as a coach for multiple youth sports and serving on the board of directors of multiple community organizations. His biggest passion is his family. He has said that all of the great things he has accomplished in his life is due to the constant and unwavering support of his wife and children.
Questions (and Answers)
About “Courting” Graduate School Admissions Committees

Julie Radico, PsyD, ABPP
Radico Psychological and Consultation Services, LLC

Jocelyn Turner-Musa, PhD
Morgan State University (MD)

Mitch Prinstein, PhD, ABPP
University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

Will graduate school admissions committees love you or love you not? Although we aren’t aware of any spells or potions for getting into graduate school, there are things you can do to improve your chances of achieving the happily-ever-after ending that you desire.

In this issue of our graduate school series, our three experts answer questions about nurturing the professional relationships formed during the application and interview process—yes, with a few romantic analogies along the way. Happy Valentine’s Day, and best wishes to you on your graduate school pursuits!

Every romantic couple remembers how they first met! If the graduate school admissions process were a romantic journey, what milestones or experiences would make an applicant particularly charming to an admissions panel?

Radico: Applicants can have a CV (or dating profile, to stick with the analogy) that is easy to read and succinctly identifies the important details related to education, research, service, clinical experience, and work experience that allow admissions to understand who you are and how you would be a good fit at their program. If possible, it would be helpful to have experience in each of those categories.

Turner-Musa: This is a very intriguing question. First impressions do matter. An applicant who has done their homework is impressive. That is, the applicant who has researched the department, the program, faculty research, etc. conveys to the admissions panel the student’s interest in the program. They took the time to learn about the program and have thoughtful questions based on this knowledge.
Prinstein: The perfect meet-cute for me would be an applicant who writes about a specific area of interest in their personal statement, and a link to how that interest fits what our lab is working on. It is always great to see that an applicant has selected their potential graduate mentor carefully and thoughtfully, and not just because they are interested in the geographic location of their graduate program. Mind you, it is not necessary for the applicant’s interests to match the mentor’s exactly, but something that shows that there is a logical opportunity for collaboration would make most feel this relationship really was beschert.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. So how should you dress for your graduate school interviews?

Radico: I would encourage applicants to dress in such a way that the interviewer would not think twice about your outfit. Dress in business attire (e.g., suit), so that the interviewer can primarily focus on your accomplishments and your conversation.

Turner-Musa: I always say, “dress to impress.” That said, business professional attire is appropriate, even in virtual interviews. Treat this like a job interview. If you are not sure, search the internet for examples of business professional attire.

Prinstein: Dress like you are going on an interview in whatever way that means for you. Your doctoral program is a community that needs to accept you for who you truly are and embrace your culture, identity, and contribution, so you should be unabashedly yourself. For many, this includes a suit, but it is far more important that you are comfortable being yourself on that day.

You wouldn’t introduce a first date to your family. Could you share any things that might be “too much information” to share with your graduate school admissions committee?

Radico: It can be important to share some general information about yourself so that the interviewer can gain a better sense of who you are as a whole person. Be sure that the information is true to who you are, and something you can have a comfortable conversation about in any setting. For example, you could talk about your pets, your favorite musical, your love of cooking, etc. Stick to talking about things you enjoy or how you’ve grown over time learning about a certain hobby or sport.

Turner-Musa: Although it is important to share information about yourself, information irrelevant to the process should not be included. For example, it may not be appropriate to complain about a former professor or negative experiences during your undergraduate education. This is like speaking negatively about a former partner on your first date. Such behavior may leave a poor first impression. Similarly, you don’t want to talk about traits or characteristics about yourself that may be questioned by the committee. You want to accentuate the positive.

Prinstein: If it is relevant to the kind of psychologist you want to become, then share it! The question may be when to share it, how much to share, and to whom. Questions about cool bars to go to in the college town may not be important, but questions about the climate, the workload, the mentor’s style are all ok. And sharing who you are, what interests you, what makes you think the way you do are all appropriate as long as you look for a cue, or gauge the receptivity of the people you are meeting with. When in doubt, you can ask a graduate student what they feel the program culture is, and make decisions to share based on what you hear from them.

Flowers might be a nice surprise for your special someone on Valentine’s Day, but should you ever give your graduate school admission committee any sort of gifts?

Radico: No. Your interviewer should not accept any gifts from you. If you’d like to express your appreciation, you can handwrite or email a thank you note.

Turner-Musa: Give the gift of “thanks.” Thank you goes a long way.

Prinstein: A thank you note is nice. Nothing else.

What are ways that students can express their passions, whatever they may be, when applying to graduate school?

Radico: Practice talking about your experiences, interests, and goals with a trusted person in your life. It can also be helpful to practice in a mirror. This will allow you to create concise and clear explanations that you feel comfortable stating out loud.

I’d encourage you to have a 30-second response to the prompt, “Tell me about yourself.” You don’t need to rehearse to the point...
THREE HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

that it feels robotic, but get comfortable with how you can share important information while still being yourself.

**Turner-Musa:** This is an opportunity for you to shine. Talk about a particular experience you had that served as a catalyst for your interest in graduate school. It could be a job, research, internship, volunteer, or other experience that you are passionate about. Perhaps you are passionate about “giving back” to your community and you volunteer at a local community center sharing your knowledge and skills. Be genuine and true to yourself. This will come through in the personal statement and interview.

**Prinstein:** Ask questions! Talk about your past scholarly experiences! Show enthusiasm when people talk about your research. If you got an interview, you are qualified to be there. This is now a sorting process to see who fits which lab at which university, and a lot of that is based on who seems to bring energy and enthusiasm to the table. Academics show excitement by asking each other research questions and talking about possible future directions and collaborations. So let your nerd flag fly high!

**Radico:** A good window for sending a thank you message is the day after the interview. It’s fair to ask follow-up questions at any time. I’d encourage you to express your thanks when asking the question(s), if you have not already sent a separate thank you message. Checking on your application depends on the information the program has provided you on their website or during the interview process. If they tell you they will reach out by a specific date, and that date has passed, it is acceptable to reach out by phone or email.

**Turner-Musa:** It is okay to send an email or note of thanks within 24 hours to one week after the interview. Thanking the committee for the opportunity to meet and discuss your interests in the program shows your appreciation. In any budding relationship, if you’re interested, call, text, or email to let them know. If you don’t reach out, it may be a sign of disinterest.

**Prinstein:** Any time is fine! Many graduate programs make decisions just a few days after Interview Day, so there’s no time to play coy. Having said that, no one likes to date someone desperate, so expressing enthusiasm and gratitude is great. Begging or fawning makes you stand out, in a bad way. Don’t treat interview weekend like a chance to hook up with fellow applicants or students. Don’t try and seem cool. Don’t talk poorly about other programs or faculty. Don’t be mean to administrative staff. Show up ready to learn about the field, about research, and about these people who may well move around one day and will likely be in your professional life one way or another for decades to come.

**Radico:** This will hopefully come across when you are talking about your career goals and how the program will help you achieve those goals. It is not helpful to tell the program that they are your “number one choice.” They have likely heard this before and have learned that candidates are not always truthful when they say such things. Instead, be sure to express your interest in the program for specific reasons related to their faculty, research focus, courses, practicum opportunities, etc.

**Turner-Musa:** Once the application is in, this is not a time to be passive. Be proactive, email faculty and members of the admissions committee to show your appreciation and how much more you’ve learned about the program. You can also share any updates about your own academic or research experiences and how they fit with the program.

**Prinstein:** Most applicants are serious and know what they are getting into. So, it may be important to just avoid anything that makes you stand out, in a bad way. Don’t treat interview weekend like a chance to hook up with fellow applicants or students. Don’t try and seem cool. Don’t talk poorly about other programs or faculty. Don’t be mean to administrative staff. Show up ready to learn about the field, about research, and about these people who may well move around one day and will likely be in your professional life one way or another for decades to come.
Kim Watson, PhD, PMP has over 25 years of coming alongside great visionaries to capture and execute their visions through a team empowered to provide exceptional performance. Along with many successful years of corporate, nonprofit, athletic, and governmental consulting, Kim completed a Master’s degree in Sport and Exercise Psychology, and a PhD in Performance Psychology. She is a globally certified Project Manager Professional (PMP), Six Sigma Green Belt Professional, a professional member of the American Psychological Association (APA), and a professional member of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). Kim helps leaders be intentionally strategic about bolstering their own and their team’s engagement, improving productivity and results, improving retention, minimizing applicant interview time, eliminating costly bad hires, uncovering hidden talent, and increasing their top and bottom lines. Simply put, Kim helps leaders change the way they think about themselves and others for the rest of their lives.

Tell me a little about your occupation.
I work as a consultant, collaborating with organizational leaders to assess their teams and gain insights from a behavioral perspective. My focus is on ensuring that individuals are in roles that align with their natural inclinations, leading to greater job satisfaction which in turn leads to greater engagement. I help identify how people are wired and offer guidance to leaders on optimizing team dynamics. Essentially, leadership is psychologically driven, and my role involves coaching leaders on effective approaches based on the unique traits of their team members. Ultimately, my goal is to contribute to creating a work environment where individuals feel fulfilled, and leaders are equipped to bring out the best in their teams.

What brought you to the psychology field?
My undergraduate degree is in business administration, and I’ve always been someone driven to get things done efficiently. Although I can certainly be visionary, I thrive more on taking someone else’s vision and figuring out how to successfully execute it through a team. For many years, I worked as a project manager, holding a global certification as a project management professional (PMP).

In that role, I was entrusted with significant budgets, often overseeing multimillion-dollar projects with tight deadlines. Through these experiences, I came to a profound realization: no matter how ample the financial resources, success ultimately hinges on having a skilled and motivated team. It became evident that effective leadership and creating an environment where individuals can leverage their strengths are critical. Money is important, of course. You must have the money to do what is needed of you, but it’s more than that. It’s leadership. It’s about leading well and freeing people to leverage the strengths that they bring to the table. To be able to understand their strengths and allowing them the space to excel. I realized that, and this realization inspired me to further develop my skills in working with people. I decided to transition from a business-oriented approach to one driven by psychology. This shift allows me to not only...
manage budgets and operations effectively, but also to understand and connect with the individuals comprising the team. To me, psychology was the natural choice to enhance my ability to collaborate, lead, and create a work environment where everyone’s strengths contribute to overall success.

What did your journey look like to go from a business background into an organizational leadership role?

When I pursued my undergraduate degree, it was primarily driven by expectations from my parents. At the time, I hadn’t given much thought to what I wanted to do with the business degree I was getting. My main focus was on securing a job that would support a family and allow me to make a meaningful contribution. However, life took an unexpected turn, and I found myself as a single mom.

Obtaining that degree was significant for me, as it provided important credentials that made a difference in the job market four decades ago. Having a degree not only signaled to others that I had achieved a certain level of education but also instilled in me a sense of accomplishment and the application of taught skills.

Although I initially entered the workforce with a general understanding of business, I discovered that I didn’t thrive as an employee who merely followed instructions without being equipped to excel. Understanding this inspired me to seek out organizations that respected my strengths and allowed me some autonomy in my role. It became essential for me to have a voice in what I was doing, as I recognized the importance of contributing my abilities the best I could.

Did you feel like you were able to find your voice to speak up for yourself in the workforce?

Yes, and it’s really about finding agency, specifically deciding whether I make decisions based on my internal compass or seeking input from others. People have different approaches, and both are valid, but they’re distinct. Understanding ourselves is key. I struggled with submitting to authority if I felt it didn’t have the organization’s best interests at heart. For me, it’s more about values than work dynamics or politics. Identifying my nonnegotiable values allowed me to confidently voice my opinions and politely decline when something didn’t align with those values. It shifted from being a me-against-another-person narrative to a matter of what was the right thing to do. That has allowed me to adopt and champion a framework of attacking problems, not people.

What are the nonnegotiables you instill in your work life?

Not valuing and treating people well is a nonnegotiable. I acknowledge that fairness and equality are not always the same. I recognize the distinction between fair and equal treatment and I am comfortable with that understanding.

Additionally, working with people who cheat others or are dishonest is a nonnegotiable for me. I had an experience working for a previous organization where, after successfully organizing a major event, my boss asked me to add an unexplained charge to the client’s final invoice. I faced a dilemma of obeying my boss or doing what I believed was correct. I pushed back, expressing my unwillingness to comply, but was instructed to proceed. When the client questioned the added charge in the final meeting, I refused to make up an explanation and chose to quit rather than further compromise my values. It was a challenging decision, but it reinforced the importance of doing the right thing for me.

What motivated you to go back to school?

My decision to return to school was influenced by several factors, such as the unethical scenario with my previous employer and being a parent playing significant roles. However, the primary motivation stemmed from my desire to learn, not out of necessity but genuine curiosity and passion.

Embarking on graduate and postgraduate studies allowed me to transition from absorbing information somewhat passively in my undergraduate years to actively contributing to academic conversations. In the graduate program, I appreciated the opportunity to have a voice in discussions, offering my perspective and insights. The postgraduate experience elevated this opportunity, emphasizing collective contributions to advance the body of knowledge.

I found incredible satisfaction in being part of conversations that pushed the boundaries of understanding and contributed to the progression of knowledge. Although I value the foundational learning from my undergraduate studies, the advanced academic pursuits were driven by my intrinsic motivations to contribute, learn, and engage in meaningful conversations. It wasn’t about meeting expectations but fulfilling my own commitment to personal and intellectual growth.

What guidance do you have for individuals who think it’s too late to pursue a graduate degree (or switch career paths after being a few years into their current field)?

I hold a personal value system that propels me to continually seek self-improvement, always aspiring to be a better version of myself tomorrow than I am today. Despite not pursuing my graduate and postgraduate degrees until later in life, I never considered myself “done” with education. If I had adopted a mindset that dismissed further education, I believe I would have limited my potential for personal growth. I understand the significant commitments involved, such as family responsibilities, time constraints, and financial limitations. However, I advocate for adopting a mindset that recognizes there is always more to learn, enabling us to consistently evolve and become a better version of ourselves in the future.

What was it like to learn about Psi Chi when you went back for your PhD?

Unfortunately, I didn’t join Psi Chi until the end of my PhD program because I didn’t have knowledge about it beforehand. I did my PhD remotely, and without someone introducing me to Psi Chi, I was unaware of its existence. Although I may not be able to speak to how Psi Chi directly impacted my academic experience, I can share what I feel I missed out on and wished I had from the Psi Chi community.

Psi Chi, from my perspective, represents a network of individuals deeply committed to promoting the positive aspects of psychology, both in community impact and in supporting those pursuing careers...
in the field. The grind of graduate and postgraduate work can be challenging, and having a network of cheerleaders and champions in the field could have provided crucial support during moments of doubt and exhaustion.

Looking back, I recognize the potential benefits of the community aspect and the support it offers. Although grants weren’t a significant concern for me as I went back to school later in life and chose to manage my student loans independently, having colleagues for mutual support and encouragement would have been quite valuable. Despite these missed opportunities, I did form strong relationships within my PhD cohort that continue to be important to me.

What importance or value would you place on advisor support?
I believe advisor support is important. Throughout my four-year PhD journey, I had the experience of working with five different advisors, which presented its own challenges. The frequent changes in my trusted point of contact made it difficult to address issues effectively. If I had been a member of Psi Chi, I believe it could have played a helpful role in advocating for myself and the program.

Having an advisor who actively promotes Psi Chi and values its role could have provided a sense of continuity and support. This continuity might have encouraged my involvement with Psi Chi, as I could have had a consistent advocate for both my academic and personal development.

What advice would you give for Psi Chi members wanting to lean into the psychology side of business, or current psychology undergrads unsure of how to use their degree?
I would advise individuals, both in the career world looking to redirect toward psychology and psychology undergraduates unsure of their path, to first understand the distinction between clinical and applied psychology. This distinction is fundamental for anyone seeking a degree or career in psychology. As an applied psychologist myself, I can attest to the vast differences between these two fields. Once this understanding is in place, individuals can better identify the career path that aligns with their knowledge and passion, allowing them to make a meaningful impact in their chosen field.

Beyond that, it’s essential to do the necessary introspection to determine personal nonnegotiables. We all may find ourselves as employees at some point, and having a clear understanding of what we are unwilling to compromise on enables us to navigate the professional landscape with respect and integrity. Deciding not just what we want to do, but what we won’t do, is a crucial step in shaping a fulfilling and purposeful career.

What piece of advice would you like to leave for our members?
I would emphasize that the value of any organization, including Psi Chi, is directly proportional to the level of engagement and participation by its members. Joining Psi Chi, or any organization for that matter, becomes truly beneficial when individuals actively take advantage of the opportunities and resources available to them. It’s akin to joining a gym but never going and then expecting results. Engagement is key, and the more someone invests in the organization the more they will gain from it.

In my limited exposure to Psi Chi while in the academic setting, I have encountered remarkable and inspiring individuals. I regret not having these connections earlier in my journey, but I now appreciate the opportunity to foster these relationships moving forward.
Like most aspects of graduate school, preparing to teach your first course as a graduate student can be overwhelming. It is common to feel unprepared to pass on knowledge that you are still learning yourself, and choosing which information students learn and how they learn it feels like a big responsibility. However, you will have many resources to support and guide you, and your instructional skills and content knowledge will grow quickly. You will come to find that teaching is an incredibly rewarding experience unlike any other, as you get to re-experience the joy of learning your favorite subjects through new eyes. In this article, we aim to present practical advice for the first-time graduate instructor.

Seek Inspiration
Although you may be a novice instructor, at this point in your education, you are also a professional student with countless hours in the classroom. Spend some time reflecting on the courses, assignments, and professors you have had in the past that you connected with and learned from most. Ask yourself, “Why did I enjoy that course so much?” “Why did I learn so much from that assignment?” and “Was there something about the instructor’s teaching style that kept me engaged with the course content?” For a wider range of perspectives, ask other graduate students to share their experiences with you. You can find out which professors in your department receive excellent teaching reviews and ask to observe their class and/or talk with them about their approach to teaching. Drawing inspiration from past assignments and instructing styles that you and others have found effective is a good starting place, and you can adjust accordingly when you get more experience.
Don’t Start From Scratch
For regularly taught courses in your department, search for existing materials developed for your course by previous instructors. It is common for departments to have a syllabi archive containing the more recent versions for each class. If your department does not have an archive, you can instead search for your course in the university’s course registry to find instructors who have taught it recently and request to review their syllabus. You will likely want to edit this document catering to how you want to teach your course, but it will feel much less overwhelming if you have a starting place. In the rare chance that your class has not been taught before, you should inquire about whether your department or university has a syllabus “template” that will provide a standardized format and language for university-wide policies. You can also search for syllabi from other universities on your course for further inspiration.

Beyond the syllabus, you can reach out to professors or graduate students who have taught the course before and request their materials (e.g., assignments, lecture slides). Many textbooks have lecture slides and test question banks that you can use as a starting point. Again, you can aim to personalize these materials over time, but having somewhere to start will make the process less overwhelming and ensure that you teach what other instructors in your department and the authors of your textbook consider to be the most important information.

As you develop your course content and materials, set yourself a limited amount of time to work on them. If you let yourself, you can spend all of your time making small changes to lecture content. You can (and will) make these changes over time. The first version of a lecture will never be the best version, and that is okay. The practice of delivering your lectures, fielding questions from students, and reviewing their assessments will provide invaluable information on what changes are needed.

Develop Clear Learning Expectations
One of the first and most foundational tasks you will undertake when teaching a course is creating a syllabus. The syllabus is a contract between you and the students that covers what they can expect to learn about in your course and how they will be assessed on their knowledge. Your syllabus should include a description of the course and assignments, learning outcomes, grading criteria, and estimations of how much time students should spend on assignments. Students will reference this document throughout the course to manage their time, judge the value of each assignment, and understand what exactly you expect of them, so it is important to be clear and give opportunities (e.g., in class or “preclass survey”) for students to ask questions.

Along with clarity, prioritize simplicity when devising your syllabus. Your class is likely one of many that your students are taking, so complex course plans can be overwhelming and cause confusion and missed deadlines. For example, you can make deadlines easy to remember (e.g., set each deadline to Sunday at 11:59 p.m.) or condense the 20 assignments in your course into a few categories (e.g., “content quizzes,” “writing reflections,” and “final project”). These simplifications will make course requirements easier to digest at first glance and will reduce the information students need to remember in order to perform well in your class.

Establish a Safe, Productive Environment
If your course will include discussions about sensitive topics, it will be especially important to include a class climate policy. Learning requires an environment where each person feels comfortable to speak about their experiences and beliefs, and to challenge each other’s ideas. Thus, to facilitate productive discussions, it is imperative to establish that students are part of a learning community where individuals have different backgrounds, experiences, and identities. We recommend setting specific class guidelines, providing an opportunity (i.e., in a “preclass survey”) for students to add to them, and reviewing them if they are broken. For instance, your guidelines could be to:

1. treat others with respect,
2. be conscious of how much you speak to allow time for the class to learn from many perspectives, and
3. allow others (and yourself) to make mistakes and learn from them.

Your syllabus is also a valuable tool to set boundaries that can help to protect your time (and sanity). Clearly state when you will respond to emails and how long it will take you. For instance, you can state that, unless otherwise stated in class or via course announcement, you will respond within 24 hours Monday through Friday, and within 48 hours on the weekend. Set expectations about what requests are reasonable, and when you would prefer to meet in person over email. In a large class, you may be able to review outlines or help brainstorm for big writing assignments, but it would be too cumbersome to review entire drafts before final submission. Or, you may want to state that you prefer to answer any quick questions via email, but would prefer to meet in person to go over an entire exam or to brainstorm for a writing assignment. Meeting with students can take up a lot of your time, so it is important to set office hours that are convenient for you and fall outside your protected time for research and writing. For instance, setting your office hours 30 minutes before class and 30 minutes after class will typically be convenient and work for you and your students. If you do need to meet outside of your stated office hours, try to find a time that works for the student and does not disrupt your research or writing time.

Use Varied, Purposeful Activities and Assessments
Although developing prepared lecture content and assigning chapters from textbooks or books are important to build foundational knowledge, consider breaking up lectures with tools that encourage engagement, such as discussion
important exercise as an instructor and will help you evaluate whether you need to adjust or drop any assignments to ensure that all requirements of a course align with its stated learning outcomes.

**Trust Yourself and Your Strengths**

It is common to be given a teaching assignment in graduate school before you feel like an expert on the topic. However, being a successful instructor does not require you to be a content expert; you only need to know more than the students to teach them, and they are just beginning to learn psychology. Because of your background in the field, you will be able to learn the material faster than they will, and teaching others will help you become an expert on the topic. In fact, learning a topic alongside your students can be advantageous. You just taught the material to yourself, so you are in a strong position to teach it to someone else. You are not a seasoned pro (yet), but you also won’t overcomplicate the material. Someone who has taught the subject countless times (and in many cases, has a teaching assistant who does most of the grading and student interaction) may make the mistake of using terminology that is too technical, or brush past difficult concepts too quickly, while someone who just learned the material has a better grasp on what concepts are easy to confuse, or most difficult to learn. Inevitably, there will be some gaps in your knowledge, especially at this stage. If a student asks you a question that you don’t know the answer to, this can be framed as a learning opportunity for yourself as well as your students. You can always say, “Let me follow up with you on that at a later time,” or, if the question is not sufficiently relevant to the topic at hand, “That’s beyond the scope of the course.”

In general, there is no one way to be a good teacher. It will be important to find your individual strengths, rather than solely attempting to imitate what you have seen. You may be naturally extroverted or introverted, serious or funny, deliberate or spontaneous. Focus on identifying your strengths, and learn to work within them. Your main objectives as an instructor are to provide students with the information and tools they need to succeed in your course (and, more broadly, in their educational career) and to do your best to cultivate a safe, inclusive, and fair environment in which they can learn. By learning how to reach those objectives with your natural personality traits, you are giving yourself the best chance of improving as an instructor.

**Solicit Feedback From a Variety of Sources**

Receiving constructive criticism can be uncomfortable but is necessary when learning any new skill. As someone who is new to teaching, you should seek feedback whenever possible. Don’t wait until the end of the course to ask students what they think of it and whether the course needs any adjustments. Take your course reviews seriously, and tell students that you appreciate their feedback. Ask a seasoned professor or instructor (e.g., your advisor, your teaching appointment supervisor) to sit in on a class and provide you with feedback. Not all feedback will be helpful, and a lot of it will be contradictory. For instance, some of the students might have loved the writing assessments, while a small minority thought that they weren’t worth their time. Some might have wished you lectured more, while others stated that they learn the best from opportunities to discuss the content with others. Although you will never be able to please everyone, you will be able to detect patterns that reveal your strengths as an instructor and the assignments that resonate the most.

Sarah Dimakis is a PhD candidate and Graduate Teaching Fellow at the University of Oregon, who studies how people think about the morality of others. In the last five years as a graduate student, she has taught, co-taught, led labs, and developed materials for several psychology courses, including Moral Psychology, Social Psychology, Research Methods in Psychology, and Statistical Methods in Psychology.

Raleigh Goodwin is a PhD candidate at the University of Oregon and an NSF Graduate Research Fellow. She studies how people evaluate scientific and political information and how individuals form judgments and decisions, especially those involving risk, based on that information. During her undergraduate education, Raleigh worked as a supplemental instructor for Introduction to Psychology and Statistics for Behavioral Sciences at Louisiana State University.
This academic year, Psi Chi’s Board of Directors asks all chapters and individuals to join us for the Pie for a Purpose Global Service Project. The project’s objective is to increase support for mental health advocates through gifts to the Christian Ladd Hall Scholarship for Mental Health Advocacy.

Most of us know at least one person who has struggled with mental illness. Please take this meaningful and easy-to-complete opportunity to celebrate giving, community, and psychology by seeing faculty and others get a pie in the face! View full guidelines and sign up today for instructions, a free poster template, and personalized support.

About the Christian Ladd Hall Scholarship for Mental Health Advocacy

The three main objectives for this scholarship are:

1. To increase mental health advocacy through the support of one Psi Chi member enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate training program with an emphasis on mental health advocacy.
2. To increase the awareness of and support for mental health advocacy through scholarship recipients’ future work, application essays, and community advocacy events.
3. To honor the memory of Christian Ladd Hall, a young man whose life story was impacted by Bipolar Disorder II.

The Scholarship

Once fully endowed, the Christian Ladd Hall Scholarship will award a $3,000 scholarship each year to a Psi Chi member who is an advanced undergraduate student or graduate student training for a professional career that includes mental health advocacy. In addition to the scholarship, recipients may also request up to $1,000 to create and offer a mental health advocacy event in their community. All applicants for this scholarship submit an essay on mental health advocacy. A selection of these essays will be published each year in the Eye on Psi Chi.

Remembering Christian Ladd Hall

Christian Ladd Hall passed away from accidental fentanyl poisoning on July 9, 2022, at the age of 27. Diagnosed with Bipolar II, all aspects of Christian’s life story were impacted by these mental health challenges. Christian’s story of defeats and victories is similar to so many others who will benefit from increased mental health advocacy and action.
Virtual Internships and Experience in the Helping Professions

Vicky Phares, PhD
University of South Florida

Do you want an internship or other hands-on experience in the helping professions but can’t find anything through your university or in your town? No worries—it’s just a click away! That’s right, there are a great many virtual opportunities where you can help others and also develop your own professional skills.

Most students already know that they need research experience to gain admission to research-oriented graduate programs (such as a PhD in clinical psychology). If that’s you, McMahon (2021) provided some specific resources on how to find a research assistant position.
Students may or may not know that, if they are pursuing a practice-oriented graduate program (e.g., a master’s degree in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, social work, rehabilitation and mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy), they often need a great deal of experience in the field. Internships can be paid or unpaid, and they can be face-to-face or virtual. Volunteering can also count as experience even if it is not formally called an internship. There are big scholarly debates about the exact definition of an internship, but for the purposes of this article, I will use the term internship to denote any experiential learning that is supervised and that occurs outside of the classroom.

Let’s start with a brief overview of how you can find an in-person internship that is linked to your university or that is in your town. McMahon (2019) suggested that you first start out by asking about internships in your psychology department. For example, you could ask advisers, professors, and graduate student teaching assistants about internship opportunities. In addition to asking within the psychology department, you can ask about internships in your career services center or your office of community engagement. Many universities also have an office of student organizations, which might include an office for leadership and civic engagement. McMahon (2019) went on to provide five excellent tips on finding an internship locally.

Tip 1: Ask directly about internships.
Tip 2: Begin networking now.
Tip 3: Look and listen for the needs others.
Tip 4: Develop unique skill sets.
Tip 5: Design an internship from scratch (pages 35–37).

She also created a very useful blog about psychology jobs and internships, which can be searched based on thousands of locations around the world (McMahon, 2023).

But if you can’t find anything locally in your area, there is still hope! Even before the COVID shutdown, there were a number of online internship opportunities, but the shutdown lead to a notable increase of virtual internships—partly because the demand for virtual psychological services skyrocketed (Ainsworth et al., 2021). These virtual opportunities have largely remained in place even after the lock-down.

Here are some high-quality virtual internships and virtual volunteer opportunities for you to consider. They are open to students throughout the United States, and some are even available internationally. Through my internship classes, I have had first-hand experience with each of these sites and have only listed opportunities that my students found to be meaningful.

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Virtual Internships and Volunteer Experiences

**Crisis Text Line**
https://www.crisistextline.org/volunteer/

This internship is excellent. A total of 30 hours of free training in suicide and crisis management. The internship hours are based on your schedule. Training and internship hours are all done online or via text. The organization asks that you complete at least 200 volunteer hours because of how much they train you. My students have found this position to be very rewarding. It is a great internship for those interested in depression, trauma, crisis management, and suicide prevention. Note, however, that it is a very intense experience. Some students who are struggling with their own mental health have found the experience to be too taxing. Some of the training material and text conversations can be triggering and graphic, given the nature of this population. Please consider your own well-being in relation to this terrific but intense internship.

**LGBT National Help Center**
https://www.lgbthotline.org/

There are three national hotlines operated by the LGBT National Help Center: LGBT National Hotline, LGBT National Youth Talkline, and LGBT National Senior Hotline, in addition to an online peer support chat. Volunteers are asked for a 12-month commitment of at least 3 hours per week (with the same time-block each week). There may also be options to volunteer as a Resource Assistant. They are only interested in volunteers who are personally part of the LGBTQA+ community.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness**
NAMI HelpLine: nami.org

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has a virtual HelpLine where volunteers are trained to provide peer support to those in need of help with their mental health. There are also local chapters in most communities around the United States, where volunteers can provide virtual or in-person services, such as facilitating support groups after appropriate training.

**Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)**
https://www.rainn.org/volunteer

This is a nonprofit, antisexual violence organization dedicated to educating the public about sexual violence, safety, and prevention. RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline. After passing a background check, volunteers receive 20 hours of online training. The organization requests that volunteers provide a minimum of 10 hours per month of direct service on the virtual hotline and that they commit to at least 18 months of service.

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1 Quotations are from each organization’s website.
people.” They utilize four strategies to
transgender, queer, & questioning young
The mission of The Trevor Project is to
https://www.thetrevorproject.org/
The TREVOR Project

nonprofit agencies, including medical and
texts. There are various projects worldwide for
Translators Without Borders
https://translatorswithoutborders.org/

For individuals who are fully bilingual, there are various projects worldwide for nonprofit agencies, including medical and crisis response texts.

The TREvor Project
https://www.thetrevorproject.org/
“The mission of The Trevor Project is to
end suicide among gay, lesbian, bisexual,
transgender, queer, & questioning young people.” They utilize four strategies to achieve this mission: 1) crisis services,
2) life-affirming resources, 3) education, 4) advocacy. Some of the examples of available internships are Crisis Counselor
(which includes 40 hours of training and requires a 1-year commitment of at least three hours per week) and Advocacy
(which requires a 1-year commitment of at least one to two hours per week).

United Nations
https://www.un.org/
A variety of virtual tasks are available through United Nations Volunteers, including writing, research, translation, and teaching online.

Veterans: Hire Heroes USA
https://www.hireheroesusa.org/
“Hire Heroes USA provides free job search assistance to U.S. military members, veterans, and military spouses, and we help companies connect with opportunities to hire them.” Students could help with mock interviews and outreach.

Volunteer Match
https://www.volunteermatch.org/
In addition to the tried-and-true virtual internships and volunteer opportunities that were just listed, you can also search for your own in-person or virtual opportunities through Volunteer Match. Volunteer Match is a searchable database for volunteer positions across the United States. The database allows you to search for either Virtual Volunteering or In-Person Volunteering near your location (or both!). Many worthy nonprofit agencies need your help at this time and can accept your help through a solely virtual manner.

Other Resources
Note that you can also conduct searches for internships through a number of mechanisms, such as Handshake, Indeed, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Google for Jobs, Vault, and Way Up.

Concluding Comments—Also Known as: Go for It!
No matter how you find your internship, it will be worth it. As noted by McMahon (2019), “Internships are almost always fruitful” (p. 35), even if it helps you realize what you don’t want to pursue rather than being a good fit with your interests.

On numerous occasions, I have told my students that internships are a win-win-win situation, whereby:
1. Students gain experience that can help them secure a job or admission to graduate school;
2. clients receive help from compassionate, caring, well-trained individuals, and
3. agencies (that are often underfunded and struggling to meet their mission goals) receive tremendous help from the next generation of young professionals.

So, even if your college or university does not offer internships or if you are in an isolated location that has limited mental health agencies or even if you have challenges (like transportation or mobility issues) that preclude an in-person internship—fear not. Your virtual internship is just one click away!

References

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CHICAGO, IL
MPA: April 18–20

SAN FRANCISCO, CA
WPA: April 24–28

See you there!
Have you ever thought, “I want to get into the minds of criminals!” Or, “I want to know what drives people to commit crimes.” Often students become interested in criminal justice psychology topics because of burning questions like these. However, contrary to what popular television series like *CSI*, *Criminal Minds*, or *Mindhunter* might have you believe, decades of research have already provided some answers. Generally, eight risk factors consistently predict criminal behavior and have been dubbed the “Central Eight” (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). This article provides an overview of these risk factors, how they are used to inform treatments to reduce the chances of future offending behavior, and other considerations that make correctional psychology interventions effective. With approximately 1.2 million adults incarcerated across the United States (Carson, 2022)—about 95% of whom will one day return to their neighborhoods (Hughes & Wilson, 2004)—this work is all the more essential.

A Reigning Paradigm: The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model Explained
The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model is the most studied and cited model for assessing and managing offense risk (see Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Each of the three components represents separate but interlocking principles (See figure 1).
Figure 1:
What Questions Does the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model Ask?

The **Risk** principle says that individuals who are at higher risk for offending behavior should receive more intensive services (i.e., a higher dosage) than people who are lower risk and that high-risk and low-risk people should not be treated together (Lowencamp et al., 2006). For example, you would not want to place people encountering the system for the first time for a misdemeanor offense in the same treatment group as people with repeat felony offenses. This setup not only exposes lower risk people to those with more experience living a criminal lifestyle, but it is also a waste of resources because lower risk people require less intervention.

Standardized risk tools such as the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI; Andrews et al., 2004) or the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS; Latessa et al., 2010) can help mental health and correctional professionals identify how many and which risk factors are most relevant for each person. In general, more risk factors mean a higher risk of reoffending. This is where the Central Eight come in. They include:

1. **Criminal history**—the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior!
2. **Antisocial personality disorder or traits**—people with these traits tend to have little regard for the rights or well-being of other people.
3. **Criminal thinking or antisocial cognitions**—thoughts or attitudes someone has that justifies their illegal activity (e.g., believing society owes them).  
4. **Criminal or antisocial peer influence**—consider how influential your social circle can be on your beliefs and choices or how you have been able to influence others.
5. **Poor educational or work achievement**—people may resort to illegal means to make ends meet when faced with economic instability caused by few marketable skills and job opportunities.
6. **Substance use**—not only because some substances are illegal to use, possess, or sell, but also because substance intoxication can impair good decision-making.
7. **Family or relationship discord**—this could include childhood abuse or neglect, strained relationships with family members, a chaotic home environment, or a pattern of unhealthy romantic relationships.
8. **Unproductive leisure time and recreation**—there is some truth to the adage, “idle hands are the devil’s workshop.”

Other factors may be relevant, but the Central Eight are consistently observed in the literature as having the strongest predictive power (e.g., Goodley et al., 2022; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2009). Students often assume mental illness is one of the Central Eight risk factors. Although people with serious mental illness are overrepresented in correctional environments relative to the general population (Bronson & Berzofsky, 2017), far more justice-involved people do not have a mental illness. Our society has historically drawn a misguided link between mental illness and crime. In reality, about 90% of people with mental illness who become justice-involved do so for reasons other than their illness (Skeem et al., 2011) and they are more often victims of crime than perpetrators (Desmarais et al., 2014). Although people with mental illnesses are generally not dangerous, mental illness may still be a necessary treatment component.

Some risk factors are static, meaning they cannot be changed. Criminal history is one example; you cannot go back in time and erase the commission of a crime. Static risk factors have implications for the intensity of treatment but are not particularly helpful for determining what should be targeted in treatment. Other risk factors are dynamic, meaning they can be modified. These changeable risk factors are also called “criminogenic needs” as they form the basis of the **Need** principle. Thus, the Need principle says interventions aimed at reducing offense risk must target these changeable factors using evidence-based interventions (i.e., interventions backed by research). Examples include using cognitive-behavioral techniques to alter criminal thinking or enrolling individuals in educational or vocational training programs.

The **Responsivity** principle does not focus on any Central Eight factors; it focuses on considerations that will improve individuals’ responsiveness to criminogenic interventions. This principle recognizes that certain conditions or barriers can get in the way of someone’s ability to engage effectively in the process of reducing their offense risk.
Responsivity considerations may include an individual’s reading or writing skills, cognitive or learning disabilities, language or cultural barriers, mental health symptoms, or access to necessary resources. This principle is very important because even the most well-researched interventions will fail if their content or delivery does not match how a person can best attend to, understand, connect with, or access information. For example, if treatment materials are written at a 6th-grade reading level, how will someone with a 3rd-grade education participate? Or if someone is experiencing untreated ADHD symptoms, can they pay enough attention in their anger management group without becoming distracted?

Does RNR Actually Work?

Although it can be challenging for correctional agencies to fully adhere to each of the principles because they require trained staff, an organizational culture that supports growth, good quality assessment tools, availability of a wide range of services, and confidential space for interventions to take place, RNR-informed interventions can reduce reoffending rates by as much as 30–35% and are not any more financially costly to implement than interventions that are out of step with RNR (Bonta & Andrews, 2012; Romani et al., 2012). Further, programs that do not adhere to RNR principles show increases in reoffending on par with traditional punishment approaches (e.g., incarceration by itself; Romani et al., 2012).

The effectiveness of RNR has been replicated in community and in-custody correctional environments (Ogloff & Davis, 2004; Stewart et al., 2014), and these principles largely apply to various subpopulations of people involved in the criminal legal system, such as those with diagnosed mental health disorders (Skeem & Polaschek, 2020), those with sexual and violent offense histories (Schumaker & Losel, 2015), women (Green et al., 2005; Lovins et al., 2007), and youth (Andrews et al., 1990; Grieger & Hosser, 2014). However, the application of RNR may not look the same for everyone, as certain groups or clients show more need in certain areas than others. For example, women in the criminal legal system have higher rates of complex trauma, abuse, and mental illness than men, which suggests that these areas should be prioritized as responsivity factors in treatment (Fritzon et al., 2021).

Are There Any Limitations of RNR and Is It the Only Option?

Despite long-standing support for RNR, it is not without limitations. One common criticism of RNR is that it heavily emphasizes the risk people pose to others and what they need to change about themselves to be less of a risk. The Good Lives Model (GLM; Ward & Brown, 2004) was developed in response to this limitation. According to GLM, equal weight should be given to helping people develop skills that will (a) keep their risk of reoffending under control and (b) increase their acquisition of “human goods” such as friendships, independence, health, and stability that bring meaning and fulfillment to their life. GLM also encourages therapists to obtain a comprehensive account of the individual’s criminal lifestyle so their existing knowledge can be used to develop a positive, good lives plan moving forward. In this way, a person’s past experiences (good or bad) are considered an asset in treatment (Ward et al., 2007). The developers of RNR have responded to criticisms by the proponents of GLM, essentially arguing that a positive, strengths-based approach is compatible with RNR and that such concerns reflect a misunderstanding of the scope of the RNR model (Andrews et al., 2011).

Another major criticism of RNR is that it does not place enough emphasis on recognizing or addressing the systemic factors that make it more likely certain individuals will become involved in the criminal legal system in the first place. For example, people of color are more likely to be stopped by police, arrested, and given harsher sentences than white people (Tap & Davis, 2022; Wu, 2016). Systemic racism can also create limited academic and economic growth opportunities for people of color (Gardner-Neblett et al., 2023; Perez-Stable & Hooper, 2021). Although race and ethnicity are not included in the Central Eight, it has been argued that, because several factors are so often associated with race and ethnicity, RNR perpetuates bias by labeling persons of color as disproportionately higher risk (Starr, 2014). However, the use of structured assessment measures developed by researchers and supported by scientific studies can help reduce biased estimates about someone’s risk that influence various legal decisions, such as whether someone should be released on bail, whether they deserve a lighter or harsher sentence, or where they should serve their time after sentencing (Desmarais & Zottola, 2020; Lowder et al., 2022; Vincent & Viljoen, 2020). Risk tools based on the RNR model simply serve as a mirror reflecting the systemic barriers in our society. For example, if lack of employment increases the risk for criminal behavior and more Black men are unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023); e.g., due to generational disparities, hiring bias by employers), it seems we should focus on dismantling the race-unemployment link. Regardless of race, acknowledging and processing experiences of racial trauma and white supremacy with justice-involved clients could be more routinely integrated into treatment and may increase responsibility to criminogenic interventions (Batastini et al., 2022).

Serious mental illness (e.g., major depression, schizophrenia, posttraumatic stress) is another responsibility concern that may warrant more attention in some cases than the basic RNR framework gives. We already know mental illness is not a primary risk factor for crime; however, for people with both serious mental illness and criminal legal involvement, the Bi-Adaptive Model proposes that interventions will be most effective at reducing reoffending if psychiatric and criminogenic risk factors are addressed at the same time (Scanlon & Morgan, 2021). So, in addition to the changeable factors within the Central Eight, programs may also need to address someone’s compliance with prescribed medications, teach them new skills to cope with specific symptoms, and/or reduce their reluctance to see a mental health provider.

Despite its imperfections, the RNR model has reigned supreme because it is easy to follow, flexible, cost-effective, and can produce good results for many types of people under correctional supervision or custody.
Noneetheless, high rates of racial and ethnic disparities, trauma exposure, and mental illness among people who are involved in the criminal legal system require an expanded framework of rehabilitation in which RNR is applied more completely and/or supplemented with other approaches that not only enhance crime reduction goals but also help people achieve well-being.

Does Correctional Psychology Appeal to You?

If you found this article intriguing, a career in correctional psychology or mental health might be a great fit for you. Many state and local correctional facilities hire bachelor’s and master’s-level providers with psychology degrees. However, a doctoral degree in clinical or counseling psychology can offer more flexibility and options in both correctional practice and research.

The best way to learn about a career in this field is to find someone already doing this work and ask about their professional journey. Check out the jail or prisons in your area—could you volunteer for or shadow someone in their mental health department? Is there someone at your university doing research with correctional populations and could you apply to be a research assistant? Divisions 18 and 41 of the American Psychological Association may also be good places to network and find mentorship.

References


Criminal Justice and Behavior, 38(1), 1–21.


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Mary Dillon is a second-year PhD student in counseling psychology at the University of Memphis. She earned her bachelor’s degree in criminal justice specializing in forensic psychology from Seattle University in 2019 and her master of arts in forensic psychology from George Washington University in 2022. Her research interests include criminal justice reform, the identification of prejudicial thinking, the impact of intersectional identities on justice-involved individuals, forensic assessment of individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities, and the detection of sexually abusive behavior. She is passionate about identifying disparities in forensic psychology and using an interdisciplinary approach to research.
Psi Chi’s mission is “recognizing and promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology.” Local advisors and officers: Your chapter probably already recognizes and promotes members’ achievements in many ways—from honoring them at induction ceremonies to inviting them to present about their work. But going beyond this, is your chapter also fulfilling its role in promoting the application of psychology?

As members, we have many ways to apply psychology to the world around us, and in fact much of psychology focuses on problems that can be solved using our discipline’s wisdom. For example, most psychology majors will take Psychopathology and Mental Health, a class focused on the diagnosis and treatment of atypical behaviors that interfere with everyday life (Best Psychology Degrees, 2023). Although psychological science offers important problem-solving information, there has been a growing appreciation for the application of psychology to understand and promote healthy human behavior. We can apply psychology not only as a solution for problems but also as a catalyst to make good things even better.

In 2004, Peterson and Seligman looked across time periods and cultures, using domains of religion, philosophy, and science, to ultimately identify six universally valued virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

How Can Psi Chi Chapters Facilitate Values in Action?

Merry J. Sleigh, PhD, and Donna Webster Nelson, PhD
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This identification led to the Values in Action Inventory (VIA), which categorized individual traits and strengths that facilitate the development and manifestation of each virtue (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ruch & Pryor, 2015; VIACharacter.org, 2020). For example, leadership experience is an expression of and catalyst for the virtue of justice. Quite a few research studies have provided evidence that supportive school, work, or family contexts enable the development and expression of character strengths and virtues (Jach et al., 2018; Lavy, 2019; Meyers et al., 2019). Furthermore, interventions designed to facilitate identifying and using strengths have been shown to lead to a range of positive outcomes for individuals including greater life satisfaction, increased positive emotion, and reduced depression (Schutte & Madouff, 2019). In this article, we examine the VIA virtues and associated strengths and consider ways that Psi Chi chapters can utilize and encourage them in their members and thus, contribute to the betterment of the individual members and perhaps even society as a whole.

Wisdom

The virtue of wisdom reflects an appreciation for knowledge and learning. Character strengths that lead to wisdom include creativity, curiosity, perspective-taking, judgment, and a love of learning. These strengths motivate an individual to seek understanding in a variety of ways, approaching the topic from multiple angles and evaluating conclusions with critical thinking skills (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Chapters can encourage this virtue by having members:

- Think “outside the box” when developing programming. Brainstorm together without allowing censure or fear to limit ideas so that creativity flourishes. Solicit input from all members. Sometimes those with the least experience in the organization might have the freshest perspective, leading the group to try something new and innovative.
- Make educational events interactive so that the process of learning is engaging, participatory, and fun. For example, a hands-on workshop doing meditation may be more effective than a lecture on stress management.
- Develop programming that reinforces creativity and curiosity. Look for service projects where members can use their artistic talents, play with children, or interview older adults. Post a bulletin board with an open-ended prompt to which members can respond. During planning meetings, faculty advisors might want to focus on asking the officers questions and posing problems rather than providing information and solutions.
- Encourage officers to take the perspective of members when thinking about advertisement and programming. Officers are typically highly involved campus members and may need reminders to think about how to get information to and motivate others, carefully considering issues such as differences in levels of introversion, physical and cognitive abilities, social comfort, experience, and availability. In the same way, faculty advisors might want to carefully consider factors that impact officers’ availability and ability when setting expectations.

Courage

The virtue of courage relates to the way people approach and overcome challenges. Character strengths that lead to and reflect courage include bravery, perseverance, authenticity, zest, and integrity (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Chapters can encourage this virtue by having members:

- Promote an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion that allows each member to be their authentic self. This atmosphere can be created through direct diversity, equity, and inclusion statements on advertisements, or through an intentional culture where individuals are genuinely welcomed and valued at chapter events. Officers (and more experienced members) can make a point to introduce members to one another or initiate a friendly conversation with a member on the fringe of activities.
- Be ethical when conducting chapter business, and incorporate discipline-specific ethics into chapter programming. For example, when student researchers share their experiences, they could include information about ethical standards and review boards, whereas teaching assistants and clinicians could discuss ethical dilemmas and how psychological principles drive appropriate responses.
- Promote bravery by motivating members to stretch out of their comfort zone. This effort might include getting members to conduct research, run for an officer position, attend regional conventions, apply for grants, or even make a new friend. A chapter might encourage individual members, who are not officers, to take ownership of one activity or project.
- Approach setbacks as learning experiences. Every chapter has faced challenges, disappointments, and failures. The key is how the chapter responds. If members adopt a growth mindset, this means they believe they can improve, learn new things, and overcome obstacles (Dweck, 1999). This mindset prompts people to persevere and work harder in the face of challenges, increasing chances they will achieve their goals (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Faculty advisors and officers can model this mindset for other members.

Humanity

The virtue of humanity is one of love for others manifested in warm, positive relationships. Character strengths that lead to humanity include kindness, social intelligence, and love (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Chapters can encourage this virtue by having members:

- Make sure to think about service from the perspective of those being served. Chapter members need to make sure that they do not focus more on executing a service project than they do about intentionally understanding the true needs, context, and values of those they are attempting to serve (see Ritzer & Sleigh, 2018).
- Practice random acts of kindness and educate people about the benefits of such behavior (Abrams, 2021). As one example, chapters could join
with the American Psychological Association in supporting the #BeKind21 campaign from Lady Gaga’s Born This Way Foundation.

- Recognize and reinforce character strengths in self and others. This identification might come via a workshop where members take a strength assessment and then discuss their results (see assessment options at the end of this article). As another example, department faculty and chapter officers might develop annual chapter awards for individual members who display specific virtues or traits.

- Protect the mental health of chapter members by appreciating the stressors created by a post-COVID academic environment (Seppäälä, 2022). Chapters might help members by offering workshops on self-care, stress reduction, or caregiver support. Faculty advisors and chapters can also support members by maintaining realistic expectations of one another and extending the trait of forgiveness when needed.

- Develop social intelligence. Establish and follow ground rules for chapter meetings and events that facilitate smooth, cooperative, and productive interactions. Practice active listening skills and respectful communication to facilitate mutual understanding, negotiate conflict constructively, and forge positive connections among members.

**JUSTICE**

The virtue of justice is exemplified by an awareness of and respect for those around us. This virtue facilitates teamwork and social structure. Character strengths that lead to justice include citizenship, fairness, teamwork, and leadership (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Chapters can encourage this virtue by having members:

- **Participate in the voting process.** Educate members about government, at all levels, and Psi Chi voting opportunities and then facilitate participation. For example, chapters can advertise dates and voting options related to local, state, and national elections. Psi Chi members, through their chapter, can vote each year on a President for the Psi Chi Board of Directors.

- **Take on leadership responsibilities.** Make sure to advertise chapter officer positions, but also consider short-term leadership opportunities for members. For example, a member could initiate and run a one-time service project in the community, lead an event where they share a special talent, or serve as a liaison between Psi Chi and an outside group of which they are a member. Chapters must have a minimum of at least three officers; however, active chapters often have additional officer positions in order to maximize leadership opportunities.

- **Carefully examine chapter practices with an eye for fairness and justice for all members.** For example, officers may consider whether chapter information, event accessibility, and feedback opportunities are equally accessible to all members. Faculty advisors should be sensitive to financial, or other, constraints that might prevent students from joining and make themselves aware of support resources.

- **Sponsor a session on implicit bias.** Provide members with resources to test their implicit attitudes as a means of discovering their own unconscious biases toward different groups. Use this as an opportunity to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the chapter and the broader university.

- **Create a strong chapter structure that supports the transition between officers.** The chapter might choose to have training materials in place for new officers, or create a process where outgoing officers train new ones. The faculty advisor can maintain an electronic library of templates for commonly used materials, such as induction ceremony brochures, invitation emails, and announcements. New chapter officers might also appreciate having a document that clearly describes their responsibilities, available resources, and anticipated timeline.

**TEMPERANCE**

The virtue of temperance is reflected in a life of moderation and self-discipline. Character strengths that lead to temperance include forgiveness, humility, and self-control (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Chapters can encourage this virtue by having members:

- **Model humility through concerted efforts to recognize all team members who have contributed to events or accomplishments.** Be generous with credit and thanks.

- **Hosting workshops on the mental health benefits associated with forgiveness** (see Harvard Health, 2021; Weir, 2017).

- **Increase humility through activities (e.g., service projects, fundraising, advocacy) that reveal members’ own pockets of privilege.**
• Participate in self-regulation training to learn to recognize emotional triggers and develop adaptive responses to difficult or challenging situations. Visit positivepsychology.com/self-regulation/ for educational materials, self-assessments, and training worksheets and activities.

• Invite speakers to share information about careers related to behavioral analysis and regulation. While educating the audience about career paths, the experts can also provide an overview of how their strategies can be applied to individual self-assessment and growth.

TRANSCENDENCE

The virtue of transcendence is seen in an appreciation of the beauty of the world around us. Transcendence allows people to desire excellence and meaning in our pursuits. Character strengths that lead to transcendence include gratitude, hope, enthusiasm, spirituality, and humor (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Chapters can encourage this virtue by having members:

• Actively show gratitude. Gratitude is a very intentional thought process that involves acknowledging a benefit and then giving credit to others for that benefit (Cannon, 2017). Gratitude is most effective when it is specific to the recipient. Advisors, officers, and members should be quick to offer thanks across levels of the organization, with the goal to be target-specific.

• Develop programming where gratitude is the focus. For example, students could be invited to write thank you notes to professors, faculty mentors, or administrative staff. Similarly, students could write thank you notes to deployed military members or local community leaders.

• Pursue humor and fun. Plan social events that provide opportunities for members to interact in an informal, playful context. Members could organize intramural sports or gather for outings to local cinemas, concerts, or restaurants.

• Model enthusiasm. Faculty advisors and officers are frequently observed by other members, and this grants them an opportunity to role model the very behaviors that we hope to see across the chapter. Leaders who smile and have an upbeat attitude promote positive interactions and inspire positive feelings in others (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008).

• Identify other campus organizations with which there are shared priorities or a similar commitment to excellence, and unite, with an attitude of enthusiasm and hopefulness, to accomplish a meaningful goal. For example, groups may join together to beautify the campus with flowers, start a food garden at a local family shelter, or paint a mural in the community. Additionally, diverse organizations may find common ground in advocating for a vulnerable societal group, educating people about mental health issues, or celebrating a pivotal moment in history.

If you see value in these virtues, and we hope you do, one place to start might be to identify your own individual strengths. Once you know your own strengths, you can better serve those around you. Such self-awareness should also enable you to better recognize and appreciate the strengths of others. Below are free online resources to help you develop your own character strength profile:

The VIA Character Strengths Survey: https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register

Signature Strength Questionnaire (SSQ-72): https://strengthsbasedresilience.com/assessments/ssi72

3 Strengths Exercises: https://tools.positivpsychology.com/3-exercises-strengths

The next step might be to expand this exercise to your chapter officers and members! We hope this article has given you a starting point to consider virtues and how to put them into action. We feel confident that you can use your own traits—creativity, wisdom, teamwork, humor, zest—to come up with a wealth of applications to benefit your chapter and its members.

REFERENCES


Donna W. Nelson, PhD, earned her doctorate in social psychology from the University of Maryland. She previously served as Psi Chi faculty advisor at both the University of Florida and Winthrop University. She is currently a psychology professor at Winthrop and faculty advisor of Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society. Dr. Nelson has been recognized with numerous awards for her mentorship and collaborative research with undergraduates.

Merry J. Sleigh, PhD, is a professor at Winthrop University (SC) who has been actively engaged with Psi Chi for almost three decades, including serving in vice-presidential and presidential roles on the Board of Directors. She earned her undergraduate degree from James Madison University (VA) and her doctorate from Virginia Tech. Dr. Sleigh has won numerous awards for her mentoring, teaching, and advising.
The Psychodynamic Underpinnings of Fascism
Interview With Sheldon Solomon, PhD

Elisabeth Barrett
Psi Chi Headquarters
Dive into the psychological underpinnings of fascism and examine its components through insights from Dr. Sheldon Solomon. In this interview, he highlights key characteristics of fascism, the manipulations of shared realities by fascist leaders via the spread of information and misinformation, and the role of education for preserving democracy.

Please summarize what your career and research journey looked like?

I’m a first-generation college student and was a chemistry major in college. In the 1970s, there was no such thing as psychology in high school, and I had no idea that the discipline of psychology existed beyond, let’s say, therapy. But I took Introductory Psychology in my second year of college because my roommate happened to have the books, and I was immediately attracted to the discourse—particularly the idea that you could use the scientific method to understand the way that people behave. I was also attracted to social psychology, in particular, because of its historical roots, founded after World War II with a big commitment to the value of theory. But at the same time, I was equally enthused by social psychology’s commitment to practical applications, particularly at the time, trying to figure out racism on the domestic front, and fascism and authoritarianism in the aftermath of World War II on the international front.

How would you define fascism, and what are key characteristics to look for?

When I talk about these ideas, I try and say to folks, “Leave your politics at the door.” This is a non-political effort to understand a timely and important phenomenon that is happening around us. With that in mind, I rely on Jason Stanley, a philosopher at Yale who wrote a book called How Fascism Works, the Politics of Us and Them (2018). He said that fascism has three components:

1. Populism: fosters domestic divisiveness
2. Nativism: tends to surround racial, ethnic, or religious purity, and is often complemented by xenophobia
3. Authoritarianism: submission to authority, often by mindless adherence to larger-than-life leader who thinks they’re solely capable of running the world

“Fascist politicians,” Stanley notes, “transform the population’s shared understanding of reality by twisting the language of ideals through propaganda and promoting anti-intellectualism, attacking universities and educational systems that might challenge their ideas. Eventually...fascist politics creates a state of unreality, in which conspiracy theories and fake news replace reasoned debate.”

In recent years, the use of the term “fascism,” as well as the awareness of it, has increased significantly. Some people express that individuals are throwing that term around loosely, and others are genuinely afraid. How might you comment on concerns of the rise of fascism?

I’m of the persuasion, following Hannah Arendt in The Origin of Totalitarianism (1951) that fascists often come into office through democracy, but then they use democracy to ultimately undermine and eventually destroy it. I argue that a successful fascist politician parallels Hitler’s behavior. His plan relied on turning truth on its head through a variety of mechanisms in order to create a vision of reality that satisfies the psychodynamic yearnings of his constituency but generally has no connection to reality.

Based on independent observations of nonpartisan organizations, fascism is on the rise around the world. Research suggests that, during times of historical upheaval, political preferences shift from what evolutionary psychologists describe as wisdom versus dominance in terms of leadership. Harvard anthropologist Joseph Henrich, in The Secret of Our Success: How Culture Is Driving Human Evolution, Domesticating Our Species, and Making Us Smart (2015) argues that we follow some leaders because we genuinely admire and respect them based on their knowledge and expertise; and, others because we genuinely fear them, not so much that they are wise but rather that they are entirely capable of pummeling us or our enemies into oblivion without one iota of remorse.

And I don’t mean that cynically, because there are times we might need a confident leader to galvanize our energy and enthusiasm, even if it does happen to be behind a belief system that has little to do with reality. When in troubled times, all of us tend to lean in that direction.

How have defined characteristics of fascism changed from its early rise to its later developments?

Everything that was described above—the divisiveness, the nativism, the submission to authority, the devotion to a worldview that denigrates actual thinking or adherence to truth—just becomes more pronounced to the point where the average citizen loses the capacity or the inclination to differentiate between fact and fiction.

What psychological theories relating to human behavior do you utilize in your research, and how does your research help to further develop these theories?

In terms of our understanding of the psychodynamic underpinnings of fascism, we frame our work in terms of the theory of evolution along with current conceptions of developmental and cognitive psychology utilizing the distinction between fast and slow thinking. We are however, fundamentally anchored in existential psychodynamic thought and attachment theory.

My colleagues, Jeff Greenberg and Tom Pyszczynski, and I developed what’s called terror management theory (TMT) in the 1980’s. TMT is derived from cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker’s ideas that humans are uniquely aware of the fact that we are going to die someday. This knowledge creates potentially debilitating terror that we manage by embracing humanly constructed beliefs about reality that help us minimize that anxiety by giving us a sense that we’re persons of value in a world of meaning, and hence eligible for immortality, whether symbolically or literally. Human beings are consequently motivated, whether we are aware of it or not (and mostly we are not),
to maintain faith in our cultural worldviews and/or confidence in our self-esteem. Whenever our worldviews or self-esteem are threatened, a host of compensatory defensive responses are initiated. All these ideas play into the way fascist leaders are, and they render their folks incapable of making rational decisions. The cognitive theory we use is based on Daniel Kahneman’s distinction between fast thinking and slow thinking:

- **Fast thinking** is our default mental apparatus. It is what we use when we walk around on autopilot, enveloped in our cultural worldview. It operates automatically and effortlessly through heuristic shortcuts. It works quite fast and often useful, however, prone to error.

- **Slow thinking** is what we use to solve specific problems. This is our rational, logical, higher order thinking. It requires effort, exercise, education, and self-control. It is genuinely fairly accurate and precise. While slower, it is reliable.

Both systems are fundamentally critical and ideally operate in a coordinated fashion. Fascists, however, work to cripple the slow thinking system by essentially lobotomizing their followers intellectually and mangling them emotionally. Fascists operate by disabling the capacity for rational thought. Essentially, when people are frustrated and anxious, maybe because of economic or psychological insecurity, they crave for something or someone to live for. When that happens, they are particularly prone—and when I say they, I mean all of us—to become devoted to a leader who confidently proclaims that they’re singularly able to rid the world of evil.

Populist leaders tend to, first of all, be extraordinary liars. They construct a worldview of alternative facts to attain and maintain power. This also requires that there be an identifiable external enemy. So, while this fascist leader says they are the best and only they can fix a major problem in the economy, country, or world, they are also likely to identify and declare other people to be the all-encompassing repositories of evil, the eradication of which would make life on Earth to be heaven. This is the emotional mangling that fascist politicians project. They take the fears of their constituents and help convert it into rage projected on an out group declared to be evil.

Then, these leaders build a fact-proof screen between their followers and the realities of the world by disabling the capacity and motivation for critical thinking. By doing this, they imprison their followers in the context of what is, ultimately, a warped and malignant worldview. This is how fascist followers become incapable of discerning falsehood and making rational decisions.

**In what ways do you see untruths utilized and weaponized? And how does fascism develop in political climates?**

Fascism develops in a political climate in a variety of ways depending upon who the leader is as well as the vagaries of the historical moment. There are many commonalities, as well as a few differences in notable fascist leaders, like Mussolini from Italy and Hitler from Germany.

Mussolini said fascism should more appropriately be called “corporatism” because it is a merger of state and corporate power. In one sense, according to political scientists, in all fascist contexts, there is a collusion between authoritarian political leaders and generally amoral, ruthlessly profit-seeking corporate entities that end up transcending the interests of the people in the society itself. What happens in this political context is a conjunction of business interests with political power, not to benefit the people themselves, but rather to keep the people that are in power in power and to keep the rich richer.

In other cases, it really is about maintaining a big lie. Here we get to Hitler who said if you tell a big lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed.

**What are your thoughts on social media’s impact in the spread of both information and misinformation?**

Like any technology, social media has its virtues. And like any new technology,
Do you think leaders are aware that their interests are taboo or unfavorable and conscientiously find ways to make it more palatable for their followers? Would narcissistic tendencies take an effect?

It is often times automatic, as a domineering leader, not knowing what they were doing. Hitler is an interesting case, though, because he knew exactly what he was doing. For example, he held rallies at night when people are tired, so they are easier to persuade. He made sure to speak in really simple words because he didn’t see most people to be intelligent. This way, they are driven by hate and fear rather than reason. Even one of Hitler’s confidants said to always accuse the other people of exactly whatever it is that you are guilty of. Hitler had a clear sense of what he was up to, so I would propose that the answer to this question varies according to the leader in question.

What tips could you provide for people to discern facts from falsehoods given that misinformation has become so vast, normalized, and believable?

At the core, I think it is important that we understand the psychological underpinnings of fascism. If we don’t, democracy is truly endangered.

We need to activate the slow thinking system that entails rational cogitation. Now, how do we secure this? As a researcher teaching in a college setting, I think education is crucial. If fascism is essentially twisting the brains of people to the point where they are no longer capable of differentiating between true and false, we need to metaphorically reengage that thought system in a way that turns the world back right side up.

Another thing is we can’t keep doing is to normalize public lying. It is quite shocking how many statements, how many auditory utterances that tumble out of the face of our politicians, are factually incorrect. Additionally, we need to be sure that individuals have a sufficient education to where they are capable of differentiating between truth and falsehood. Democracy depends on a shared reality, one that is negotiated upon and which we compromise, where there is a shared basis to begin with.

What are you hoping to achieve through your research?

On one hand, we’d like to just understand as much as we can. On the other, we want to use that understanding to come up with a broader theoretical framework to delineate the motivational underpinnings of human behavior. Ultimately, we are just like the original social psychologists striving to enhance psychological well-being and foster social progress. It sounds a little corny, but really, we’d like to do anything to nudge us in a more benign or benevolent direction.

Sheldon Solomon, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at Skidmore College. His studies of the effects of the uniquely human awareness of death on behavior with Jeff Greenberg (at the University of Arizona) and Tom Pyszczynski (at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs) have been supported by the National Science Foundation and Ernest Becker Foundation, and featured in the documentary film Flight from Death: The Quest for Immortality. He is coauthor of In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror and The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life. Sheldon is an American Psychological Society Fellow, a recipient of an American Psychological Association Presidential Citation, a Lifetime Career Award by the International Society for Self and Identity, the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs Annual Faculty Award, and Career Contribution Awards by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology and International Society for the Science of Existential Psychology.
In this interview, Dr. Robert F. Bettler, Jr. unpacks his experiences and advice as a seasoned trial consultant at DecisionQuest, a U.S. legal support company. For twenty-five years, Dr. Bettler has practiced various forms of jury consulting, a tool to help attorneys understand and anticipate how jurors might perceive evidence, process that information, and react behaviorally in their verdicts.

Are you interested in a well-paying career outside of academia that will allow you to practice social psychology? Whereas forensic psychology often involves rehabilitation jobs in correctional facilities and studying the motivations of criminal behavior, trial consultants...
specialize in helping attorneys to select jurors and interpret their behaviors in order to improve the attorneys’ effectiveness during trials. Join us as we explore the path and necessary skills for this fascinating career.

Thank you for speaking with us today. To get us started, could you walk us through a typical week in the life of a trial consultant?

There’s probably not an entirely typical week. Things go from project to project, and sometimes there’s nothing going on in between projects. So it kind of depends on what I’m prepping for or what I’m doing between projects. So it kind of depends on what I’m prepping for or what I’m doing my final report on.

If I’m working on a survey, then I’m going to be researching possible items for a questionnaire, finding subcontractors to recruit participants, and so on.

If I’m working on a mock trial, I have to take a few days to get all the information from the client. I have to immerse myself, at least verse myself, in the case at hand. They’ll send me all kinds of documents to go through to give me a feeling for what the case is about, who the players are, and so on. I’ll also have surveys, and I need to figure out what questions I need to ask. At Decision Quest, we had a body of standard questions, so I would always incorporate those. And then, there’d be plenty of specific questions about the case at hand.

If I’m working on a focus group, I would prepare like for a mock trial, but kind of less structured. Whereas a mock trial has carefully timed schedules, a focus group is kind of freewheeling, though I definitely go in having familiarized myself with the case and with a protocol of what I want to ask the focus group folks.

At the end of a survey, mock trial, focus group, or indeed anything, I need to generate a report for my client. In some cases it could be very thick with, let’s say, 100 or 150 survey items thrown into PowerPoints. Clients and lawyers like to see the PowerPoints! The most important thing is trying to figure out what was in the jurors’ minds. The jurors take information in, right? They process it somehow, and then they react in terms of verdicts or maybe comments or something. So I’m trying to use this overt behavior of comments and survey responses to figure out what’s going on in their heads.

Conducting a mock trial, or a focus group for that matter, is a very intense process. I’ve had 34, 50, and even 98 people in a mock trial before. And you have to herd them around and keep them together. So that’s really intense. At 71 years old, I don’t want to do it anymore. It’s just too draining. So that’s kind of the what a week might look like.

Long ago, I was charged with being the steward of 25 years worth of data. And being very versed in the jury decision-making literature, I personally believe that no one on earth has as much solid, clean data, though sometimes I have to clean it up first. Before COVID when we discovered Zoom mock trials and Zoom focus groups, I spent a lot of time getting all this data and kind of homogenizing it so the variable name and the variable responses were uniform across hundreds and hundreds of datasets. A pretty small minority of trial consultants are really statisticians. So one thing I did with the data, which not a lot of other trial consultants do, was to use this data to conduct meta-analyses to determine if there is any uniformity or consistency is how jurors might react in certain kinds of cases.

What are some myths or relatively unknown aspects of trial consulting?

There’s a TV show called Bull about a trial consultant. When it first came on, I thought, “Oh, that’s interesting.” But after the first half hour, I turned it off, and I’ve never watched it again.

Also, remember that John Grisham movie, The Runaway Jury, where Gene Hackman spies on the jurors and steals their hard drives. I’ve never seen that happen in 25 years of this career. So if you think that’s what I did, I don’t know anything about it. Jurors to me and to most of the trial consultants I know are kind of sacrosanct. We don’t touch the jurors. Now, after the trial and if the judge allows, sometimes we’ll interview some jurors. At that point, you can do that in many states.

Another myth is that trial consultants are mind readers. There has been a lot of research about reading body language, and human beings think they are good at this, but they are not. Some groups like FBI interrogators are maybe a little better than average. But for most people, it is just a crapshoot as to whether they will correctly guess what’s going on in a stranger’s head based on body language.

I always tell my lawyer clients who think I can read minds that human beings are no good at reading the body language of a stranger upon short acquaintance. But on the other hand, I can walk into my house and take one look at my wife in the kitchen, and I know if I’m in trouble. So to illustrate how trial consultants overcome this, on several occasions I’ve been hired to do what’s called trial monitoring where I sit in the courtroom and observe the jurors for weeks and weeks and weeks. Six weeks is not unusual, and I’ll fill up entire notebooks during this time. If you establish a baseline and observe people over time, then you can maybe make some
pretty good guesses about what their body language means.

Are there any films or TV shows you’ve come across that actually do a good job of portraying a trial consultant?

As far as films, I can’t think of any. In The Runaway Jury, remember how the plaintiff’s attorney, Dustin Hoffman, hires a walk-up trial consultant who offers his services for free. What he did and how he operated was kind of like how I operated when I first started. When I first started while I was still in grad school, I was part of just a small two-and-a-half person group. To counter-balance the bad karma that I accumulated from working a number of cases for big corporations, I would do occasionally pro bono (i.e., free) jobs, especially when I was first starting out. My colleague and I would go to the local public defender and offer our services, kind of like what happens in The Runaway Juror.

Actually, I did one pro-bono case just last year where a Spanish family was discriminated against in a very nasty manner, and I advised the attorneys and helped them prepare for the trial. I’m not entirely owing it to my efforts, but of course, mostly the attorney’s efforts. The defendants settled with a multimillion dollar compensation awarded to this poor immigrant family—a life-changing verdict for them. That’s happened several times.

Tell us about a particularly memorable case that you worked on.

I shouldn’t get too deep into anything that’s active or has been active in the last five or ten years. I will mention that you can get on https://pacer.uscourts.gov/, which is a site that holds the documents from various legal actions in federal court. There, you can look up the Enron criminal case and find my name as having done the change of venue survey study because the Enron criminal defendants wanted to change from Houston where they did all their dirty work. There were, if memory serves, 800 respondents in Houston, 800 in Phoenix, 800 in Atlanta, and 800 in Denver, Boulder, or Colorado Springs—I forget which. And so, I put together this report to show why Ken Lay could not get a fair hearing in Houston, and indeed, they hated him there. I should note, he died before trial, so he went to his grave innocent in the eyes of the law.

Like I said, we worked several pro-bono jobs with public defenders. One of them was quite memorable to me—a really heinous murder here in Louisville where I live. I think I’m going to leave the names out, but there’s a book written about it where a guy, let’s say he was in his 50s, was dating a 20-year-old woman. She broke up with him, so he kidnapped her, raped her, tortured her, killed her, and buried her. He was put on trial, and the son of a bitch got off, because the prosecution made some horrendous blunders in the trial.

A few years later, someone discovered some pictures that he had taken while he was raping and murdering this poor young woman, so they put him on trial again. Because of double jeopardy, they could not try him for murder. So they tried him for perjury, because he had, of course, lied multiple times while being interviewed about the murder, and I offered to help the public defender pick a fair jury for this scumbag.

One day, during a break or something, I was sitting alone with this accused perjurer, and he said to me, “Bob, would you kneel down with me and accept Jesus as your personal savior?”

I said, “No, me and Jesus are good, thank you.” So that’s one of my favorite war stories about how a rapist tried to convert me to fundamentalist Christianity!

You had a diverse range of careers before you became a trial consultant. So what drew you to being a trial consultant?

Money and interest. I had a grad school classmate who in turn had a friend who was a big plaintiff’s attorney here in
Louisville. At the time, I was working as a statistician in a private nonprofit, while simultaneously working on my dissertation. This friend kept telling me, “Bob, come and help me with these focus groups.” And finally, he started waving so much money in front of me that I said, “Well, what the hell?” I quit my statistician job, and I started doing this nominally full time.

Again, I started out as a small two-and-a-half person trial consultant, primarily based here in Louisville, but we also did work in West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, and Tennessee. In these surrounding states, we would do mock trials and focus groups and surveys and so on. Then in 2003, DecisionQuest bought us out, which I think to this day is one of the biggest and oldest trial consulting companies. So I became an employee of DecisionQuest, and I just retired at the end of January of this year.

**Which aspects of trial consulting have you found to be the most fulfilling, and are there any areas of it that you don’t like or that are challenging?**

The pro-bono work can be fulfilling. I like the statistics. Now that I’m retired, I really will not go out to a mock trial or anything. I sit here at my computer and do statistics. I’ll do that all day.

This is a business, so a very important component is sales. I really never cared for that part of it. Now, I could go out to a lawyer convention and give a speech. But salesmanship was never really my thing. I just enjoyed, like a lot of your readers, doing social psychological research. This is one of the few places where you can get paid for doing it. You know, you get to kind of figure out what’s going on in the jurors’ heads, which is why I stuck with it for 25 years and didn’t ditch it like I ditched teaching and engineering.

**Could you share any insights regarding average pay, job outlook, etc.?**

What is rewarded the most is getting new business—you know, going out and meeting attorneys. Some trial consultant companies have a department that does nothing but sales. They’re not PhDs, they’re not psychology people. They just go out and try to drum up business. If you do that, then the sky’s the limit. I mean, the person could make a million dollars a year. I was at best low six figures at my peak. Again, the salespeople would go out and get the business, but then I would actually do the business, do the work. For somebody starting out now who has reasonable skills, I think maybe low six figures would be possible. If you think about it: that’s not bad for a psychology MA or PhD.

**Do you need a master’s or a doctorate?**

Most of the people in this business nowadays have a PhD in social science, usually psychology. You see people with either social psychology and clinical psychology, an MA in psychology or some other social science. Those folks are going to be a little lower down on the scale. Then, there’s a bunch of JDs who turn into trial consultants. They actually tend to do better as far as money goes, because in many instances, they know a bunch of lawyers. So they kind of go back to their old colleagues and sell themselves as trial consultants. That’s the most common path.

Especially 30 years ago, there were people who had only a bachelor’s degree in psychology. There is nothing stopping a person with a BA from hanging out a shingle and saying, “Hey, I’m a trial consultant.” There is no regulation—it’s not licensed or regulated or anything. I know people who, in the 80s and 90s, did just that and eventually worked their way up to a really good job. But that being said, there are trial consulting companies nowadays that won’t even talk to you unless you have a PhD or a JD/MA combo.

**Is there any way for a student to dip their toes in the water and see if this is the right career path for them?**

You could Google the phrase “trial consulting” or “jury consulting,” and dozens and if not hundreds of companies will pop up. Some of these companies might offer an internship of some sort. I don’t really know, it’s been so long. How I got into it, and how I got into almost everything in my life, is I knew somebody. So go out and schmooze a bunch of lawyers, and it’ll give you a leg up.

Also, you could conceivably go and sit through a trial. You probably would have to kiss a lot of frogs, but if the attorneys get used to seeing you, it’s possible they might ask your opinion about something, and you might have a toe in the door. I don’t even know what I would do if I was just starting off. I shudder to think about it, but back in the late 90s when I started this, it was just kind of going out and meeting lawyers. Sometimes you can finagle a presentation for a group of lawyers. I’ve done that several times and then got some business out of that.

**What skills or characteristics do you think lead to success in trial consulting?**

It depends on how you define success. If you just define success by money, then you need to be a schmoozer. If a person is a good schmoozer, the sky’s the limit.

Beyond that, you need to have a good grasp of social psychology and social cognition. Most people who have a PhD do, but not all. I know a guy who has a PhD—he’s very successful monetarily, but in the realm of jury psychology, he’s like a one-trick pony where everything comes down to Kelley’s covariation model. That’s what he always falls back on, but a lot more has been done since 1967.

I’ve got four shelves of books over here on jury decision-making and related things like body language. So my advice is to have a really thorough understanding of human decision-making in general and then jury decision-making in particular. I don’t think psychology is an advantage, I think it’s the total advantage.

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Robert F. Bettler, Jr., PhD, is a retired trial consultant. Over his 25 years in that, his third, career, he conducted mock trials, focus groups, surveys, assisted in jury selections, etc. in various civil and criminal cases in every state in the Union, except North Dakota. A degreed electrical engineer in a previous life, he has also authored computer and internet-based programs to facilitate social scientific data collection and analyses. He spends his days in retirement studying foreign languages (Russian, Spanish, German, and Japanese), the psychology of totalitarianism, the social cognitive theories of Jane Austen, and the Biblical book of Judges. Finally, he is a proud veteran of the U.S. Army who can still fit into his dress greens almost 50 years after discharge, as long as he doesn’t breathe too deeply.
Careers and Credentialing Opportunities in Counseling and Psychology: WINDOWS INTO THE WORLD OF WORK

Tony D. Crespi, EdD, ABPP
University of Hartford (CT)

Michael C. Amico, PhD
Connecticut State Community College Housatonic
There is no magical window for clearly seeing the vast array of career choices in professional counseling and psychology. Although a graduate degree can open a porthole, each windowpane views a different scene and career panorama. Still, if the windows are covered or obscured, your view may be eclipsed. Because each view opens contrasting visions, the counseling landscape can feel all-consuming with a sense of uncertainty needing a NorthStar light for vocational guidance. Then too, this is compounded by differing degree options (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, EdD, PsyD, DMFT). Truly, the visual array of degrees alone can feel overwhelming, producing insecurity as if adrift at sea lacking a compass for guidance. Eyeing these vistas, it is also evident that many careers require state certification or a professional license.

A picture window into this universe can help you see and better understand the career options while blocking out extraneous stimuli that can throw indecision into one’s vision. Balancing this array of choices must also include more than a peek or glance at professional certifications and licenses. In many worlds of employment, these are as necessary as a graduate degree, and an understanding of careers in counseling and psychology also requires a knowledge of certification and license requirements to navigate this world.

Glance through a transom window into the world of a school psychologist— a world of professional shortages—and you glimpse a requisite specialist degree (which is a postmaster’s certificate) as well as a state credential from the State Department of Education. Equally notable, the life of a forensic counselor in a state or federal prison views multiple opportunities while wanting State Department of Health Services qualifiers as a licensed professional counselor or equivalent. Within these portals, too, you may glimpse an array of national certifications providing credibility while not typically necessary for practice. Those too who want to assist with substance abuse issues may desire to become licensed alcohol and drug counselor, which requires a master’s degree, while others may see a career as a board certified behavior analyst (BCBA), a licensed marriage and family therapist or licensed psychologist. Each portal requires a clear view for navigation. Look carefully through these windows and understand that, from the Department of Defense (the largest employer of psychologists in the country) to public schools (where shortages of school psychologists are pervasive), students must weigh vastly different career paths.


Fundamentally, each graduate course of study, from a school psychology program to a clinical psychology program to a program in mental health counseling or school counseling delivers a specific curriculum, and often possess differing accreditations that can shape different career options and opportunities. They require differing degrees, differing hours of training, and different types of supervision. Still, many students and faculty know one specialty while lacking details in related fields. As a comparison, although physicians may hold either an MD or DO, few possess manifold board certifications, such as in child psychiatry and family practice granting specialty practice across career dimensions. Choosing a specialty warrants thoughtful attention.

As clarification, a former advisee pursuing a PhD in an esteemed APA-approved program in counseling psychology phoned asking if had been easier to acquire multiple credentials when a student. A clinical neuropsychologist laughingly responded if it had been easy, he and many others would have acquired additional certifications and licenses! He observed that, in his view, few “combined” programs exist at the master’s level and that combined doctoral programs typically require additional time and training. He added that this is not often appreciated when surveying a lengthy program of study! My former student was apprehensive because a conference presenter told her their university would not offer employment because she was not a certified school counselor and lacked a CACREP-approved PhD in counselor education! Asking if she might restate her reasons for choosing her program, she laughed! Noting she was interested in a position in either private practice or a college counseling center, she explained she had felt a PhD and credential as a licensed psychologist would best meet her aspirations.

Agreeing with her plan, we noted that a PhD in counselor education would not be eligible for a credential as a licensed psychologist in the same way she was not eligible for a credential as a certified school counselor. Hoping to alleviate her anxiety, we noted that each program has limitations including cost, location, faculty mentors, and educational philosophy, but we felt a graduate degree and license is better than no degree! We heard a sigh of relief!

Clearly, career planning is challenging knowing that not all programs can meet all career paths and not every credential can satisfy all employment demands. Given these facts, it is important to put serious energy into pondering these life-changing windows. However, because a crystal ball isn’t an option, we suggest taking a moment to give these questions respect and time. Although credentials such as that of a licensed psychologist, licensed professional counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, certified school psychologist, licensed alcohol and drug counselor, or certified school counselor may be useful each has limitations in the same way a single physician board certification cannot open all areas of medical practice! Understandably, we have seen students choose carefully balancing career goals and find happiness. We have also seen individuals choose blindly and feel disappointed. Hopefully this can help.

Options and Opportunities

Consider these figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical psychologists</td>
<td>148,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School counselors</td>
<td>110,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse counselors</td>
<td>68,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School psychologists</td>
<td>41,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and family therapists</td>
<td>41,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology professors</td>
<td>29,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology teachers</td>
<td>28,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at junior colleges</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry technicians</td>
<td>15,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAREER ADVICE

Certification and Licensure: A Vast Picture Window of Choices

State

[Necessary For These Areas of Practice]
- Licensed psychologist (doctoral degree)
- Licensed professional counselor (master’s degree)
- Licensed marriage and family therapist (master’s degree)
- Licensed clinical mental health counselor (master’s degree)
- Certified school counselor (master’s degree)
- Certified school psychologist (three-year specialist)
- Licensed alcohol and drug counselor (master’s degree)
- Certified addiction counselor (training hours requirements)

National

[Not Necessarily Required But Important For Credibility and Portability]
- Nationally certified counselor [NCC, master’s degree]
- Certified clinical mental health counselor [CCMHC, master’s degree]
- Certified forensic counselor [CFC, Clinical Level, master’s degree]
- Nationally certified school counselor [NCSC, master’s degree]
- Nationally certified school psychologist [NCSP, three year specialist program]
- Board certified, American Board of Professional Psychology [ABPP, doctoral degree]
- Board-certified behavioral analyst [BCBA Exam, master’s degree]

State Certification and Licensure for Practice

In some cases, employment does not require a license nor certification. Positions such as that of a parole officer or state protective services social worker are examples of positions which do not typically demand state certification nor licensure, and not all require graduate degrees. In contrast, positions such as a school psychologist or school counselor ordinarily require a specific State Department of Education credential with graduate degrees. Similarly, in other venues, such as the veterans administration or a state psychiatric hospital, a clinical or counseling psychologist must hold a credential as licensed psychologist with a doctorate. Fundamentally, the options are diverse with differing requirements.

As clarification, employment as a certified school counselor or certified school psychologist requires the completion of different programs of study, such that few practitioners acquire both credentials! Although these two specialties typically require a minimum of a master’s degree (or three-year program of study in school psychology) and credentials through a State Department of Education, the acquisition of both credentials remains rare in the same way that “multiple” certifications and licenses usually requires the completion of multiple programs of study with specific practicum and internship experiences and differing supervisors. The same can also be said of those working with individuals with substance abuse issues. As a licensed professional counselor and a licensed alcohol and drug counselor, they have some similarities if working within this population whereas education, training, and licensure differs. Truly, each specialty differs but can also open a different professional “wheelhouse.”

Case Illustrations

Career Case I: A Future Forensic Counselor

A year ago, an individual possessing interests in forensic counseling asked about employment within her state department of correction. Although she knew from a previous talk that corrections is a large employer, she had not realized that a credential as a licensed professional counselor from a master’s program could open a window into this area. Unaware of the distinction between a State Department of Education credential as a certified school counselor versus a State Department of Health Services credential as a licensed professional counselor, this new clarity was helpful as she quickly researched state employment. Within hours, she learned that forensic counseling is a growing area of employment necessitating a master’s degree and counselor licensure.

Career Case II: A School Psychologist

Becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor

Another call we received was from a certified school psychologist seeking a credential as a licensed professional counselor. Hoping we might simply endorse her application, she was confused why the State Department of Health Services had denied her application as she was providing counseling services. Asking if she had contacted the program where she was educated for that endorsement, she avoided offering a verbal response. Proceeding graciously, we articulated the illustration of an area of practice versus a profession, noting that, although a licensed psychologist might provide services in marriage and family therapy, this does not equate to a credential as a licensed marriage and family therapist! Reticent to explain why her degree-granting institution would not endorse her application, we explained because she had not completed a planned program of study in counseling as required by state regulations, she lacked specific classes suggesting the lack of a planned program of study, and she had not received supervision from a professional counselor. After a moment, she acknowledged that the school had denied her request. We closed explaining that state credentials are to protect the public and changing specialties is akin to a physician acquiring a new and different board certification, noting multiple association ethics codes mandate practice only within areas of competence and additional training might enhance competence in broad ways.

Career Case III: A Future Counselor

One person we met, an undergraduate, was trying to explore a career path that involved working with people. In her case, she needed to work to support her family and knew a goal targeting a doctoral degree in clinical psychology would not be workable given her family demands. Pragmatically, she explained that she needed to keep financial issues at the forefront as she navigated her career. As we explored options that existed at the master’s degree level and below, we discussed a possibility of starting at the associate’s degree level and earning a certificate in behavioral healthcare. Noting this would provide an initial credential to work in a social service agency, she realized that she could then continue her training and earn additional education and training working toward an eventual master’s degree and licensure as a licensed alcohol and drug counselor or licensed professional counselor. As this track became clearer, she
could see the possibility to ultimately earning her bachelor’s and master’s degree en route to these professional practice markers. Suddenly, the prospect of meeting key needs en route gave hope for her future.

Questions and Answers

The following points might be helpful in better understanding critical issues as well as similarities and differences in these complex areas:

1. **Is the job market comparable throughout the country?**

   The job market varies. Using school psychology as an exemplar, although there are shortages throughout the country, competition can vary with differing opportunities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. If you also look at clinical psychologist employment in metropolitan regions, top areas include Washington DC and New York/New Jersey. Looking at nonmetropolitan locales, strong employment regions include Northern West Virginia and Maine. Ideally, speak to programs on employment outcomes and talk to graduates. Know that individuals interested in private practice would not typically find a school psychology or school counseling program an ideal fit whereas marriage and family therapy or mental health counseling might possess appeal. Talking to programs and graduates can be helpful. Ask about post degree employment. Talk to graduates.

2. **Is licensure or certification necessary for employment?**

   Although an opening for a school psychologist or school counselor typically require a State Department of Education certification, and although a clinical or forensic psychologist will ordinarily need a credential as a licensed psychologist from a State Department of Health Services, specifics vary between and across specialties. Similarly, a licensed professional counselor or licensed marriage and family therapist will hold a credential often necessary for specific positions. At the same time, state protective services investigators and parole offices are not ordinarily licensed. This in hand, licensure or certification can enhance options. Look at state employment web sites. Ask questions. Choose knowledgeably.

3. **Is school and program accreditation important?**

   Accrediting associations include the New England Commission of Higher Education, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and more. This is the first tier of accreditation for universities providing the public a basic benchmark for quality. Beyond school accreditation lies program accreditation: APA, NASP, CACREP, and AAMFT, and each accredits programs within a specialty. The APA accredits doctoral programs in clinical, counseling, or school psychology and “combined” programs blending two or three specialties. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) approves “specialist” and doctoral programs in school psychology, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) approves programs in marriage and family therapy, and The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) approves programs in multiple counseling areas. Each can be key to certification and licensure, and these accreditations are important to help confirm program quality to ensure that graduates meet specified standards.

4. **Can a nontraditional education degree create career opportunities?**

   Any degree may open one window, but not all windows. Fielding Graduate University remains the sole APA-approved program in clinical psychology in the United States, which uses a distributed
education format leading to credentialing as a licensed psychologist. Elsewhere, several CACREP-approved programs offer MA and PhD degrees in various counseling specialties using nontraditional models. Capella University is one example as is The University of Cumberlands. Finally, AAMFT-approved marriage and family therapy programs also offers degrees in nontraditional venues. Loma Linda University in California offers the DMFT as an illustration. This is to say licensure and certification is not restricted solely to traditional programs. Finally, programs outside licensure, such as in organizational psychology, are available in this format including a PsyD from Alliant International University – California School of Professional Psychology.

Conclusions
A graduate degree in professional counseling or psychology can open an exciting window into multiple careers. Still, the differing views can seem overwhelming! When confronted with varied career windows, varied degrees, differing specialties, and a myriad of certifications and licenses, the choices can create hesitancy. Although we have no magical picture window, we do suggest that students consider all the landscapes that various careers and degrees might open and create a vision best suited to individual goals. Realize too that there may be a time when one might desire to change career paths. Career respecialization can be viable, and multiple certifications and licenses can create options and opportunities for those interested in career shifts. However, these shifts can require cost and time, and changing specialties can often be frustrating, but just as board certification helps enhance confidence in medicine so in counseling and psychology each marker helps protect the public.

Just as our mystical windowpane can open a visual portal to a new career world, different graduate degrees and varied certifications and licenses can open different outlooks. Understandably, choosing your ideal vision may seem overwhelming. We suggest talking to students and faculty in your targeted program, ask for reflections and ask about individual careers along with positives/negatives. Recognize that each degree and each certification can open a different portal!

Think about your goals. Which program can provide the best portal into your dream? Look at employment data. Look at areas of shortages and over supply. If interested in a career as a school psychologist, recognize this as an area of shortages! If interested in a career in forensic counseling, this too is positive! Examine the trends via the Occupational Outlook Handbook over the next 10 years. Look for projected growth. Still, not all areas boast shortages. Within the contrasting worlds of school counseling and clinical psychology, individuals might glimpse a more varied maldistribution of professionals and positions. Further, examine urban and suburban trends that apply to a desired career. Ensure that jobs are available in the area viewed as a personal destination. If an academic environment is desired, know college counseling centers are often staffed by many clinician’s master’s degree credentials.

From clinical psychologists to school psychologists and school counselors, the options are varied. This article was intended to provide a glimpse through our portal into the world of work in professional counseling and psychology seeing some career opportunities through one window while using another pane to glimpse certification and licensure! To view a complete panorama, use both panes to grant a more informed choice understanding the relationships between degrees and career credentialing. Only you can decide which career portal best fits your aspirations.

References

Tony D. Crespi, EdD, ABPP, is professor of psychology at The University of Hartford. With credentials as a licensed psychologist, licensed marriage and family therapist, professionally certified school psychologist, and professionally certified school counselor, he is also a nationally certified school psychologist and holds board certification from the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP). He is a past-president of trainers of school psychologists and the author of multiple books and articles.

Michael Amico, PhD, is professor of psychology at Connecticut State Community College Housatonic in Connecticut. Although his PhD is in general experimental psychology, he also holds master’s degrees in counseling as well as clinical psychology. Particularly interested in both traditional and nontraditional graduate education, he has taught in multiple colleges and universities and has served on diverse university committees. He is a past president of the New England Psychological Association and currently serves on its board as well as serving as associate coordinator.

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An Eye on the Workplace:

Achieving a Career With a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology
The last several years have seen significant changes in the demands placed on the discipline of clinical psychology. Some of these demands have emerged from unexpected sources, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly every health professional, student, and educator had to deal with a “virtual world,” and simultaneously cope with social isolation, illnesses and death, and an uncertain future. Depression, anxiety, and abuse of all kinds became intensified by the inability to reach out and seek comfort and safety from family, friends, and professionals. Other demands emerged from conflicts with which we might have been more familiar, but which were far more frequent or intense than we could ever anticipate. Global disasters from natural forces such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and fires occurred in frequencies never imagined; social injustices and disagreements in sociopolitical ideologies dominated our everyday lives. Images of hunger, destruction, suffering, and pain have been our daily companions, as we have the ability to access anything that is happening in the world with a swipe of our hand.

The consequences of these demands have resulted in unprecedented levels of anxiety, hopelessness, depression, and substance abuse. Our individual and collective well-being have been affected for the worse. There are now record high levels of need throughout the world, and these trends are definitely reflected in the United States.
There has never been so much need for professional help; and yet there is no guide as to how best to train these professionals who will have to deal with these increasingly intense and frequent crises.

These questions define the most acute problems faced by faculty and university training programs as they continue into the 21st century. How should educators respond? How can training programs best assist novice clinicians to support them to deal with these issues? How can training programs help guide students who will have to support people from different backgrounds, different cultures, and different experiences?

There are, of course, effective measures already in place to tackle these issues. One of the most common is to produce mental health professionals who are culturally sensitive and aware. To this end, all clinical training programs highlight diversity issues, not as “add ons” but rather as core tenets of good clinical practice. Trainees focus on how the intersectionality of diversity impacts all elements of a psychologist’s duties, from assessment of traumatic brain injuries to therapeutic treatment planning.

Equally important is to train clinicians who show discernment in their ability to distinguish “fact from fiction.” The access to information has never been so easy; however, the cost is that a lot of information is incorrect or based on insufficient scientific methodology. It is incumbent therefore on training programs to provide nascent clinicians with the skills to discriminate between scientific evidence and conjecture. To this end, doctoral programs in clinical psychology—particularly PhD programs—emphasize research and methodological competencies in their clinical trainees.

Some training programs have also focused on requiring trainees to engage in research that highlights the health (physical and mental) needs of the community. Community projects—such as those involving stakeholders, civic leaders, businesses, and statutory agencies—enable trainees to learn about mental health through the application of clinical psychology to real world issues that are affecting their own communities. Some examples of multidisciplinary topics that have a far-reaching impact include empirical investigations into adolescent mental health in rural communities, runaway behavior in youth, and adult suicide. Other examples include the further investigation into the disparities in health outcomes for children of color, highlighting the intersectionality of the effects of socioeconomic and race status on premature child deaths. Long-term projects enable students to conduct investigations that show cumulative effects of not only risk factors but also interventions. Students and faculty can cocreate the opportunities to explore and use collaborations within the community to improve the lives of local residents.

Specific methods such as the ones above will undoubtedly help the burgeoning clinician deal with these looming issues. However, it is likely that there is another crucial antidote to these 21st century mental health problems. This antidote can be seen in a concept discussed across many different disciplines, from civic education to philosophy. This concept is the idea of “belonging” (Minkler, 2023).

“Belonging” can be thought of as the antithesis to “othering.” Minkler, in his discussion of the two concepts, highlights how important belonging is to the survival not only of the United States, but of the world. He suggests the notion that being the same as each other, or belonging, is central to understanding how communities can recover from the traumas of racism, oppression, and cultural disparities. In contrast, “othering,” where we consider ourselves to be separate from our fellow human beings, has contributed to the ailments we all now face. Such ideas are also reflected in the words of Thomas Hübl (2023) who argues “…the energy that fuels othering… is actually frozen in… fields [of collective trauma].… connection to the others is the key to health.”

What, then, will be expected of the next generations of clinical psychologists? For one, they will have to be creative. They will need to embrace new ideas, and be open to all possible solutions, realizing there are many answers to the same problem. They will need to work in interdisciplinary teams, combining their skills and knowledge with other professionals in order to find the best possible solutions. They must be courageous. They must realize that not all of the problems may be easy to solve and that, sometimes, the answers may be painful and force them to have conversations in which they may feel uncomfortable. The 21st century clinician must also always keep in mind that the health of the individual is only as good as the health of their community, and that belonging must be part of their solutions.

References
Minkler, J. (2023). Civic Intelligence: The empowerment of America’s Youth. [Manuscript submitted for publication].

Dr. Debra Bekerian is the academic program director at CSPP’s PhD Clinical Program, Fresno CA. Dr. Bekerian received her PhD in experimental psychology from the University of California before going to the Medical Research Council’s Applied Psychology Unit (now the Brain and Behavioral Unit) in Cambridge, UK, where she specialized in applied memory issues and trauma. While in the UK, she undertook training as a Gestalt psychotherapist, and continued to work as a researcher and therapist. She has published extensively in the areas of memory and applied psychology, and now focuses on applied projects on pediatric death, suicide, and the long-term effects of trauma on cognition.
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

Share your chapter's accomplishments with others in the next issue of Eye on Psi Chi! Chapter officers and advisors are encouraged to visit https://www.psichi.org/page/eye_activity

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.

EAST

Albright College (PA)

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter hosted a trip to Philadelphia's Museum of Illusions. On this trip, the chapter got to travel from Reading to Philadelphia to experience cool optical illusions from perspective-changing rooms, along with many other memorizing exhibits. Members got to experience over 60 different exhibits, one of the popular ones being the Vortex Tunnel where they walked through a completely stationary tunnel with spinning lights flying around in an attempt to make it difficult to walk by throwing off their balance.

FUNDRAISER: The chapter fundraised over $500 for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) during the fall semester by table sitting on campus to sell many fun items like bracelets, Crocs charms, and stickers. During their table sitting, members were also able to promote awareness and gain interest about the chapter.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: On September 25, the chapter held a “What to Do With a Psych Major?” event where psychology department professors gave students ideas and resources to become active in planning to use their psychology majors after graduation. Similarly, the chapter helped with an “Applying to Grad School” event on October 25 where students were given information and tips aimed toward the process of applications for graduate school.

Shippensburg University (PA)

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter hosted a “Psi Chi Pumpkin Painting” event. This also served as a recruitment event for new prospective members to join the chapter in the spring. The chapter had several recruitment flyers and sponsored all the painting supplies for psychology major and minor students at the university. Over 30 students attended, some of whom plan to join the chapter in the future!

University at Buffalo, SUNY (NY)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter...
hosts an induction ceremony every semester. In fall 2023, the chapter inducted 23 members! Several friends and family members attended the ceremony to support the new inductees and celebrate with cake. **MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter hosted a panel of graduate students from various fields to speak about their program tracks. The panelists included students in behavioral neuroscience, cognitive psychology, clinical psychology, social psychology, and school psychology for masters and PhD programs. The panelists included first-year to fifth-year graduate students to represent a wide variety of experiences! Undergraduate student attendees spent the hour questioning the graduate students about life in graduate school, types of programs, and tips for applying. **SOCIAL EVENT:** The chapter held a casual destress night for students to get together and relax before final exams. There were coloring sheets and bracelet making supplies for students to engage in, as well as free pizza and stress balls. Relaxing music played in the background. The event was well-attended and was just what the students needed! **MIDWEST**

**DePaul University (IL)**  
**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** On October 25, the chapter held its annual graduate school panel event. Six current graduate students from the psychology and counseling departments described their path to graduate school, illustrating through their stories that this road often contains unexpected roadblocks and detours along the way. Ultimately though, their unique journeys led them to graduate school. Panelists shared tips and advice for applying to graduate school, and at the end, they fielded questions from the audience. The event helped foster meaningful connections between undergraduate and graduate students, as many attendees stayed afterward to further engage with the panelists. **SOCIAL EVENT:** On November 8, the chapter hosted a stress relief snack break and game event. This was the chapter’s third event of the year. Snacks, as well as board and card games, were provided. This event offered all attendees an open environment to relax before finals and get to know each other better. Chapter officers facilitated conversations on multiple topics including the importance of mental health care. The event lasted for an hour and was a great way to publicize the chapter’s upcoming events and plans for the remainder of the year. **Northwest Missouri State University**  
**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter hosted an alumni panel event. Graduates from the university’s behavioral sciences programs joined current students via Zoom to share their various postgraduation paths. The alumni included individuals currently...
in graduate programs, individuals taking a "gap year" before applying to graduate school, and individuals who went straight into the work force. They answered questions and offered advice to students for future endeavors. The chapter is also a participant of Psi Chi’s International Partners and Leaders (IPALs) program, and a couple of individuals from their partnering program, the University of Toronto – Scarborough, also joined via Zoom.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter cohosted a Halloween-themed movie night with another organization on campus, the Behavioral Sciences Association (BSA). Attendees watched The Old Dark House, a horror movie that came out in 1932, depicting many different views on mental health, which the members then discussed at the end of the movie. Dr. Chase O’Gwin, a faculty member whose academic interests include the psychology of horror, facilitated discussion.

SOCIAL EVENT: During the university’s Wellness Fair, the chapter had a table focused on the benefits that pets have on peoples’ health. Chapter officers developed a tri-fold poster that included “5 Ways Pets Help with Stress and Mental Health” published online by the American Heart Association. The poster also shared the “Playtime With Puppies” event (a partnership with the New Nodaway Human Society to bring shelter dogs to campus) that the chapter cosponsors in the spring. People who visited the table were invited to take a dog treat bag with an informational note attached.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

Universidad de Sonora (Mexico)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: On November 17, 2023, the chapter celebrated the induction of new members joining the organization and elected new officers. Faculty advisors, Dr. Nadia Sarai Corral and Dr. Martha Frias Armenta, introduced five new members (Carmen Lucia Sanchez, Karen Olimpia Moraga, Jesus Salvador Gutierrez, Linda Isis Garcia, and Maria Elena Vega), confirming that they met the necessary requirements and qualifications. New chapter officers were initiated. They accepted their responsibilities as vice-president (Maria Elena Vega) and treasurer (Linda Isis Garcia).

SOUTHEAST

Agnes Scott College (GA)

SOCIAL EVENT: This past November, the chapter hosted a psychology themed PowerPoint night with snacks. Students attended and presented characters’ psychological disorders from cartoons.
they enjoy. They asked the audience to guess what their hypothesized disorder was, creating good discussions!

SOCIAL EVENT: In October, the chapter hosted a game night where students were asked to write anonymous questions and throw them on the floor. Each person picked up a question and had to answer it in front of the group. Students introduced themselves to the group before answering. Questions asked about individuals’ favorite classes, animals, movies, etc. Afterward, students enjoyed snacks.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: On November 6, 2023, the chapter held its first post-COVID informal induction ceremony. The chapter inducted six new members, and the ceremony was conducted by Keesyn Alan (president) and Sarah Causey (vice-president). The event started with the induction and was followed by a presentation from guest speaker, Dr. Jones, who is the director of the Specialist in School Psychology (SSP) program at LSUS. Dr. Jones provided valuable insights into the SSP program and what it entails to be a school psychologist.

FUNDRAISER: On October 24, 2023, the chapter held its first post-COVID fundraiser, “Dine-Out for Mental Health,” at Zuzu’s Coastal Cuisine. The chapter collaborated with the restaurant, and a certain percentage of proceeds went toward the chapter’s future initiatives. A table was set outside the restaurant, allowing chapter officers to express gratitude to customers for supporting their cause.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter held its first guest speaker event on October 2, 2023, as part of the lecture series. Guest speaker, Dr. Mindy Waite, spoke about her work as a certified dog behaviorist. She is one of the 41 certified applied animal behaviorists, as well as a clinical assistant professor in animal behavior at Carroll University. During her presentation, Dr. Mindy provided valuable insights into her journey to becoming a certified dog behaviorist and shared details about her work in the field.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter hosted a holiday card-writing event on November 28. Students came and wrote cards to hospitalized children, veterans, and older adults. The cards were sent to the organization, CardzForKidz, which accepts cards year round. This event allowed students to express their gratitude and bring joy to others.

University of Maryland (VA)

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter put on a positivity rock painting event where students came to paint rocks to place around campus. These rocks had positive messages and pictures on them to inspire students across campus. The event supplied a large bucket of rocks that were dispersed the following days.

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MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter hosted an induction ceremony in fall 2023. The chapter welcomes its newest Psi Chi members!

Texas State University

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter invited five faculty, graduate students, and staff members to act as an interview panel for students in a mock graduate school interview setting. This new event series, known as “Get to Grad School Workshops,” helps break barriers of ambiguity and confusion regarding graduate school. Texas State University houses the largest first generation student population in Texas, which motivated the chapter to create hands-on, experiential learning opportunities allowing students to practice skills like self advocacy and effective communication of research interests or target client population.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: Fall 2023 was a fantastic recruiting semester for the TSU Chapter! It broke its chapter record of Psi Chi applications received. From the record-setting applications, 45 new members were inducted—the largest amount in over
a decade! Chapter officers worked diligently in recruitment during the fall 2023 semester by tabling in the quad, marketing the chapter on social media, and speaking to psychology classes about Psi Chi.

**WEST**

**California Lutheran University**

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter held its annual Grad Night on October 3, 2023, during which students were able to learn about graduate schools and the application process. All the major facets of the application process were addressed, and helpful resources were shared. The event included several guest speakers who provided their insights into what makes a competitive applicant.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** The chapter hosted a community service project on October 24 that advocated for awareness of student athletes’ mental health. The event was held at a women’s volleyball game at California Lutheran University. Chapter members spoke with students and attendees about breaking the stigma on athletes’ mental health and provided informational resources.

**University of California, Santa Barbara**

**SOCIAL EVENT:** The chapter partnered with the Society of Undergraduate Psychologists at UCSB to host a holiday party as a way to destress before finals. Members decorated cookies and gingerbread houses with their peers and professors while listening to holiday tunes!

**FUNDRAISER:** Each year, the Alzheimer’s Association hosts a Walk to End Alzheimer’s event in various cities, and University California, Santa Barbara Psi Chi was lucky enough to participate in the 2023 Santa Barbara Walk. Members came out, socialized, and walked in hopes of raising money to fund Alzheimer’s care and research. UCSB Psi Chi teamed up with other psychology and mental health organizations at UCSB to raise over $2,000!
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