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Help Us Fund the Diverse Future of Psi Chi
Bradley Cannon
As we celebrate Black History Month and look toward the beginning of the spring here in the United States, I feel a great sense of hope. The year 2020 was a year of many disappointments. For Psi Chi students and faculty, there were the (relatively) small disappointments of not being able to see classmates and friends in person, of missing out on academic celebrations such as Psi Chi inductions and graduations where we could be with each other physically. I know I deeply missed being able to hug my graduating seniors, take pictures with them on campus, and experience my university’s end-of-the-year rituals. Those of us who only had these kinds of disappointments were the fortunate ones. Many in our Psi Chi family experienced much greater losses: losses of jobs or housing, and even losses of family members and friends due to COVID-19. Although we continue to experience losses, there is more hope than we’ve seen in months. We have vaccines for COVID-19, and there is hope that our lives will return to what we believed was normal. We have reason to hope that our daily routines as students and faculty, seeing each other on campus, celebrating milestones together, and all of the little activities that we took for granted will be available to us again without fear of deadly disease transmission. We have had to accept disappointment, and continue to do so, but it is finite. We can see an end. Hope is infinite.

Hope may seem to be something that is not part of psychology. Maybe you think it is something to be discussed in a philosophy or religion class. However, a very robust body of research in psychology exists on the construct of hope. Psychologists have looked at hope as a mindset that helps individuals work toward goals, even when there is uncertainty that there will be a positive outcome (Lopez & Snyder, 2003; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2018). One of the preeminent researchers in this area, Everett Worthington, believed “hope is motivation to persevere toward a goal” (Daly, 2020). In clinical and counseling psychology, we need our clients to have hope that they can change their behavior, negative thinking, and circumstances to relieve distress and live a more fulfilling life. Students, you know from your psychopathology courses that lack of hope is one of the key features of major depression (Sue et al., 2015) and an important warning sign for suicide. One reason therapy works is because it builds hope. Hope is not something that only happens in therapy or counseling. When facing social issues, hope is an important part of bringing about change; working to bring about change to help others, whether on an individual or group level, can make us, as practitioners of the science of psychology, hopeful ourselves. (If you would like to assess your own level of hope, I recommend the Adult Hope Scale, available at http://psichi.com/HopeScale)

This brings me back to my Presidential theme of “Psychological Science: We Have Answers.” Psychology can play a role in ameliorating, coping with, and even preventing a repeat of some of the most terrible global issues and events that we have experienced in the past year. Here’s an example how psychological science is being used to persuade people to make personal decisions that will help protect them and others from illness. Katy Milkman, codirector of the Behavioral Change for Good Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania, and her colleagues are testing what messages would encourage people to get the COVID-19 vaccine (Wharton University of Pennsylvania, 2020). Behavioral scientists are also testing to see if certain messages are more effective for specific demographic groups so that the messages can be tailored for the groups they will be sent to (Van Beusekom, 2020). This is an application of basic social psychological research on persuasion and conformity to a novel, real life situation that needs answers.

Perhaps the course of the pandemic would have been different had psychological science been more integrated into the response. At the beginning of the pandemic, many people went into high alert mode, the “fight or flight” sympathetic nervous system response that all of us learned about in Introductory Psychology. Many of us took precautions, but over time, “pandemic fatigue”, set in. Knowing psychology, we could have predicted this. We are not made to maintain that fight or flight state for long periods of time. Prolonged activation of the sympathetic nervous system leads to physical and mental health consequences (Ciccarelli & White, 2017). Over time, many people merely adjusted to the “new normal” and let down their guard. This resulted in the fall and
winter surge in cases associated with travel and holiday gatherings.

Another principle you learned in your Introductory Psychology class that applies to the pandemic is social norms (DeWall & Myers, 2018). In some communities, wearing a mask, distancing, and other measures became the group norm; individuals tended to follow public health measures because that was the expected behavior, whereas these behaviors did not become the norm in other places or among other groups of people. Again, psychology has answers: How does a behavior become a norm for a group? What is the role of leaders in establishing norms? If psychological science is used to manage the pandemic, we can have greater hope that people will be healthy and our lives will return to normal sooner.

What about the other important issues of the day such as climate change, social inequality, and racism? Again, psychology has answers (e.g., Clayton & Manning, 2018; Comas-Díaz & Torres Rivera, 2020). We know how to change behaviors in individuals and groups. Psychological principles can be used to reduce unwanted behaviors and increase desirable behaviors.

The sustained momentum of antiracist movements, the election of the first Black/Asian female Vice-President of the United States, the awareness of white privilege, and more dialogues about race in the past year have led many of us to feel hopeful about changing racial and other social inequities. There is still a long way to go, but acknowledging individual and structural racism, as well as implicit and explicit bias, are the first steps toward changing behavior. How can we use psychological science to change individual and group behavior around prejudice and discrimination? Let’s use what research has shown about group norms, persuasion, and conformity to reduce racism and increase social justice. What do we know from developmental psychology that can help us raise children who don’t continue to perpetuate racist stereotypes?

Psi Chi students, alum and faculty, YOU are the bearers of hope. Your life relies on psychological principles in your workplace, your personal life, and as a citizen; you bring the hopeful mindset, that perseverance toward goals, to all those whose lives you touch. Let us all move into the spring and into this new decade with hope, and using the tools and knowledge of psychology to reach goals to improve ourselves as individuals, as communities and as a world.

References

Black History Month Is Just Beginning

People of color face unique challenges and achieve great things year-round—not just during the shortest month of the year. Take a moment to review Psi Chi’s Black History Month Online Resource, and consider how you could continually apply these resources to build a more socially just world.

In this resource, you’ll find new releases and past favorites that honor historic African American psychologists and provide strategies to help you reduce negative stereotypes and systemic racism. A diverse selection of race-related content awaits: magazine articles, podcast episodes, webinars, blog posts, journal articles, and more.

Visit https://www.psichi.org/page/BlackHistoryMonth

A Few Resources
ARTICLE: How Do We Get More People to Talk About Race? An Interview With Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD
WEBINAR: Difficult Dialogues Webinar by Susanna Gallor, PhD, and Jason Edwards, MA
PODCAST: Racist Slurs (That People Use All Too Often) With Rihanna Mason, PhD
With a great deal of enthusiasm, hope, and relief, I say, “Welcome 2021!” Although hindsight may be 20/20, my guess is that most of you are like me and would like to do all you can to not look back at 2020. I typically use the past year to provide guidance on how to approach the new year, but much of this past year was so unprecedented, unexpected, and unwanted, that I am uncertain how much guidance it can give to my 2021.

Unfortunately, I realized that avoiding a typical “year in review” for 2020 might short-change us a great growth opportunity. For example, instead of looking at how much didn’t go our way this past year, we could review 2020 with a growth mindset in which we look back for challenges overcome and lessons learned. We can use this growth lens without ignoring or excusing the negative events of the year. Even as we enjoyed new opportunities and lessons, we missed wanted experiences and events. Even as we overcame challenges, we were forced to deal with the mourning that comes with defeat and loss. The key to approaching our review of 2020 with a growth mindset is to look at everything that happened in the year, to create a holistic picture that includes both challenges and triumphs. A holistic, growth-oriented view of 2020 empowers us to act in the present by acknowledging the past and using it to prepare us for the future.

Fortunately, as psychologists, we have a great deal of work and opportunity waiting for us in 2021. Psychology is equipped to help rebuild and move forward from the past year. Much of the world is recognizing the critical importance of monitoring and promoting mental health. Social and political uncertainty has us looking more closely at the role of human attitudes, behavior, and cognition in creating—and solving—the challenges that have plagued our interpersonal and intergroup relationships for far too long. Uncertainty and change create new opportunities. Psychological scientists and practitioners are critical workers in helping individuals, groups, communities, and nations harness the uncertainty of 2021 to build a better world.
Red or Blue, But Not Purple: Citizens May Vote for the Wrong Person If They Dichotomize Their Attitudes and Behavior

Seungyoon Lee, PhD
University of Arkansas at Monticello

A dichotomy occurs when two issues are viewed as mutually exclusive or contradictory. Individuals may feel at ease with dichotomous thinking, because it yields clear answers. However, what you select may not always be correct and, as a result, people may find themselves making the wrong choices.

Dichotomous thinking creates a powerful rule in people's attitudes, behavior, and perceptions. When it comes to convincing others, the simplest technique is to pick pairs of opposites: black or white, masculine or feminine, Republican or Democrat. The lesson is that we must pick one or the other, not both (Bosson & Michniewicz, 2013; MacCallum et al., 2002). This can create a conflict—either being for or against something. They forget alternative groups, for example, people who belong elsewhere, or those who minimally lean your way without consistent action. They select supporters on their side or opponents to change their minds. How can dichotomy necessarily work in our best interests?

Bechler et al. (2020) conducted a study based on two questions: (a) how people try to convince their target audiences, and (b) how people choose the right person when voting? The authors examined patterns of influence with various persuasion techniques and how they affect decision making. Their work shows that persuaders tend to choose target audiences if they think it is possible to change them qualitatively (e.g., from being negative to positive—rather than being negative to more negative). This dichotomous attitude, according to Bechler et al. (2020), occurs because one's change in attitude is more flexible and can therefore capitulate more. Persuaders select target audiences who are slightly or moderately opposed to their opinions. Those audiences paid less attention to the persuaders, compared to those who leaned their way. These results were identical when investigating voting behavior for COVID-19 safety measures. Persuaders preferred to recruit target audiences who opposed their campaigns, but their influence was greater with those who felt similarly.

The findings have some implications for facilitating and allocating resources. Current practice shows that an ideal marketing strategy is having an impact on those who are not on your side, but Bechler et al. (2020) suggest that targeting people who lean your way is much more likely to be target-worthy.

References


Has COVID-19 Affected Your Motivation?

Bradley Cannon
Central Office

Slightly more than half of people now working from home during the pandemic would like to continue working from home in a post-COVID-19 world. This is according to a new Pew Research Center study (Parker et al., 2020), which also found that more than three-quarters of people now working from home believe that they have the technology, equipment, and workspace needed to do their jobs from home.

And yet, 36% of participants indicated not feeling motivated to do their work during the pandemic. Those hit hardest include younger teleworkers and parents of children younger than 18. What can be done to help? Psychological science has answers!

According to Murayama (2018), almost all human behaviors, such as your choices and the outcome of those choices, are influenced by your motivational states. Fortunately, researchers such as Murayama are dedicated to developing a unified, multimethod, multidisciplinary approach called Motivation Science, which has explored many facets of improving motivation.

Boring-Bray (2020) suggests that the pandemic’s “no clear end in sight” and “uncertainty about the future” may be partly to blame for decreased motivation. Her advice to boost motivation includes laying out SMART Goals and planning specific daily tasks.

Regarding goal-setting, Murayama and Elliot (2011) found that not all goals are equal. Specifically, participants who set goals to demonstrate their memory ability relative to other participants showed better memory than those who set mastery goals to simply develop their cognitive ability. And yet, when reassessed one week later, the opposite results occurred, indicating that performance goals help short-term learning, but mastery goals lead to long-term learning.

Another reason for decreased motivation may be increased screen time. Although the new Pew Study found relatively little evidence for “Zoom fatigue” specifically, a recent Nielsen report revealed that people working at home are consuming 2 hours 10 minutes more TV each week than before the pandemic (Settembre, 2020). Higher screen time has been associated with moderate or severe depression in adults (Madhav et al., 2017) and in teens (David, 2019).

Boring-Bray (2020) also emphasized self-care and to stay social (safely, of course!) via virtual get-togethers with your friends. If these strategies don’t work, and you are still feeling unmotivated, depressed, or anxiety, then it may be time to seek out a licensed mental health professional. Many websites can help you choose a therapist. You may also be able to request a referral from family, friends, or your physician. A professional will help you increase your motivation and, if you are new to working at home, focus on positive aspects of your changed working environment such as increased flexibility and productivity, saved money, and reduced commute and environmental impact.

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Settembre, J. (2020, December 2). Professionals working remotely during the pandemic are watching two hours more of TV study. Foxtv. https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/working-remote-during-pandemic-two-hours-more-tv
Political polarization is now a common phrase, but a lesser-known term, political sectarianism, may better explain the growing partisan divide in the United States. Political sectarianism can be defined as “the tendency to adopt a moralized identification with one political group and against another” (Finkel et al., 2020, p. 533). Finkel et al. found that individuals now feel more hostility toward political party opponents than they do warmth toward members of their own party. This could be due to the fact that political affiliation has not only become increasingly polarized, but also developed into a battle of morality in which each side believes that they subscribe to the “correct” beliefs.

What might be some of the factors driving this increased political sectarianism? Kahneman and Tversky’s prospect theory (1979) may provide a hint to one of the mechanisms at work here. The frame of modern campaigning has become what the voter would lose if the other party’s candidate were to win. Although a victory for the party’s candidate may allow access to new opportunities (gains), the potential political losses may psychologically outweigh these gains. A loss frame creates a psychological threat (Nail et al., 2009), pushing us toward our in-group and away from the members of the out-group.

Evidence from the recent elections in the United States supports this emphasis on advocating against the opponent over promoting a candidate. Take Arkansas’ 2nd Congressional District election this year between Republican Representative French Hill and Democrat Joyce Elliott as an example. The total amount spent by satellite groups in opposition of both candidates totaled $4,252,626.70 while only $810,755.82 was spent in favor of the candidates (Ballotpedia, 2020). That’s $5.10 spent against the opponent for every $1 spent in support of the candidates. The argument of what you stand to lose with a vote for the opponent is far more accessible—and thus influential (availability heuristic)—than the candidate’s platform.

When the stakes for an election appear high, and what we purportedly stand to lose is connected to our deeply held moral beliefs, our strength of conviction toward our beliefs solidify and animosity toward those who appear oppositional to these beliefs magnify. Understanding our bias to attend more to fear and loss is a first step to lessening its effect on our vote (Waldroff, 2020). If it is an automatic process to focus on loss, perhaps we can improve our political decision making by slowing down and asking ourselves, “What do I stand to gain from this election?”

References

Shawn R. Charlton, PhD, earned a BA degree from Utah State University (2001) and a MS and PhD from the University of California, San Diego (2006). His research interests explore decision-making in a variety of contexts. Research on professional development in higher education is a growing emphasis for his Behavioral and Social Decisions Laboratory.

Submit to This Series
Do you know about a major contemporary event related to one of the many areas of psychology? Share it with us for potential publication in this series! Recurring Contributors are also wanted. For full submission guidelines, visit www.psichi.org/page/PsychologyInTheHeadlines
February is Black History Month, providing an opportunity to recognize the impact of Black Americans and other minority groups, both nationally and internationally. The year 2020 brought devastating challenges along with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter protests, and general political unrest. Many individuals did things differently this year, while maintaining social distance and staying connected to the media. Ambiguity, bias, gender stereotypes, and racism prevented Black and minority groups from achieving their full potential, along with economic turmoil. In 2021, we want to foster positivity and leadership roles for all. This interview will be a call to action for collective growth, as well as ways in which the field of psychology can benefit society.

Dr. Loretta Neal McGregor (LNM) is a highly motivated African American scholar, having overcome challenges during her academic career. She is a professor of psychology and the past president of the Faculty Senate at Arkansas State University (ASU) in Jonesboro. She has been a member of the ASU for 15 years, and was the chairperson of the Department of Psychology and Counseling for eight years. She received her BA in psychology from Ouachita Baptist University, AR, and her MS in general experimental psychology from Emporia State University in Emporia, KS, while earning her doctoral degree in human factor psychology at Wichita State University in Wichita, KS. She is a fellow at the Southern Regional Educational Board’s Doctoral Scholar’s Program as the first in Arkansas. She is the 2020 recipient of APA’s Division 2 Presidential Citation for outstanding service to the program and to psychology. She is the first person of color to receive this honor, but believes her greatest contributions were achieved outside the discipline.

Thank you for joining us today, Loretta. I read your bio and was impressed with your outstanding work. First, what motivated your interest in psychology?

I'm originally from Arkansas. I used to sit on my grandfather’s knee, watching the nightly news—CBS News with Walter Cronkite. I remember a scene from the Vietnam War and listening to the commentary, which I really didn’t understand. I kept wondering what we had in common with homes being destroyed, families looking for shelter, people being killed … in what appeared to be a senseless war, with college students protesting all over the United States. I kept thinking, “What would happen if my home got destroyed? What would happen to my family? I wondered about people in a global way, both the similarities and differences. I began to understand that people were more alike than not. That triggered my deep interest in psychology, and I am still looking for similarities among all human beings.
That reminds me of our shared interest in psychology. Your expertise is experimental psychology, not social psychology. What made you decide on that field?

I am very eclectic, not only in my views of psychology … but I was accepted at a graduate program in counseling psychology at Wichita State and found I was more of an experimental person. Thinking about human behavior and everything that influences us, I appreciate the cognitive perspective, the psychosocial, and the biological in my theoretical perspectives. I’m more of a generalist. I researched Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark and that aligned with the history of psychology for Division 1. I wasn’t interested in history at the beginning, but in looking at African Americans and people of color in psychology, I try to create awareness in students and remind myself that we are not always welcomed in psychology. But now that we’re here, it’s more about what we do to understand others. So in that sense, I am a generalist.

What brought you back to Arkansas after you completed your doctoral degree in Kansas?

I wanted to be in Arkansas, with a strong desire to help move people forward, who have a similar background to mine. It’s not only about ethnicity at this point, it’s about gender. Many small towns in Arkansas are patriarchal, European-dominated in terms of culture. And we have individuals who don’t fit into any of those categories. They’re treated like second-class citizens to this day. I returned to help women and students of color realize their potential. I could do that … maybe one student at a time. Over the past 30 years, I found myself effective in that role to get students more motivated in their worlds. I wanted to make a difference.

Do you think students—especially minority students—are receiving the mentorship and resources they need. Are there challenges that still exist, and if so, what are they?

You know, work as a discipline and the view of mentorship has changed over the years. There is personal mentoring and less-personal mentoring. In a personal relationship, you have a direct connection to teaching, guiding, and research. Gender and ethnicity have not been an issue in these relationships as long as students and I had similar academic interests. Three of my students have done remarkable jobs and are awaiting their doctoral program admissions—one is already in a doctoral program and another will be starting. The aspects of a less personal mentorship is being present, becoming a role model for others of the same gender and ethnic group. This is effective inside and outside your discipline, but attracts students and colleagues who are “in your shoes.” Students who look like you and think about important issues can make a difference.

Students of color find it difficult to seek mentoring for a variety of reasons. Many attend college but also work part- or full-time. Some are caregivers and some don’t understand the need for mentoring. The traditional model for mentoring does not meet the needs of students of color. We must help all students understand the importance of mentoring. Faculty must be flexible when working with students of color because they are often the first in their family to attend college. They learn how college works “on the fly.” Students do not understand how extracurricular activities may benefit them, so it is our responsibility to provide the necessary resources.

What motivates you to move forward, and helps you succeed? Any challenges you have experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown?

My family helped me succeed. They are my heroes. Maintaining research productivity has been a challenge for me. And we are social beings, but we have lost a lot this year.

Various articles show that psychologists must be leaders and move forward with psychological research. This also applies to psychologists who are minority women. How does a largely racist culture produce women of color as leaders?

With all the advances we’ve made, there is the belief that women are not as capable. We each have areas of strengths, including leadership ability. The myths are so pervasive.

What was your most challenging situation when you began your career? How did you overcome these obstacles?

One of the most challenging was feeling isolated at the academy. I was the only Black faculty member in our department. I was the youngest, and for a while, the only woman. All other faculty were White men. They did a wonderful job of mentoring and supporting me in the profession, but they couldn’t relate to some issues I faced as a woman of color. I forged friendships with women at other institutions across the United States, but our interactions were often brief.

As a young Black woman in the department, I worked twice as hard as my male colleagues. I always felt I needed to prove myself. I was married and a mother of two. My spouse did a good job of assisting with the children and the housework. But in the early 90s, most childcare and housekeeping fell to the female partner. I often felt overwhelmed, yet I managed to find good support systems in and outside the institution. My involvement in civic and religious organizations provided a strong support system to cope with the stresses of home and work. I handled the stress by carving out some time for myself.

What are some ongoing challenges women of color must handle, and what would help them overcome these obstacles?

I have conversations with other women of color. You engage with them about the lack of respect in science, race, and ethnicity. We feel a lot of pushback in this time period. Solidarity is key. Making our voices heard is crucial, as we are so rarely brave enough to tell the truth.
Has the number of Black or minority professors increased during your career?
I am not sure if the overall number of applicants of color has increased over time. I believe applicants of color are more mobile, and likely to migrate among institutions (vs. their White counterparts before achieving tenure). Faculty of color are less likely to attain the status of full professor before retiring or leaving the academy.

The academic world doesn’t always welcome faculty of color with open arms. I was on search committees where it seemed as if applicants with non-European names were scrutinized more than others. Questions of “fitness” were posed as ways of screening applicants of color from the pool. If a faculty of color was hired, the scrutiny continued. Some students may have filed complaints, creating a tough work environment for the faculty member of color. In the current climate, students are typically not chastised for these actions. Weak connections often leave faculty of color vulnerable to unsubstantiated claims by students.

Based on your experience as an academic, what advice would you give an early career professor of color?
It will not be easy. Enjoy the ride. You are doing good in the world.

With her teaching, mentorship, and service, Dr. McGregor helps students and colleagues define leadership and how we can reach our full potential. We appreciate her time in talking about herself and her vision of mentorship—and to think about prompting the lives for which we hope, to be full partners in our homes, and to take on our leadership roles in society.

Seungyeon Lee, PhD, is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM) in Monticello, Arkansas. She has taught a wide range of psychology courses since she joined UAM in 2014. Dr. Lee was honored by UAM as the recipient of the Outstanding School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty Award (2016), the Regional Faculty Advisor Award of Psi Chi, Southwestern Region (2017), the American Psychological Association’s Early Career Achievement Award (2020), and the Arkansas Psychological Association’s Academician/Research of the Year Award (2021).

Dr. Lee also serves her profession in several capacities. She is also currently serving as the Southwest representative of Psi Chi Diversity Committee. During this time, she has also served on the Southwestern Regional Steering Committee and the Psi Chi Research Award Committee for the Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA). She is the Chair of Mentorship of Teachers Award Committee for the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), as well as being an active member of the American Psychological Association (APA). She is particularly interested in promoting undergraduate students’ professional development and helping low-income, first-generation students to navigate the joys and opportunities of pursuing their professional degrees in a number of fields, including psychology and other social sciences. In January 2021, Dr. Lee was selected as the first Psi Chi Faculty Support Director.

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With her teaching, mentorship, and service, Dr. McGregor helps students and colleagues define leadership and how we can reach our full potential. We appreciate her time in talking about herself and her vision of mentorship—and to think about prompting the lives for which we hope, to be full partners in our homes, and to take on our leadership roles in society.

Seungyeon Lee, PhD, is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM) in Monticello, Arkansas. She has taught a wide range of psychology courses since she joined UAM in 2014. Dr. Lee was honored by UAM as the recipient of the Outstanding School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty Award (2016), the Regional Faculty Advisor Award of Psi Chi, Southwestern Region (2017), the American Psychological Association’s Early Career Achievement Award (2020), and the Arkansas Psychological Association’s Academician/Research of the Year Award (2021).

Dr. Lee also serves her profession in several capacities. She is also currently serving as the Southwest representative of Psi Chi Diversity Committee. During this time, she has also served on the Southwestern Regional Steering Committee and the Psi Chi Research Award Committee for the Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA). She is the Chair of Mentorship of Teachers Award Committee for the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), as well as being an active member of the American Psychological Association (APA). She is particularly interested in promoting undergraduate students’ professional development and helping low-income, first-generation students to navigate the joys and opportunities of pursuing their professional degrees in a number of fields, including psychology and other social sciences. In January 2021, Dr. Lee was selected as the first Psi Chi Faculty Support Director.
Psi Chi/Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for Women of Color

Help Us Fund the Diverse Future of Psi Chi

Bradley Cannon
Psi Chi Central Office

Inez Beverly Prosser (1895–1934) is considered to be the first African American woman to receive a PhD in psychology. Ever passionate about education and encouraging Black students to go to college, she taught at secondary school and college levels for half of her life. Dr. Prosser’s dissertation research (Prosser, 1933) was related to the personality characteristics of African American children in integrated and segregated schools (Benjamin et al., 2005)—a topic relevant to this day.

We are establishing a scholarship for women of color in her honor as an opportunity to increase the number of women of color entering the workforce with a psychology background. Once this $3,000 scholarship is fully endowed, it will honor her legacy and serve as a mechanism to empower students to complete their educational journey and pursue an advanced degree in psychology.

Just a year after receiving her degree, Dr. Prosser died in a tragic automobile accident, and yet her life was one of numerous achievements. Even after her death, people would reach out to her family about how she had helped them go to college and complete their degrees (Bernice Beverly Arbor, personal communication, June 22, 2003, as reported in Benjamin et al., 2005).

Will you help us continue Dr. Prosser’s efforts of increasing the number of women of color with a psychology education? Your gift will support representation and impact of women of color in psychology. Psi Chi has pledged to match the first $50,000 raised—doubling all contributions. Once the scholarship is fully endowed, the fund will provide an annual $3,000 scholarship in perpetuity.

Every donation, large or small, brings us one step closer to awarding the first scholarship from this program. More than $18,000 has already been raised, with many people even donating or pledging to donate at the Black Diamond level of $1,000.

Visit www.psichi.com/Prosser to make your gift.

If you would like more information about how you can support the Psi Chi/Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for Women of Color campaign, please contact cynthia.wilson@psichi.org.

References


A re you struggling to write or update your graduate school resumé or CV? You’re not alone! The most recent column in this series discussed many things to include that will, in general, increase your chances of acceptance into a graduate school program or job occupation. Now, Drs. VanderStoep, Landrum, and Handelsman are back to answer students’ questions about the exact opposite: Which details would it be best to leave unsaid?

If something doesn’t “look good” on my resumé or CV such as low grades or no research experience, should I avoid this topic and hope that it isn’t noticed. Or should I address it, and if so, where would be the most appropriate place to do that?

**Scott:** I would not highlight your weaknesses in your CV. You could address shortcomings in your cover letter or personal statement. If you do that, I would try to highlight other positive elements of your professional work that suggests that a bad grade or GPA is an outlier. For example, a low quantitative score on the GRE could be counterweighted with deep experience in a research lab where you have performed advanced data analysis. Individual grades will not appear on a CV. Sometimes people put a cumulative GPA next to their degree information. This seems to happen more within CVs of younger scholars. I can’t think of a reason that people must include GPAs on their CVs (perhaps my colleagues will have a different perspective). However, remember that if a graduate school admissions committee or an employer wants to know your GPA, they won’t have to work hard to find it in your materials.

**Eric:** It’s pretty standard on a resumé or CV to include your GPA, usually in the same location that you indicate the specific type of degree earned (bachelor’s of science degree or bachelor’s of arts degree) and your undergraduate institution. If you leave it off, that’s OK, because a graduate admissions committee is going to go find it anyway. I guess my philosophy would be to go ahead and put it on your document because it is what it is, and why hide it?

One reason to include your overall GPA is perhaps you might want to broaden the story a bit and include—if it’s to your advantage—your last two years GPA and your psychology GPA. If your overall GPA is 2.97 and you are applying to graduate school, I am almost certain that your last two years GPA is over 3.00 and your psychology GPA is likely somewhere around 3.50. Putting those three numbers together on your CV does allow you to tell a story in your personal statement or cover letter about your academic record/academic progress as an undergraduate student.

**Mitch:** “No research experience” is not, itself, an item for a CV. The CV contains achievements that exist! GPA, as you’ve read from my colleagues, may or may not be included. I lean toward
not listing one (low) GPA on your CV but include in a cover letter what you want your committee to know about it. But you will be asked, on the application, to list your GPA and to send your transcripts. Thus, that information will be noticed! Remember, psychology professors spend a lot of time extolling the virtues of data—so they’ll find the data they want to see.

I worked a lot in a retail (cash register) position during all four of my undergraduate years. This information shows that I successfully maintained a job, but how valuable is this to my résumé if I’m trying to get into grad school?

Scott: If that is the only experience you have, then you will be at a disadvantage for graduate school and research/clinical jobs compared to other applicants who have more relevant experience. But remember that your four years of school have allowed you to accumulate a lot of those skills. Think about the research and statistics classes that you have had, the course where you had a large library or data-analytic research assignment. And I would highlight the nature of the work and the important problem-solving and critical reasoning skills that you’ve developed. And yes, it is good to highlight longevity in the job. Remember that all you can do is your best. Getting into graduate school is a competitive process. Although not mentioned in the question, I will make the point that, because of the competitive nature, it is important for all applicants, especially those with less experience, to apply to a wide range of schools and programs.

Eric: The job that you had during your undergraduate years might not have helped you acquire psychology-specific content knowledge or apply psychology-specific skills like you would when serving as a teaching assistant, research assistant, or intern, but there is certainly value there. Holding that job allows you to demonstrate your dependability and reliability, your loyalty, and your teamwork skills. If you earned any promotions at all during those four years, you would be able to include leadership skills. When thinking about graduate school, your supervisor from this job could certainly be one of your letter writers; the key phrase that I use as a litmus test is “can they speak to your professional skills and abilities?” Someone observing your work ethic for four years should certainly be able to write you a strong letter of recommendation. Now, as Scott hinted, you need to locate and secure letter writers who also know about your psychology-specific content knowledge and skill set. If you do not have those folks available to you at this time, then you may not be as competitive a graduate school applicant at this time.

Mitch: Let’s talk a little about attitude. You should definitely have a realistic view of your chances. You should be intentional about which programs you apply to. At the same time, be prepared to play the game, even though you may lose! As you know, many college graduates did not get into a four-year school out of high school and went to community colleges as a “Plan B.” Likewise, some applicants do not gain admission to their tops choice, but achieved their goals via Plan B, C, and/or D. (Perhaps some of your own professors took circuitous routes to get where they are—ask them.) Listen: Eric, Scott, and I have been rejected from multiple programs, jobs, awards, etc. (and perhaps a couple social events where I showed up with them, but that’s a different column…). Ultimately, the decision about whether the skills you learned in retail are relevant and adequate will be made by others. Let them make their decisions on the basis of accurate, adequate, and clear information. BTW, some of those admissions committee members might have started their own careers as cashiers…

Writing is not my strong suit. Should I acknowledge in my application that I received professional assistance with my résumé or CV? Or should I allow graduate school committees to believe that my writing is better than it actually is, even though this may present challenges later if I am accepted?

Scott: We all receive assistance on our writing. All three of us have written journal articles, book chapters, and complete books. These documents go through multiple revisions with multiple reviewers. What is more, it is unwise for any undergraduate not to ask someone at the university career center to review a résumé. I don’t have first-hand experience of someone who hired an outside expert to assist with writing, although I have heard of this for college applications. But people who work in the career center are professionals (and you are paying for them with your tuition). I would say that you have to answer this question for yourself: Can I, with integrity, claim ownership over the written material (or other media) that I send out? I would not self-disclose that you are a bad writer. Although this wasn’t asked in the question, I feel obligated to address it. Specifically, graduate school requires a lot of writing. And if you struggle with writing effectively, I would urge you to consider if you want to pursue a graduate program or a career in which writing is tantamount to success.

Eric: First, good for you for thinking about this issue this deeply. I review personal statements and CVs for students at Boise State applying to graduate schools all the time, so getting help on this type of writing is not uncommon (and I like to think it was professional assistance). I would say that if you get to an interview stage in the graduate admissions process, and if this is still on your mind, then you could mention it during your interview or during one of your conversations with faculty or graduate students during an interview.

To Scott’s point, once you are in graduate school, you’ll need to be much clearer with graduate faculty, and especially when you are working on a master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation, as to exactly where you can receive assistance and where that might be forbidden by graduate school policy. You might be able to receive help with 7th edition APA Publication Manual formatting, but the ideas for hypothesis generation might be required to be completely original to you. Being open about your concerns is really the best way to go in the long run, in my opinion.

Mitch: Writing is not a trait, but a skill that you develop with effort, practice, more effort, and a little coaching. Writing also involves a multitude of skills. I am not a good “writer,” either, but I learned (in college, graduate school, and with everything I submit that gets reviewed by peers) to be a good reviser. I’ve also
learned that writing (including revision) and thinking are the same thing; there are data to suggest that people’s writing gets better as they have something to say. Thus, you will get better at writing as your thinking and desire to communicate develops. The question Scott posed is a good one—do you want to enter a profession that involves such a high percentage of time spent writing (papers, reports, resumés, columns for student honor societies, etc.)? Here’s another important question: Are you willing to put in the effort to become a good thinker/writer? Virtually any professional position includes writing. Most professionals love either the process or the product of writing so much that they happily expend the effort it takes to be good. Writing for me is excruciatingly hard—it is no easier for me now than it was when I was a first-year student in college. What’s changed over the years is that I am more confident that I can complete a project I start and that I have something I want to say (whether people want to hear it is a different story). The effort I put in gives me the opportunity to interact with people like you and with wonderful, inspiring colleagues. That interaction (plus the money) makes all the effort worth it.

What are some “fatal flaws” that you’ve seen in resumés or CVs?

Scott: It sounds simple, but spelling, syntax, and grammar errors are show-stoppers. And they are so easy to correct. If you need to have 10 people preview your CV, do it. I don’t review graduate school applications because I work at an exclusively undergraduate college. But I review many applications for faculty positions each year in my role as an academic dean. Here are two specific suggestions based on things that I notice when I review those applications from PhDs/ABDs. Fortunately, these don’t happen very often, but when they do, they work against the candidate in a big way. First, make sure that there is consistency in formatting. If you make your first level heading 14 point, bold, and flush to the left, PLEASE make sure that each first-level heading is formatted that way and that a similar heading contains the same level of information. Second, make sure your bullets are parallel in their format. For example, if you put a period at the end of one bullet, do it for all of them. If the first word is a progressive form of a verb, make sure they are all of that form. This stuff is under your control. Control it!

Eric: Fatal flaws, as in truly immediate disqualifications from the graduate admissions pool? As with Scott, I have to add the disclaimer that I do not sit on a graduate admissions committee as I am at an institution with an undergraduate-only department, but I do conduct research about this topic. I think true fatal-flaw resumé/CV mistakes are fairly rare, and I think they would include misrepresentation of degrees earned, lying about a publication authorship—an egregious error that was not simply an APA formatting mistake but someone who was trying to claim credit for some accomplishment they did not earn or award they did not achieve. Mitch is likely to have more insights about this as our actual graduate program faculty member!

Mitch: I’ve seen a few (thousand) applications in my time, and from that experience I can say that Scott and Eric are right on the money. Admissions committee members consider the effort (and honesty) you put into your application a predictor of the care and effort you will put into your academic and professional work. As with lots of endeavors, you will achieve excellence by creating a positive product that reflects who you are and what you will bring to the program.

Scott VanderStoep, PhD, is Professor of Psychology and Dean for Social Sciences at Hope College (MI). He received his master’s in social psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his PhD from the University of Michigan. His research articles have largely been in the area of reasoning and problem solving, college student thinking, and psychology and religion. He is the coauthor of two editions of Learning to Learn: The Skill and Will of College Success and Research Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and editor of Science and the Soul: Christian Faith and Psychological Research.

R. Eric Landrum, PhD, is a Professor in the Department of Psychological Science at Boise State University, receiving his PhD in cognitive psychology from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. He is a research generalist, broadly addressing the improvement of teaching and learning, including the long-term retention of introductory psychology content, skills assessment, improving help-seeking behavior, advising innovations, understanding student career paths, the psychology workforce, successful graduate school applications, and more.

Mitch Handelsman, PhD, is Professor of Psychology and CU President’s Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado Denver, having earned his PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Kansas in 1983. He has coauthored two ethics books, Ethics for Psychotherapists and Counselors: A Proactive Approach (2010; with Sharon Anderson), and Ethical Dilemmas in Psychotherapy: Positive Approaches to Decision Making (2015; with Sam Knapp and Michael Gottlieb). He is an associate editor of the APA Handbook of Ethics in Psychology (2012). His blog for PsychologyToday.com ("The Ethical Professor") focuses on ethical and teaching issues.
Farewell to Mitch

As this is the final Three Heads column featuring Mitch, his coauthors wanted to say a few words to wish him well in his future endeavors...

If you asked Dr. Handelsman, “Hey Mitch, where did you first meet Scott VanderStoep?” I suspect he would look you straight in the eye, and with all his candor and integrity (on both of which he scores high), he would say, “I have no idea.” Such is the impact that I have had on Mitch’s life!

Although Mitch’s memory might be fading and my impact on him is likely diminutive, allow me to share with the readers, and to refresh Mitch’s memory, one of my favorite stories: Scott Meets Mitch. Mitch and I met at a session of the American Psychological Association meeting. We were scheduled to do a symposium together with Dr. Eric Landrum. (You remember him, dontcha, Mitch? The big Boise boy with no hair.) Anyway, Eric introduced us about an hour before the session. I’m the young guy, and I’m nervous because we’ve only allowed an hour to prep. Mitch is unfazed. He sits on the bench, as cool as the other side of the pillow, as the late TV personality Stuart Scott would say. “C’mon Mitch,” I think to myself, “while we’re young. Let’s get to work.” This session would be the first of several that we would do at regional and national conventions, along with one pandemic remote session, and over a dozen jointly authored essays in *Eye on Psi Chi*.

Back to the first meeting. Apparently, preparation can wait. Eric and Mitch get sidetracked with sidebars and small talk. I don’t know Mitch, so I mostly listen. Besides, I am in the presence of THE Dr. Mitchell Handelsman. Who am I? I’m just a little guy at a little school who teaches undergraduates. He’s Dr. Mitchell Handelsman—a big-time, major-research, endowed professor who supervises doctoral students. I’m intimidated. He looks intimidating. At least his hair is intimidating. He has a lot of it. Way better than mine. To this day—great hair. Grayer than when we first met, but still great. Mitch needs to put his hair on his CV.

Well, time is drawing nigh for our presentation and we’ve done no prep. Eric and Mitch continue to yammer outside the meeting room. The clock is ticking. They are thick friends from Rocky Mountain meetings, and I’m the third wheel. I finally get the courage to interrupt, hoping that if I can insert myself in the chitchat, maybe I can direct the conversation to prepping for our presentation. I ask an ice-breaker: “Mitch, where did you and Eric meet?” With less than a 50-millisecond response time, he japes, “We had the same parole officer.” I laughed out loud. It was the first of many funny aphorisms that I heard him make. Mitch is a true King of the One-Liners. With his quip, the ice was broken, he provided a balm on my nerves, and the symposium went great, as did several others that we conducted. Those sessions launched the “Three Heads” series for *Eye on Psi Chi*, with this one being Mitch’s last column.

I am going to miss Mitch. I am going to miss his one-line maxims as much as I am going to miss the other stuff—his humility, his student-centered resolve, his commitment to Psi Chi, and his steadfast diligence to the Three Heads series. I will miss you at APA, RMPA, the pages of the Eye, and wherever else our paths would cross. I hope this is only “so long” and not “goodbye.”

Thank you, Mitch, for being my friend and a penmate on this fun writing journey. Peace, Scott VanderStoep

Dear Mitchell,

I never thought I would be writing a letter like this. What started as a thought of a roast then went straight to a eulogy, and now I think I’ve settled on something closer to a memorial, although from your website and recent emails there is no need to “memorialize” you because you are very much alive and actively contributing to our discipline at a remarkable pace. Nonetheless, given your “comic” past, it’s a fun idea to memorialize you before your time.

So I went to PsycINFO and downloaded all of the journal article titles, books, book chapters, anything indexed in PsycINFO across your career—authored and coauthored pieces, edited works, and so on. From start—your dissertation titled “Alcohol Choice as a Self-Handicapping Strategy” (nice!)—to the most recent listed—“Empowering Psychologists to Evaluate Revisions to the APA Ethics Code”—there were exactly 100 titles. I then entered these titles into the word cloud generator a wordart.com. The image below presents word frequency across your career—the larger the word, the more often it has appeared.

This analysis was insightful. Clearly ethics and informed consent are your breads and butters. The relatively small presentation of the word “professional” may help to explain Scott’s story of trying to get your attention to prep before a conference presentation, however, and of course family members are likely to be disappointed that they appeared less often in titles (and may interpret that as feeling less important and less valued) as compared to, well, “self” or “APA” or any number of other entries. It’s OK; I’m sure your “family” loves you just the way you are.

Scott was very kind to mention our collaborations over the years for Psi Chi and these *Eye on Psi Chi* columns. Mitch, you have also been a prolific and generous contributor to Psi Chi; in a database search, I found 73 entries for contributions over the past 20 years. I don’t think Scott and I could ever replace Joe Palladino, but we are proud to have the opportunity to collaborate with you, and we truly hope future collaborations are possible even after these memorials are posted.

Back in the olden days of face-to-face conventions when one could have long conversations with dear friends, I have sometimes asked this question: “Do people on your campus know who you are?” While I mean that mostly from a student-knowing perspective, sometimes that applies to faculty colleagues as well. Dr. Handelsman, I would bet that your students and even some of your colleagues do not know how accomplished you are and how lucky they are to have you as an instructor, mentor, and colleague. If they were to do a PsycINFO search, a Google Scholar search, an Amazon.com search, look up and understand what an H index means, understand the selection process and the honor of being a CU President’s Teaching Scholar—if someone were to fathom all of that, then they would just start to understand who you really are. Your generosity, kindness, and incredible intellect are cloaked in a playful spirit of wit that engenders laughter and likeability.

All the best in your future endeavors. Oh, that’s right, you’re not retiring. You’re just not writing for the “Three Heads Are Better Than One...” column anymore. Nevermind.

With gratitude, Eric

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With gratitude, Eric
I am going to tell you a secret, but you need to promise not to tell anyone. Deal? Okay, here it is: When I started college, I wanted to be cop. Can you imagine? Me, a cop? In fact, that is why I majored in psychology … at least initially. I figured that having a strong background in psychology would help me move through the ranks in a large urban police department, quickly earning my detective shield, wowing junior officers with my seemingly endless knowledge of human and criminal behavior. But, it was not meant to be—for two reasons. First, at times, I like to break the law just for the fun of it. Nothing serious or dangerous, but a broken law none-the-less.1 Second, after finding out about my occupational aspirations, my father told me something that stuck with me and changed the trajectory of my professional life. My dad stated that, although being a police officer was indeed a valuable, noble, and enriching occupation, and that I would be doing very important work, I would be faced with a lot of the hardness, badness, and ugliness of life. In other words, the job would be rewarding but challenging, and I would regularly see things that were unsettling. I balked, and although I truly enjoy my current career, I sometimes wonder what might have been.

Certain professions are like this: rewarding, challenging, and unsettling at times. School psychology is one of these fields. The challenges one experiences in this field are many. And, the school psychologist often interacts with children who experience life conditions that can be truly heart wrenching. For these reasons, a career in school psychology is not for the faint of heart. But, the school psychologist can positively impact the children they work with in many ways, and they can improve the educational systems in which they work, such that all students benefit. School psychologists touch the lives of many, and many students’ experience of success is at least in part due to the good work that school psychologists do. So, let us learn a little bit more about this field.

School Psychology: For Those Who Actually Like Children

School psychology is field that applies the principles of psychology to address the academic and mental health needs of students. Importantly, school psychologists take a systems

1 Since I have already requested discretion with some of what is written here, I should also probably ask that you not tell anyone about this little tidbit as well, particularly if that person is somehow involved in law enforcement.
School psychologists thus work collaboratively with these parties to ensure children’s well-being. It is important to distinguish between school psychologists and educational psychologists. Educational psychologists study human learning and often apply this to academic contexts, but this field tends to be more research-oriented. School psychologists share an interest in learning, but also mental health, and critically, school psychology is a practitioner-based field where psychologists work directly with those they serve. In other words, while educational psychology and school psychology share some similarities, educational psychologists are learning-oriented school psychologists who don’t like being around children—kidding, just kidding.

Here is a fun fact: School psychology was one of the first examples of applied clinical psychology … before applied clinical psychology was cool (specifically, this was 1890 … clinical psychology became cool only later). However, from the beginning, school psychology differed from clinical psychology in that it focused on not only mental health, but also learning and behavioral problems. The driving force behind the creation of school psychology was the emergence of compulsory education (Fagan & Wise, 2007). Prior to laws requiring compulsory education, only a small minority of children attended school, and they were a pretty homogenous bunch of mostly upper-class children who were prepared for the rigors of formal education. But, compulsory schooling required that all children attend school, and then, as now, children varied widely in ability, preparedness, maturity, and social skills. Because the children were different, different approaches to education were required. This was all very new, so experts were brought in to assist with the designing of different curricula, programs, and services for students of varying abilities and characteristics. These experts, as you might have guessed, were school psychologists.

However, school psychology remained a relatively small field of individuals with differing educational backgrounds and expertise until a watershed event in the mid-20th century. This event was the Thayer Conference. At this conference, an agreed upon definition of the field was developed, primary responsibilities of the profession were outlined, and recommended education levels for practitioners were stated. The field of school psychology, as we know it today, was born out of this conference and then later refined by initiatives and directives from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

School Psychology: For Those Who Are Good at Multitasking

So, what do school psychologists do? The answer to this question, in short, is that they assess, advocate, prevent, and intervene when needed. The answer to this question, in long, is much more complicated, but the short version is a good summary. Assessment was a central task for early school psychologists and continues to be important to this day. In fact, many school psychologists and those in related professions specialize in the assessment of various characteristics deemed to be important for a child’s functioning (e.g., intelligence, socioemotional functioning). School psychologists serve as advocates for children, parents, and school systems, speaking for and representing the interests of these parties as needed. School psychologists also develop, implement, and evaluate prevention and intervention programs to address the needs of students. These programs can be focused on promoting positive behaviors, encouraging academic success, fostering socioemotional functioning, or addressing mental health-related issues. For example, a school psychologist may design and coordinate the implementation of a program focused on teaching effective emotion regulation skills to at-risk students. It should be noted that the prevention and intervention programs that school psychologists implement may involve either groups (as in the above example) or individuals. And, school psychologists also play a key role, a central role in many cases, in crisis intervention. If a student experiences a crisis, the school psychologist will likely be involved in engaging and administering actions aimed at returning that student to precrisis levels of functioning.

School Psychology: For Those Who Desire a Lot of Training and Good Job Prospects

If you are now interested in becoming a school psychologist, I have wonderful news for you. The job prospects for a budding school psychologist are excellent. Why? There is a shortage of appropriately trained individuals in the field. There are lots of jobs and much demand, but a shortage of supply. This is particularly the case for those who are bi- or multilingual. In the United States, many students’ primary language is something other than English, especially among elementary and middle school students. A trained school psychologist who speaks another language is thus quite an asset for most school systems. I should note, however, that although most school psychologists work in the schools, you can also find them in clinics, correctional facilities, universities, hospitals, and working in private practice. So, you have some options, provided that you have the right training … … which involves graduate level work beyond an undergraduate degree. Depending on the position you want and the certification requirements of the region in which you would like to work, you may seek a masters-level degree, a specialist degree, or a doctoral degree. Because this is a practitioner-based field, all graduate programs will require completion of not only coursework, but also practica and internships. The degree will determine what jobs you can hold. Whereas a master’s degree was previously considered to be sufficient to obtain certification in many regions of the United States, a specialist degree (e.g., EdS, PsyS) is now considered the minimum degree requirement for employment in most areas. Of course, a doctoral degree confers even more opportunity and should be pursued by those who are willing and able to dedicate 5–7 years to their graduate training. That is a lot of time, but as noted above, once training is completed, one can almost certainly find a job.
School Psychology: For Those Who Want Great Challenge and Reward

One issue that school psychologists face is that they provide many services for many individuals, and individuals in this field often report experiencing many work-related stresses. They are under great pressure to provide adequate care for their students, and given the shortage of those working in the field, they often have limited support. It is, to say the least, a challenging position. But, through their work, the lives of many are improved. Indeed, many children are profoundly impacted by school psychologists. The school psychologist helps during times of crisis, during difficult developmental periods, during periods of academic challenge, and so on. Although there are certainly tangible rewards for effectively assisting with such situations, perhaps the greatest reward is knowing, at the end of the day, that whatever you did, it made a child’s life better ... that you made a child smile. And, I think we can all agree that there are few things more satisfying than seeing a big, toothy smile on a child’s face.

The average annual salary of school psychologists is nothing to sneeze at ... for example.

2021 Distinguished Members of Psi Chi

Congratulations to Dr. Melba J. T. Vasquez and Dr. John C. Norcross for their selection as the 2021 Distinguished Members of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology! Drs. Vasquez and Norcross were chosen by Psi Chi’s Board of Directors in recognition for their international contributions to psychology and Psi Chi in the areas of research, service, and teaching.

This is truly the highest award available in our organization. In Psi Chi’s 91-year history, it has only been bestowed upon 42 individuals. Other Psi Chi Distinguished Members include Drs. Albert Bandura, Elizabeth Lofts, B. F. Skinner, and more.

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

Melba J. T. Vasquez, PhD

Dr. Melba Vasquez is in independent practice in Austin, Texas. She served as President of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2011) and is the first Latina and Woman of Color of 120 presidencies of APA to serve in that role. Her special presidential initiatives included examination of psychology’s contributions to the grand challenges in society, including immigration, discrimination, and educational disparities.

She currently serves as APA’s 2021 Parliamentarian and served in the same role in 2020. She is a member of the APA Needs, Assessment, Staging and Campaigns Committee (NASCC), and on the Board of Trustees of the American Psychological Foundation.

She is a coauthor of eight books and about 100 book chapters and journal articles. She has served on numerous editorial boards. She has been honored with over 50 awards for distinguished professional contributions, career service, leadership, advocacy, and mentorship.

John C. Norcross, PhD, ABPP

An internationally recognized expert on behavior change and psychotherapy, John C. Norcross, PhD, ABPP, is Distinguished Professor and Chair of Psychology at the University of Scranton, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University, and a board-certified clinical psychologist.

Author of more than 200 scholarly publications, Dr. Norcross has cowritten or edited 22 books and published Changeology and Changing for Good (with Prochaska & DiClemente). Dr. Norcross has been elected president of the APA Division of Clinical Psychology, the APA Division of Psychotherapy, the International Society of Clinical Psychology, and the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration. Dr. Norcross edited the Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session and served as a clinical and research consultant to a number of organizations. A Fellow of 10 professional associations, he has been honored with APA’s Distinguished Career Contributions to Education & Training Award, the Pennsylvania Professor of the Year, and the Rosalee Weiss Award. He has been featured in media interviews and national television and has conducted workshops and lectures in 40 countries. An engaging teacher and clinician, he is a longtime contributor to Psi Chi writing for the Eye and speaking at regional conventions.

Additional Resources and Further Reading

Reference


Ethan A. McMahon, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Western Oregon University where he teaches courses in research methods, advanced research methods, and positive psychology. He is passionate about undergraduate education in psychology and has served Psi Chi members in several ways over the last few years, including as a faculty advisor, Psi Chi Western Region Steering Committee Member, Grants Chair, and most recently, as the Western Regional Vice-President of Psi Chi. His research interests focus on hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to well-being, folk conceptions of happiness, and the relationship between nature and human well-being. His recent work examines how exposure to immersive simulations of natural environments impact concurrent emotional state and, more broadly, how regular contact with natural environments may be one route by which individuals achieve optimal feeling and functioning. He has published in the Journal of Positive Psychology, the Journal of Happiness Studies, Personality and Individual Differences, and Ecopsychology, among other publications. He completed his undergraduate training at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and holds a PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Wyoming.
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The pandemic has increased the need for workers to have the right mix of in-demand competencies, and it has changed that mix for several occupations. Further, according to a new report from Georgetown University’s Center for Education and the Workforce (CEW), it is possible that the mix may have permanent effects on the economy even after the pandemic is over (Carnevale et al., 2020).

For example, between April 2020 to at least December 2020 (when this article was written), the media has well-documented the shut-down of major service sectors and their support services (e.g., air travel, restaurants, hotels, leisure) with resulting high unemployment. Thousands of businesses have closed permanently; others remain open by retraining (reskilling or upskilling) employees for other tasks within their organizations. In short, competencies that were once in high demand in some organizations are in low demand (for now).

Competencies such as strong communication skills are now in very high demand and are intensively used due particularly to the nature of at-home work, social distancing, and other factors. Yet there are exceptions in supply and demand; some services have benefited from the pandemic, at least temporarily. For example, my small town’s bicycle shop had hundreds of back orders by the middle of last summer, and the competencies of a bicycle repair specialist were in high demand. Recognizing that not all elements of workers’ career trajectories are under their control, such as labor-market discrimination against women, Black, and Latino people, do you know which occupations, education, and competencies can generally give you the best chances of success during the times of COVID-19? Let’s turn to the data.

Some Background

In the Winter 2020 issue, I summarized major findings from the Emsi report Resilient Skills: The Survivor Skills That the Class of Covid-19 Should Pursue (Hettich, 2021). Briefly, the three broad groups of pandemic-resilient skills include

- human skills (communications, management, leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking),
- technical skills (technology, core business skills), and
- hard-to-find skills (interpersonal and persuasive communication, key performance indicators, Tableau).

As you know from your research methods course, it is not always wise to trust a sample of one (in this instance one report) when others are available, especially when decisions about your education and career may be involved. Consequently, I am pleased to devote this column to the new CEW report entitled Workplace Basics: The
Competencies Employers Want, 2020 (Carnevale et al. 2021). Findings are similar between these reports regarding skills employers seek. However, Carnevale and his associates dig deeper into this topic by discussing competencies (not just skills) and how they interact with educational level to influence occupational income.

Methodology
The methodology used in Workplace Basics is based on the Occupational Information Network (O*NET), a U.S. Department of Labor database containing regularly updated information about 1,000 occupations that represent the American labor market. Included in that database is information about 120 different knowledge areas, skills, and abilities (sometimes called KSAs) that combine to form competencies. The KSAs are derived from surveys of workers and analysts who are familiar with the occupations used by O*NET to describe the importance of KSAs for a particular job and the level of each necessary within the job. The Carnevale team organized the 1,000 occupations into 19 major categories based on their statistical similarity, and they used this data to calculate the demand for and the intensity of use of each competency (Carnevale et al., 2020). Feel free to consult the report at https://cew.georgetown.edu/cewreports/competencies/ for further details about the methodology.

Terms You Should Know
First, we define key terms using the authors’ language, which they adapted from O*NET. Some terms are highly specific, but the researchers are making important distinctions in their use of competencies that I have not encountered in related studies.

- **Competencies**—the knowledge, skills, and abilities that workers use in their jobs
- **Knowledge**—the principles and facts associated with certain content domains, from the subjects taught in formal education to applied disciplines learned through practice.
- **Skills**—vehicles that allow workers to successfully complete job tasks, to apply their knowledge usefully, and to engage in further learning.
- **Abilities** are the aptitudes that influence work performance; they are both innate and developed, in contrast to knowledge and skills, which are acquired over time.
- **Demand**—the average level of the competency that was required in a job and the importance of that competency in that job. For example, in this study communication was the competency most in demand, that is 77% of all jobs required communication.
- **High demand**—if at least two thirds of the jobs required it (e.g., 90% of the workers in this study were in jobs that required the communication skill).
- **Intensity of use**—the demand value quartile from least intensive (Q1) to most intensive (Q4) within an individual competency. For example, within those jobs where the communication competency is used most intensively, 77% of the workers have a bachelor’s degree. (Carnevale et al., 2020).

Competencies and Higher Education
Due to the economic restructuring and technological developments of the past 50 years, the demand for physical competencies (e.g., psychomotor, fine motor, and sensory abilities; mechanical and spatial skills; and vision and hearing) has lessened and is found primarily in blue collar occupations. In contrast, the demand for knowledge competencies has increased rapidly, and education has been a key factor in helping workers attain them. For instance, whereas 12% of the workforce held a four-year college degree or higher in 1970, by 2019 43% were four-year college graduates. However, while there is a strong association between educational attainment and being employed in a job requiring intensive use of in-demand competencies, it is important to acknowledge that educational attainment does not always mean that workers acquire the competencies they need in the workforce.

Employer surveys have revealed that less than half of employers think that recent college graduates are proficient in key competencies such as oral and written communication. (Carnevale et al., 2020, pp. 9–10; emphasis added).

In addition, and a key finding of this report, different competencies interact with one’s education and experiences to influence the financial rewards of one’s occupation. In other words, “different occupations reward different mixes of competencies and education” (Carnevale et al., 2020, p. 11).

What Are the Most Important Competencies?
In general, individuals employed in the professional and technical areas have remained employed during the pandemic in jobs that require high demand cognitive skills. Data from this report indicate the competencies most in demand across all labor sectors, based on their importance and level, (in descending order of importance, see Figure 1).

Each is key to workers’ ability to contribute to almost any workplace. These competencies are especially critical for workers in a competitive job market; job posting data have shown that these general competencies are universal and timeless, while other more specific competencies (for example, proficiency in the latest computer programming language) are continually falling in and out of favor. (Carnevale et al., 2020, p. 15).

Before you congratulate yourself for having already achieved several of these competencies, be sure to recall the specific situations in which you practiced them. To what extent do classroom-based skill development assignments transfer to the...
might you write papers for your psychology and other courses. How diverse are the topics, types of presentations, and audiences, and how often do you follow teachers’ suggestions for improving elements of your writing? Do not expect a supervisor to sympathetically provide such feedback.

Oral skills are not limited to presenting a paper in class; they also include interpersonal communication and conversational components. Supervisors often complain about the inability of college graduates to carry on a conversation with clients, conversations that are quite different from those with friends and classmates. Students who have worked in sales or as restaurant waitstaff can testify to the benefits of such jobs for practicing speaking, customer service (especially with grumpy customers), and team skills.

As for group projects, one of my working students questioned the value of our I/O group project on acquiring transferable team skills. Her take: Working with classmates whom she chose for a project that accounted for 25% of the final grade was quite different from being assigned with fellow workers (including the least liked coworker) to projects that can affect an employee’s promotion or job.

Leadership is a particularly important competency, and college affords numerous opportunities for its development in diverse settings. However, is one experience as a Psi Chi officer sufficient to achieve leadership? Did you learn how to listen to members, resolve conflicts, negotiate, delegate tasks, make decisions that accounted for members’ differing views, and lead effectively under stressful conditions?

How well does the complex thinking and problem-solving involved in reading, designing, and conducting a research study transfer to analogous workplace assignments? The answer will depend partly on your ability to think analytically, analogously, and open mindedly in different contexts. In short, you should not assume that the competencies and skill building components of your course work transfer directly to workplace settings—although some will. Your internships, job experiences, and extracurricular activities can build on your classroom foundation a strong bridge for crossing from college to the workplace successfully.

The Great Mix: Competences, Demand, Intensity of Use, and Earnings

“Competencies that are in the highest demand throughout the labor market are not always the ones that produce the highest annual earnings” (Carnevale et al., p. 39). Earnings depend on other factors. For example, when researchers controlled for education and major occupational group, competencies such as communication and problem-solving were associated with higher earnings, but only in those occupations where they were used most intensively. In contrast, competencies in math and engineering may not be in high demand in most occupations, but where they are critical, engineers and mathematicians can expect to be well-rewarded financially. According to Carnevale et al. (2020) the competencies with the highest earnings associated with intensity of use are (in descending order):

- Communication
- Problem-solving and complex thinking
- Engineering and physical sciences
- Teaching and learning
- Mathematics and computer science
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Perception and attentiveness
- Digital technology
- Vision and hearing
- Business and economics

Probably, you are not surprised to know that specific competencies in engineering, physical sciences, mathematics and computer science, and digital technology can draw high salaries.

Figure 2 illustrates the mix of competencies needed for success in three groups of occupations. Note: (a) the height of the boxes represents the strength of demand for each competency. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. 

Note. Adapted with permission from Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-18, and U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Occupational Information Network (O*NET) 24.3 Database, 2020. Note. Height of boxes represents the relative demand for each competency.
The other occupational categories included education, community services and arts, blue-collar occupations, sales and office support, food and personal services, and health care support. Space does not permit exploration of all nine categories, given the wealth of data presented for each at the high school, associates (or some college), and bachelor’s degree levels. However, because the competencies demanded for managerial and professional office occupations are very similar to the top five general competences, and because approximately 50% of baccalaureate psychology graduates enter the business world, we take a closer look at that category in Figure 3.

Here are four key takeaways:

1. The top 10 competencies most in demand in this group almost mirror (except for perception and attentiveness) the top 10 general competencies.
2. Sixty-five percent of the workers in this occupational group hold a bachelor’s or higher degree and have a median income of $86,000.
3. The middle set of data display the overall median earnings for this level of education (vertical bar), the range of all intensity-of-use quartiles for this competency (only Q4 is shown), and the median earnings of workers at this educational level whose jobs require the highest-intensity use of this competency.
4. The column on the right reflects the share of workers with bachelor’s or higher education who are working in jobs where this competency is used most intensively (Carnevale et al., 2020).

Concluding Comments

We have just explored a considerable amount of detailed information about the competencies employers want, so don’t hesitate to review it again now or later. Workplace Basics: The Competencies Employers Want 2020 focused on COVID-19 era competencies that employers seek during drastically changing economic conditions. The report demonstrated that success in an occupation depends on a mix of general and specific competences understood in terms of their demand, intensity of use, and impact on a person’s financial outcomes. Despite the specificity of this information, recognize that variations in the competency mix and related dimensions may differ from situation to situation, and that other factors can intervene, including fair labor practices and local economic conditions.

What can you do with this information?
1. If you have a general idea of an occupational area (e.g., the nine groups identified above) that interests you, use this information to explore specific careers for the mix of competences in demand and start to plan the remainder of your education accordingly.
2. Explore possible occupations using O*NET data, and conduct information interviews with individuals in those occupations.
3. Trying to match competencies you seek to course titles and applied experiences (e.g., internships) will be a challenge, so expect to work with advisors from multiple departments as well as your school’s career planning services.
4. Reflect on the jobs you have held or currently hold. What competencies have you acquired from them, and what opportunities exist to achieve or strengthen other competencies?
5. What mix of competencies do you need to succeed in your chosen occupation, and what specific steps will you take to achieve them? In these pandemic times, it helps to remember the words of Booker T. Washington (slightly paraphrased): Success is measured not so much about the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which they have overcome while trying to succeed.

**References**


Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/competencies/


Note. Competencies are ranked in the order demanded by the major occupational group.

**Figure 3. Combinations of Competencies Relative to Income for Baccalaureate Graduates in Managerial and Professional Office Occupations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of workers with a Bachelor’s degrees or higher: 65%</th>
<th>Share using competency most intensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median earnings at the highest intensity of use</td>
<td>Overall median earnings</td>
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Note. Adapted with permission from Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2014-18, and U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Occupational Information Network (O*NET) 24.3 Database, 2020.

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PSYCHOHAIRAPY

Brushing Up on the History and Psychology of Black Hair

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University of the District of Columbia
Psychologists are masterful in giving their clients a “checkup from the neck up,” and yet our assessments and interventions overlook the psycho-historical significance of hair. The cultural meaning of hair is emotionally stratified within lives as the most malleable phenotypic expression of race (Mbilishaka, 2018a). Black hair in particular is entangled with culture, identity, politics, and body image. My research for the past decade has focused on *PsychoHairapy*, the psychology of Black hair and mental health in hair care settings (Mangum & Woods, 2011; Mbilishaka, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). History, in particular, has served as my guidepost for drawing cultural insights in better serving the psychological needs of my clients in the hair salon and on the therapy couch. I have made it my personal mission to make an impact on my community through becoming a culturally informed psychologist, hairstylist, and a self-trained “hair historian.”

**Combing Through Black History**

The history of Black hair is ancient, with deep roots in the diverse cultures of the African continent. Within this cultural context, hair represented a complex language system because hair acts as a visual marker of identity (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Hairstyles could communicate age, wealth, profession, relationship status, and religion. Hair was often utilized as a spiritual tool to connect with the unseen world—from birth to death—because it is the highest point on our bodies and grows toward the heavens (Mbilishaka, 2018a).

Ethnic groups across the African continent practice rituals that honor hair. The Yoruba of Nigeria and the Wolof of Senegal continue to engage in the baby naming ceremony and perform a ritualistic of shaving the hair of newborn babies (Beckwith & Fisher, 1999; Sherrow, 2006). This shaven hair is understood as a sacred offering to the ancestral realm for the safe travels of the newest family member to the physical world. Shai girls of Ghana are guided through a rites of passage program to inform them of the cultural practices associated with entering womanhood at the arch of their menses and awarded with an ornate updo to communicate the newly acquired womanhood status. Similarly, for the Maasai—of Tanzania and Kenya—adolescent males are initiated into warriorhood status through ritualistic dyeing of the hair a bright red color and the growing of long locs (Beckwith & Fisher, 1999). Only upon completion of their duties can they cut their hair in a community gathering led by their mother, to represent a rebirth process into the next stage of life. Marriage is also viewed as an important rite of passage, therefore various ethnic groups set intentions for the marriage through the wedding hairstyle. The Tuareg of Mali and Niger prepare their brides on their wedding day by increasing the shine of the hair through special medicinal oils and the rubbing of fine black sand (Beckwith & Fisher, 1999). Alternatively, the Maasai brides shave their hair to have a “fresh start” in their marriage and to adorn the head with special talismans for wealth and fertility (Beckwith & Fisher, 1999). Himba women care for each other by adding ochre and butter fats to the hair, as a way to moisturize and protect the hair strands from breakage. These rituals require special hairstylists and barbers to complete these tasks, as these tasks require special training and respect. These hair rituals have been sustained through intergenerational cultural transmission.

Unfortunately, countless African hair rituals are now extinct due to colonization in Africa and the Transatlantic slave trade (Morrow, 1990). One of the first steps to dehumanize the newly enslaved Africans in the Americas included hair shaving (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). This butchering of the hair disconnected Africans from significant elements of African culture and values (Morrow, 1990). Nearly all enslaved Africans in the Americas were not permitted time to properly groom their hair, as their hair was now labeled as “fur” or “wool” (Byrd & Tharps, 2014).
Consequently, hair loss, scalp disease, and parasites were common complaints of enslaved Africans (Morrow, 1990). Additionally, an informal caste system developed during plantation life that privileged enslaved Africans with longer straighter hair over those with shorter and tightly coiled hair textures. White plantation owners and overseers created intraracial tensions between enslaved Africans by delegating abrasive manual labor tasks to those with tightly coiled hair and those with the closest approximations with phenotypic whiteness were responsible for more domestic tasks (Morrow, 1990). Black people went to great lengths to straighten their hair texture, such as using axel grease or heating irons to extreme temperature to alter the texture of their hair (Morrow, 1990). This form of texturism continue during post slavery for Black communities (Mbilishaka, Clemons, et al., 2020).

Although Black hair texture unfairly impacted economic and educational outcomes post-slavery, there have been movements to embrace natural hair textures in modern history (Davis et al., 2019; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019). During the 1960s and 1970s, the first natural hair movement emerged during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. These movements encouraged Black people to reconnect with their African ancestry through researching and wearing African styles (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). With the emergence of the Internet and social media, Black people began a second Natural Hair Movement in the 2010s to embrace their coiled tresses (Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019). Still, there remains conflicts about hair textures within Black families (Lewis, 1999; Mbilishaka, Mitchell, & Conyers, 2020; Wilson et al., 2018) and this occurs throughout the African Diaspora (Mbilishaka, Ray, et al., 2020).

**Becoming a CROWN ACTivist**

Deanna and Mya Scot were suspended for wearing braids to school in Massachusetts. Andrew Johnson was told that he could not participate in a wrestling match in New Jersey because he wore his hair in locs. Promise Sayers decided to continue to wear her Afro even though she was being bullied at school for her hair and documented it on social media. Deandre Arnold in Texas was not permitted to graduate from his high school
due to the length of his locs. These stories garnered national attention and informed new social policy on protecting Black hairstyles and Black people. Black children are systematically targeted through biased dress code policies related to hair (Mangum et al., 2019). The systemic hair shaming has long lasting emotional consequences when it occurs in education spaces for Black children (Mbilishaka & Apugo, 2020). Unfortunately, many Black adults have been fired from jobs for having “unprofessional” natural hair as a result of implicit hair bias and stereotypes (Opie & Phillips, 2015; McGill Johnson et al., 2017). The CROWN Act (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) was introduced in 2019 as a bill to broaden the scope the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Mbilishaka, Clemons, et al., 2020). Having passed in seven states so far, the CROWN Act intends to increase access to education, employment, and housing for Black American citizens.

Policies like the CROWN Act need to exist because hair care occupies consequential mental space in the lives of Black Americans. Black people are placed in a position where their hair care choices impact their quality of life (Mbilishaka, Clemons, et al., 2020; Mbilishaka, Mbande, et al., 2020). Fears of noncompliance of implicit hair texture and length rules impacts choices to exercise (Mbilishaka & Lacey, 2019) and even romantic relationship outcomes for Black couples (Mbilishaka, 2018c). Black people often have to navigate hair stress and anxiety in both public and home environments (Mbilishaka et al., 2020). I hope that we can enlist the healing spaces of Black hair care settings into addressing these aesthetic traumas and acts of racism (Mbilishaka, 2018a, 2018c). Further research and trainings are needed to address the complexity of Black hair in America.

Conclusion

Although this article only serves as an introduction to the history of Black hair, it is clear that the history is lengthy and complex. Psychologists should be invited to learn about Black hair as a means to have a broader understanding of Black cultural designs for living and processing of social systems. Hopefully, we can all become more culturally informed and fluent in the languages of Black hair.

References


Afifa Mbilishaka, PhD, grew up as her family’s hairstylist, graduating from lawn chairs at cookouts to eventually holding space in her college dorm room for a mini-salon. Her trait of being a skillful active listener and creative translated smoothly to the field of psychology, earning her degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Howard University. At the age of 26, Dr. Mbilishaka earned a PhD in clinical psychology and was a therapist at Columbia University. She is now a professor and head of the Psychology Program at the University of the District of Columbia. Dr. Mbilishaka is a natural hairstylist at N Natural Hair Studio in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she loves creating art with locs, twists, and Afros. Dr. Mbilishaka innovated the practice and research of “Psychohairapy,” where she uses hair as an entry point for mental health services in beauty salons and barbershops, as well as social media.
The next step after starting graduate school in psychology is an inevitable landslide of well-meaning, irritatingly optimistic, insights from friends and family. You are amazing! You deserve to be here! You are going to do great things! It gets old fast, and such high expectations can feel like a heavy weight to carry. It is often hard to believe we can even make it through a single statistics class, much less achieve the extraordinary scientific breakthroughs our friends and family imagine for us. Sometimes the only advice that feels realistic is that which comes from the perspective of another equally tired, overworked, cynical graduate student (That’s us, the authors of this article).

It can be a relief to refocus our expectations to a more reasonable level, even if that refocusing results in some pretty backwards-sounding wisdom. The best advice can sound a little terrible, but it is true. Here are some harsh but helpful tips we have picked up over our time in graduate school.

The World Could End Tomorrow

When you get into graduate school, your program suddenly feels like the most important thing in the world. And it is important. You have worked really hard to get here, and likely sacrificed a lot of time, money, and sleep for the chance to earn this degree, so it is easy to prioritize school over other aspects of life. People always say that they will go on that trip, get that pet, pick up that hobby, or get back into that sport after graduate school. Unfortunately, those things may never happen because the world could end tomorrow.

And if it did, would you be glad to have read those extra five articles, or wish you had gone on that impromptu road trip with your best friend? Now granted, most days the world doesn’t end, and it is important to plan for your future, which sometimes means putting off large life events until after graduation. And studying is definitely important. But the point is: don’t put everything else in life on hold for five years. The years you spend in graduate school are real years of your real life. If your entire purpose for those years is getting a degree and you aren’t experiencing or enjoying the world, it is going to be miserable. You may even lose sight of why getting this education was important to you in the first place.
Your Advisor Sees Right Through You

In our experience, one of the most common worries at the beginning of grad school is the fear of looking silly in front of your advisor. The good news is that your advisor sees right through your pretenses. Thanks to your CV, GPA, GRE scores, interviews, and every other possible academic record that you had to turn in during the tedious application process, you aren’t fooling anyone. Your advisor accepted you as a mentee with the full knowledge of everything you have and have not done academically. They are well aware that there is a lot you don’t know, because that is the whole reason you are in school, to learn. If you don’t ask questions and seek support when you need it, you aren’t going to trick your advisor into thinking you are more competent, but you might miss out on a lot of important learning opportunities.

You’re Not Good Enough to Do It Alone

Graduate students are asked to learn an impossible number of things in a short period of time. In any given week, you might have to teach yourself how to administer a new psychological measure, how to complete a complex statistical analysis, and what to do when you turn 26 and are kicked off your parents’ insurance plan. It feels impossible to carry the entire weight of graduate school and adulthood on your back. In fact, it is impossible to carry that weight all on your back. That’s why you must ask for help. Every person ahead of you in your program has been in your shoes, and more likely than not, they will be happy to share what they learned from the experience. Your advisor might seem intimidating, but it is their job to help and guide you. Your cohort might also be feeling overburdened, but they would probably love to vent with you about your shared frustrations. You are not meant to do it alone. In fact, you can’t do it alone, at least not in a healthy way. Friends, classmates, and coworkers are your lifelines here—make use of them and tell them you appreciate them.

You Will Never Know Enough, and Neither Will Anyone Else

A large part of imposter syndrome, which afflicts many graduate students, is the sense that you do not yet know enough. There is always another milestone, another degree, another class to complete, and the hope that once you reach that milestone you will feel like you know enough or are competent enough. It is important to understand that you will never know enough, nor will you ever feel fully competent to do what you are doing. It is also worth noting that likely none of your colleagues feel competent either, no matter how knowledgeable they may appear. Learning is part of life, and in order to be a good scientist or academic you must continue seeking new knowledge for as long as you are in the field (and likely as long as you are alive). So embrace the feeling that there is still so much that you don’t know, because graduate school is only part of your lifelong pursuit of information about the world. If you ever feel like you have arrived at a point where you know enough, you are dangerously mistaken.
You Are Always Going to Fall Short

You made it to graduate school, which means you probably take a lot of pride in your academic work and put your full effort into it most of the time. This pattern of high achieving just is not feasible in graduate school, and you will probably fall short. You need to fall short sometimes. There is a heavy workload in graduate school and you simply won’t have time to do all of it with 100% effort. It is a marathon not a sprint. You need to learn how to skim certain readings and be satisfied with less effort on certain tasks if it means getting things done on time and balancing self-care. By putting less than your full effort overall, you can focus more on aspects of your program that are relevant to your personal goals and be more successful in the long run.

If You Are Not Good Enough, You’ll Get Kicked Out

It seems that a common experience in grad school is a constant fear of failure. Failing at research, failing those impossible statistics classes, failing as a clinician. There are so many areas in which you are being evaluated and it is hard to feel as though you are doing well enough in all of these different aspects of your work. Even worse, helpful feedback from professors, mentors, and supervisors can be hard to come by, leading to a fear that you are failing and no one has even told you yet.

However, there is some good news: if your performance was really that bad, someone would have politely asked you to leave. Your supervisors might not be the best at delivering praise, but they would certainly tell you if your performance was as terrible as you are afraid it is. If you are still here, that must mean you are doing fine. You might even be doing better than fine! So try not to worry too much (we know, easier said than done). If you are not up to snuff, someone will tell you. Until then, just keep trying your best.

In conclusion: Enjoy your life outside of school, ask for help, be honest with your advisor, remember that you’re always learning, don’t expect to be perfect, and try not to worry too much. Hopefully this advice will help you in some way, but maybe it won’t. We’re just trying our best here.

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Career experts consider LinkedIn a crucial component of job searches (Breitbarth, 2019). Over 170 million people have a profile on LinkedIn in the United States (Iqbal, 2020). Career services at colleges and universities and LinkedIn’s own resources provide excellent advice to students about utilizing the platform to enhance career searches. In addition to job searching, LinkedIn serves as a useful career-management tool for aspects such as networking, professional development, and maintaining a strong online presence. Students need to actively and proficiently use LinkedIn to gain the most from its features. Faculty advisors should encourage students to proactively use LinkedIn and guide them to resources on the best ways to use the platform. Additionally, LinkedIn is a powerful tool for faculty advisors who want to best aid their students in their career explorations and development before they are ready for the job market or graduate school. LinkedIn provides unique insights into the career paths of alumni, allowing students to identify options and faculty advisors to best hone their guidance to students. We provide an overview of best ways for students to enhance their LinkedIn presence and then an exploration of how an advisor can garner information for career advising from LinkedIn.
Basic LinkedIn Advice for Students

Step 1: Setting Up Your LinkedIn Page and Profile

Before you start building your page, navigate to your profile page, look in the top right corner, and you will see a link that says “Edit public profile URL.” Change your LinkedIn public profile URL to a custom URL with your name (or as close as you can). A more personal URL promotes your profile and allows you to be more easily identifiable in search results.

If at all possible, use a professional photo. Sometimes your institution will provide this as a free or low-cost service particularly in the spring near career fair time. The photo should be a portrait shot and not a selfie.

Attend to the background photo as well as the headshot. The background photo should reflect a professional image, and it could convey an area of interest. It promotes engagement with your page by the reader.

Attend carefully to the words in the headline, summary, and profile. Assume that the reader of your profile is someone who might interview you for a job. If you are assuming your reader is a different audience, design with them in mind.

• Every word on a profile is searchable, so the words you use are important. Use tips for headlines and keywords available online such as https://www.powerformula.net/free-resources-learning-LinkedIn/

• The headline should tell a short version of your story and convey career goals. The headline is important to the reader. Provide your job title or for new alumni, add the position you hope to obtain. We do not recommend advertising your graduation date (e.g., May 2022 graduate) as this might suggest to readers that you are inexperienced.

• The “About” section at the top of LinkedIn profile, just below the headshot photo, allows for up to 2,000 characters. Use that space to provide an overview of your professional goals and experiences. Think of this as your 10-second elevator pitch. Share the skills (e.g., communication skills, project management skills) you bring with you along with your professional interest. You likely only have a few seconds to grab someone’s attention.

• The “Experience” section most closely resembles your resumé. List jobs, internships, and volunteer experiences and give a good job description for each. This section is essentially your resumé. (See PRO TIPS to the right.)

• The “Featured” section allows you to upload your resumé, research documents, and any other relevant material. Graduate students often have a professional website showcasing their research to which they can provide a link. You can also link to LinkedIn articles or posts.

• In the “Education” section, make sure to link to your college or university’s official site. Search for your university’s name, and LinkedIn automatically links your profile to the institution’s page. You can choose whether you want to share more specific information (e.g., job changes, education changes, and work anniversaries) when you set up the connection.

PRO TIPS

• Do not assume someone is going to click on your uploaded resumé. Potential employers will do word searches of your profile and attachments are not included in the search feature.

• Show knowledge appropriate to your career path of interest by using keywords and skills associated with the field. Use descriptive words. Don’t be vague, instead focus on specific skills and attributes. For example, use the phrase “developed strong interpersonal skills” rather than “worked with people.”

• Very few readers make a distinction between paid/unpaid work. It is the development of professional skills in a workplace that stands out no matter how they were garnered.

• Overall, think of your profile as your job application. Employers can tell how much effort you put into it. We recommend looking at others’ profiles for ideas for your own. Do not plagiarize but pay attention to creative and clever content. We also recommend that you do not post anything that has not been reviewed by your career services office, advisor, or faculty member. Two sets of eyes are better than one.
Networking

Networking is one of the most important job search strategies (CareerOneStop, 2015) and the primary path for recent undergraduates to secure jobs. LinkedIn can be an important component of developing and enhancing networks. Network connections are not just friends—they are acquaintances and referrals and can be established with and through online social networks (Morgan et al., in press). LinkedIn is also used for academic job searches and should not be overlooked by graduate students (Vasiliver-Shamis, 2016).

Earlier, we indicated that you should link to your institution’s official group site. Institutions and other organizations have both company sites and groups. Groups are created by alumni or units within an organization, such as the psychology department. Join alumni groups within your institution and other pertinent groups within organizations or businesses of interest to you.

**LinkedIn connections are people who you know personally and who you trust on a professional level.**

- You should send a meaningful message to connect with someone—not the generic or “blank” request to connect. Explain why you want to connect or how you know the person.
- LinkedIn defines connections by degree (i.e., 1st Connection, 2nd Connection, & 3rd Connection). The level of connection determines how and if a LinkedIn member can connect with the other members (LinkedIn, n.d.).
- It is important to grow your network. LinkedIn, like many other social media websites, will suggest people you may want to connect with professionally. Again, do not send blanket invitations to large numbers of people, but personalize your outreach. Comment on their professional career path or the fact that they are alumni of your program. People are more likely to connect with you if they can see how you are connected. Don’t add people you do not really know. Similarly, do not feel the need to accept requests from people you do not know or to whom you do not have a connection.

LinkedIn users should learn professional online networking protocols and etiquette (Prasad, 2020).
Using LinkedIn to Explore Career Options: Students and Faculty

The ability to identify the types of work that undergraduates can do with a major in psychology is helpful to both students and faculty advisors. Many excellent resources apply to psychology majors across the United States. However, specific data on the alumni from your particular institution are likely more accurate and more useful for potential networking. Alumni serve as important sources of information for current students (Lawson, 2018). Faculty advisors and students can use information about alumni to get insight into what types of careers are available and where alumni are working, and to obtain information about organizations, industries, and graduate school programs.

Students (and faculty) should join the alumni group associated with their college or university. Joining will provide campus updates and alumni connections. Students will be connected to the company site through the “Education” and faculty through the “Employer” section.

By clicking on the “Alumni” tab on the college or university’s company site, you will be able to view all the alumni connected to the university. See image below, showing the alumni tab for UW–La Crosse, indicating 54,000+ alumni.

- Within the alumni information, you can narrow the search.
- When you start to narrow your search by major, the profiles will reorder with students and alumni of the psychology major to appear first in the search results. These results provide insight into the career paths of alumni who majored in psychology, listing job titles and employers.
- For student organization leaders and faculty, this is also a great tool to identify individuals to speak in courses or career events.
- Other searches can narrow down where alumni live, where they work, what they studied, what skills they possess, and how you are connected to them.
- You can search by title, keyword, or organization. If you are using keywords, they must be separate with an OR, AND, or NOT typed in the capitalized form.
- You can reach out to alumni through these pages.

LinkedIn for Job Searching

LinkedIn is an important tool for job searching. Recruiters use it heavily, and some organizations only recruit through LinkedIn due to its professional focus. Lo (2021) asserts that recruiters, in part, like LinkedIn because the public nature of the platform creates positive pressure on job seekers to be honest about past work skills and attributes.

Access LinkedIn job search resources. LinkedIn provides great resources for job seekers. The website includes job searching handbooks, tips for profiles, and job searching videos. In addition, many LinkedIn members provide good articles on the subject.

As indicated above, join groups on LinkedIn and interact with them. When job searching, we recommend joining the following types of groups: Alumni Groups; Industry Related (e.g., if you are interested in working in Human Resources [HR], join HR-related groups), and Regional Groups (good for personal and professional networking in a new geographic community). You should engage in groups to discuss professional topics, trends, and issues with like-minded people and to build and maintain a broader network.

Use the “Save Jobs” function in LinkedIn to track opportunities you find on LinkedIn.

Sign up for email alerts for new job postings that match your interests. Learn to use the filter functions within LinkedIn.
to help narrow a job search to careers of interest to you. However, don’t narrow too much as job titles vary substantially and you will want to stay open to a wide range of opportunities.

Ask for LinkedIn recommendations from the people who know you best, just like with other forms of recommendations. Recommendations are like mini-letters of recommendations.

Research companies or non-profit organizations you may wish to work for through an organization’s LinkedIn pages. You can also see which alumni or which people in your network already work there.

Spread the word. Inform your network you are looking for a job by posting an update from your LinkedIn page.

Seek help. Consider joining LinkedIn groups that are created for job seekers (e.g., “Portland Job Seekers”).

Do not hesitate to reach out to alumni through LinkedIn and ask them about job opportunities. Not only are most alumni interested in helping, some work for companies that provide bonuses to alumni who help to secure new employees. We recommend you ask them about their own career path, and you may also ask them to critique your résumé. If you feel uncomfortable about this, consider a reverse situation. Our guess is that you would be more than happy to help someone asking for information about your university or employer. We recommend you connect with alumni before applying for a job so that they know you are interested. They may be able to provide information and feedback that will enhance your application.

Additional LinkedIn Advice for Faculty

As part of helping students get ready for the job market, we recommend that faculty remind students that their online presence on all social media platforms is discoverable (in negative and positive ways). We believe that LinkedIn should be promoted as a powerful positive tool for job searching given its dominance as a professional platform. Some faculty may wish to become familiar with LinkedIn features and provide guidance to students on how to develop their professional online presence. Finally, some faculty may wish to build the use of LinkedIn into their curriculum as part of student learning outcomes associated with communication and career readiness. Bridgstock (2019) argues that effectively using the LinkedIn platform develops students’ professional communication and digital literacy.

Many faculty have LinkedIn profile pages. All of the advice for students is helpful to faculty. Potential students (and their parents) search faculty profiles. Your profile reflects on your own and your department’s and university’s professionalism. Your profile should be up-to-date and well put together.

We recommend individual faculty and departments consider using LinkedIn more systematically for networking aspects such as alumni surveys, alumni contacts, potential speakers, and fund-raising opportunities. If your department does not have an alumni group just for psychology majors, you may wish to consider starting one.

Finally, a note to faculty regarding the ethical parameters associated with aiding job searches. Faculty should be aware that they should not partake in any financial bonuses nor should they help provide organizations with access to only a subgroup of students (e.g., only students with high GPAs; NACE, 2020). When in doubt, campus legal or career services professionals can help advise if needed.

Overall, LinkedIn remains a dominant industry standard as a professional and job search platform, and we recommend that students and faculty become savvy to its uses and explore the particular benefits of using alumni information and networks.

References

"THINK LIKE A TEENAGER!?"
What We Can All Learn From Adolescents
Interview With Adriana Galván, PhD

Bradley Cannon
Psi Chi Central Office

Adolescents are constantly adapting to new technologies, clothing trends, music genres, and more—making their behaviors difficult for older adults to "pin down." Because of this, it is little wonder that adults often see young people as bigger risk takers than older adults. And not surprisingly, psychology studies have confirmed these suspicions as well.

To adults, this willingness to take risks makes adolescents seem vulnerable to negative outcomes such as unplanned pregnancy and drug addiction. And yes, this is true in some ways, but it is also an oversimplified view. Although often overlooked, there are important benefits of adolescents' fearlessness. In this interview, Dr. Adriana Galván shares how thinking like an adolescent can teach you to try new things and even improve your ability to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inside a Teenager’s Brain
First things first! How do adolescent brains make decisions? And how is this process different from how adults make decisions?

Who better to ask than Dr. Galván, who is a professor in psychology and Dean of Undergraduate Education at the University of California, Los Angeles? Her research has focused on identifying how the neural changes in the developing adolescent brain relate to adolescent decision-making and motivation. To do this, she has used brain imaging, survey methods, cognitive tests, interviews, and physiological assays to characterize the psychological, neurobiological, and biological changes across the transition into and out of adolescence.

Dr. Galván begins to break down the development of the brain like this: “What we’ve learned over the past decade or so is that the brain in general doesn’t develop all at once. Certain brain regions develop or become more engaged earlier than others.”

The peak time for engagement in what are called motivational systems and emotional systems occurs during adolescence,
which causes adolescents to make decisions that are biased by these two systems of motivation and emotion. Expanding upon this, Dr. Galván says, “Adults are also equally influenced by motivation or emotion. But because adults have a more developed prefrontal cortex, they are more likely to also think about the future or the consequences of an action.” In other words, adults may be more pragmatic in their decisions as opposed to adolescents, who are more likely to make a decision based on how they are feeling and what excites them.

Further complicating the study of adolescent brains is determining who exactly fits this developmental category. As Dr. Galván explains, “The end of adolescence isn’t clear cut. We know, from the legal system, that people in this country are considered adults at the age of 18. But developmentally, science tells us that the brain doesn’t suddenly turn on and off or switch into ‘adult-mode’ on someone’s 18th birthday. Instead, development happens on a continuum, and the transition is more gradual and lasts through about the mid-twenties.”

By the way, when Dr. Galván says, “develop,” she wants you to know that this doesn’t necessarily mean what you think it does. Specifically, “I don’t mean that the brain keeps growing or expanding or something like that. The period between onset of puberty and the mid-twenties is simply when the brain is most receptive to the environment and most likely to change in response to that environment. So if you have an environment full of good experiences, strong social connections, and optimal learning opportunities, then you are getting a lot of good development. Or if you have the opposite, then that is going to impact brain development as well.”

Some Good News
Dr. Galván becomes genuinely excited to talk about the benefits of adolescents’ brains because this is something that many people fail to understand. She exclaims, “There are so many benefits to
These positive aspects of adolescent behavior don’t get as much coverage or as much attention because maybe they are less sensational, but they are certainly equally important.

“Sometimes, adolescent behavior gets overshadowed by the potential negatives,” she continues. “But it is important to keep in mind that it is good for our species to have a developmental period whereby people are more inclined to innovate, stand up for things that they believe in, and pursue new interests. These positive aspects of adolescent behavior don’t get as much coverage or as much attention because maybe they are less sensational, but they are certainly equally important.”

Where Things Can Go Wrong

Because adults’ and adolescents brains are “wired differently,” it automatically stands to reason that miscommunication and disagreements between these two groups is likely to occur. As an example, there is a widespread belief that teenagers want to exclude themselves from their parents.

About this, Dr. Galván says, “You know, anecdotally, it does seem to be the case that, as kids transition into adolescence, they really want to hang out with their friends more and less with their parents. But recent research has shown that this is not actually true. Parents’ influence or opinions really remains important throughout adolescence. Teenagers just aren’t as vocal about it as younger kids, who are more likely to tell parents how they are feeling and to say that they agree with them and care about their opinions.”

“Adolescents do show an uptick in their interest in getting social status from their peers and being accepted from their parents. This also contributes to the narrative of kids moving away from their parents, but again, that isn’t true.”

Hands On? Or Hands Off?

In response to teenagers’ apparent desire for distance, some parents try to be “hands-off” to let their teenagers gain independence, whereas other parents attempt to be very involved in their teens’ lives. But which parent style is correctly?

As a parent herself, Dr. Galván says she wishes that she knew! But instead of focusing on the question above, here is some alternate advice that she urges you to follow: One way to strengthen your relationship with a teenager is to be proactive. She says, “Establish a relationship with your children when they are still young, don’t just try to engage with them once they become teenagers and start to slip away. Having a firm foundation of your relationship will really help keep communication open.”

Another mistake that she has noticed some adults make occurs when they only share about their own experiences and
mistakes. Adults may believe that the feeling or emotion of their past mistakes will be automatically translated to an adolescent, but it doesn’t really work that way.

As an example, she encourages you to think back to when you were a teenager and your parents said, “Don’t do this, because when I did it, I had this outcome, and I don’t want you to have the same outcome.” This argument probably wasn’t effective on you, so why should it be effective on your child years later?

Dr. Galván explains, “Human beings, and all creatures really, learn through experience, and adolescents do as well. So I’m not saying that adolescents should go out and make all the same mistakes that their parents made. But certainly, the message is much less convincing when they are simply told about something without having their own emotional attachment to it.”

So what would work better? To improve your relationship with an adolescent, Dr. Galván encourages you to remember that all people, and especially adolescents, want to be respected, admired, and heard. “Whatever that means for your teenager is the way to approach it. Some people want more questions to be asked and more attention, and some want less. And so the best communication that one can have with their teenager is really to be responsive to how they want to communicate.”

Dr. Galván notes that some teenagers may even prefer to communicate via text or email. And that’s Ok too. As long as communication is happening, then that is a good sign!

**What You Stand to Learn**

Dr. Galván says that she isn’t really sure where she would be without her mentors. Her true self is very introverted and risk averse, but because her family are risk takers, they really encouraged her to seek out new things that made her feel a little uncomfortable. She says, “My parents were also fantastic mentors in that regard. Without these gentle nudges, I think I would have done something that kept me close to home for college. Something safe.”

But it’s fun to keep trying on new hats, she has learned. And this is not only true for adolescents, but also for adults! Therefore, although it is fairly obvious that teenagers can acquire new skills and understanding from adults, you should also consider what adults can learn from teenagers, who are more likely to take risks and try new things.

On that note, let’s leave off with this final advice from Dr. Galván: “Because of the pandemic, some adults have been really paralyzed by having to switch to remote learning, working, everything. But adolescents are a good example of how to pivot because they are very quick to adopt new technology and will fearlessly responsive to their environment. They do this in part because it keeps them connected to the people they really care about—their friends and peers—but also because they are the ones to adopt to any new platform or app before adults do. I think we could really learn from them and their fearless-ness to try new things.”

Adriana Galván, PhD, is professor of psychology and Dean of Undergraduate Education at the University of California, Los Angeles. She also holds a joint appointment in the Department of Psychiatry and is a faculty member of the Brain Research Institute at UCLA. Dr. Galván is also Co-Executive Director on the Advisory Board of the Center for the Developing Adolescent. Current projects examine the interactions among social relationships, sleep, and health with adolescent decision-making, motivation, and brain development. Her work has been featured in prestigious peer-reviewed journals such as Neuron, PNAS, Psychological Science, and Journal of Neuroscience, and highlighted in popular outlets such as the Washington Post and Los Angeles Times and cited in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dr. Galván earned her BA in neuroscience and behavior from Barnard College, Columbia University and a PhD in neuroscience from Cornell University. She also completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Behavior.
A mistake occurred during the filming and editing process of a 2020 episode of Disney’s *The Mandalorian*. Despite an episode budget of $12.5 million, a crewmember known only as “blue jeans man” accidentally appeared in one of the finished shots. Within days, Disney digitally erased this goof from the episode, but only after screenshots went viral online. This error is similar to one that has plagued the final season of *Game of Thrones*: a Starbucks coffee cup plainly seen on a table in Winterfell’s Great Hall, just beneath the Mother of Dragons.

Because of the detailed production process and sheer number of eyes involved in quality series such as these, you might think that mistakes of this sort should be entirely avoidable. And yet, psychology research has shown that failures to notice or remember specific details are surprisingly common, yes, even while reviewing film.

Psychologists have a name for this occurrence: inattentional blindness, the failure to notice something because a person’s attention was on some other task, event, or object.

So what exactly do we know about people’s inability to notice details around them? Dr. Daniel Simons explains.
The Invisible Gorilla

Dr. Simons is a renowned expert in the mechanisms of attention, perception, memory, and thinking. He received his PhD in experimental psychology at Cornell University, was a faculty member at Harvard University’s Department of Psychology for five years, and has been located at the University of Illinois since 2002.

Simons & Chabris (1999) conducted one of the most famous experiments on inattentional blindness, the “invisible gorilla test.” For this study, participants were asked to watch a video and count the number of basketball passes by players wearing white while ignoring those by players wearing black. Distracted by this simple task, approximately 50% of the participants failed to notice a person in a gorilla suit who strode directly across the video scene and even thumped her chest before walking away.

How could this have happened? According to Dr. Simons, “We have limits on our ability to pay attention. Inattentional blindness is common because we can’t take in everything at once.”

Dr. Simons believes that, for the most part, this limitation is actually a good thing because it allows us to focus on what we care about and ignore distractions. However, make no mistake, people miss details all the time, even relatively obvious ones. He adds, “The key problem isn’t that we miss things—it is that we don’t realize how much we miss. We are only aware of the things we noticed, and not of the things we didn’t see.”

If Dr. Simons showed you the gorilla video, you didn’t see the gorilla, and he never told you about it, you would continue going through life thinking that you would have seen a gorilla in a video. He says, “That is what most of our life is like. Most of our life we are only aware of the things we did notice, so we tend to think that we noticed everything. I think that is why it surprises people when they find out they failed to see something obvious.”

What You Notice Could Mean Life or Death

As Dr. Simons and many others have discovered, inattentional blindness carries many real-world consequences, especially when people are doing something that their visual and cognitive systems were not necessarily adapted to do. Dr. Simons says, “One of the most commonplace occurrences is while driving because our visual system did not evolve to be doing things at 60 miles an hour. What that means is that small gaps in our ability to detect what is going on around us or slight delays in noticing something can have huge consequences. On the other hand, if you are delayed for a second in noticing something unexpected while walking down the sidewalk, it probably isn’t going to have much impact.”

Probably the most studied example are “looked-but-failed-to-see” accidents such as when a car hits a motorcycle, bicycle, or pedestrian. In these situations, the vehicle drivers will often say, “I never saw the motorcycle. It came out of nowhere and hit the side of my car.” However, the motorcyclists will often say, “They looked right at me and didn’t stop. They went anyway.”

Dr. Simons elaborates on this situation, “Often what is going on in that context is that the drivers were looking for other cars while they were making a left turn across traffic, which is a really attention-demanding task. And because their attention was engaged, and the motorcycle wasn’t what they were expecting, they sometimes didn’t see it. Just because you are looking at something doesn’t mean that you’ll see it.”

There are many other examples of inattentional blindness that carry serious and sometimes tragic consequences. For example, Dr. Simons cites how lifeguards might not notice a child who is drowning in a crowded pool. “This is a really difficult visual search task, and drowning doesn’t look like what you think of as drowning. It tends to be more sedate, where somebody just stops flailing and sinks to the bottom of the pool. So spotting that when you are looking for other things is really difficult.”

Influences on Inattentional Blindness

Dr. Simons identifies two classes of variables that researchers believe can influence inattentional blindness.

About the first, he says, “We’ve found a ton of evidence over the years for ways in which the stimuli themselves—the videos, the objects, the tasks—play a significant role in whether you are likely to notice something.”

The other class is that differences between people might play a role. However, researchers have not found much evidence for individual differences in who does notice something and who doesn’t.

In general, the more demanding that your primary task becomes, the more engaged you will become. In other words, he explains, “If you are watching the gorilla video, and I have you counting passes, then that is fairly easy. But if I have you separately keeping two running totals, one of bounce passes and one of passes in the air, then that is more challenging, and fewer people will notice. If I give you a tracking task and make the tracking task increasingly difficult with fast objects moving around, then that too will make you more likely to miss something else.”

Also, if the unexpected object is similar to the object you are paying attention to, then you are more likely to notice. Here is an example: “Let’s say you are paying attention to basketball players wearing white shirts. When the person in the black gorilla suit goes through, you are fairly unlikely to notice because that is pretty different from what you are paying attention to, and more similar to the players wearing black that you are ignoring. But, if I have you pay attention to the players wearing black suits, then you are more likely to see the person in the gorilla suit.”
What Does It Feel Like?

For people who failed to notice the gorilla in the video, Dr. Simons finds that they are usually surprised and a little shocked that they could have missed something so obvious.

Dr. Simons has also conducted research investigating situations with more serious consequences. In 2017, he and Michael D. Schlosser conducted a study with police officers and police trainees in a simulated traffic stop. These individuals were instructed to approach a vehicle and go through the standard procedure of writing a ticket as if the driver had just failed to stop at a stop sign.

Dr. Simons says, “What they didn’t know is that we had placed a gun in plain sight on the dashboard. More than half of the trainees and about one-third of the experienced officers failed to notice. Those who did see it took action and did what they were supposed to do. But those who didn’t see it completed the process of giving a ticket.”

When the participants were later shown what they had missed, a lot of them were kind of shocked and disturbed because they had been convinced that they were trained to see everything. Dr. Simons chuckles. “A lot of people think police are trained to notice all of those details. If you watch crime shows, they are amazingly able to spot everything. But in reality, that is just not the case. In this situation, people were shocked and surprised, which partly was our goal. In addition to studying whether or not people would notice something potentially important to them, we wanted trainees to realize that they are not going to see everything. We wanted to challenge their intuitions about what they see.”

What is the takeaway from this study and a handful of others testing dangerous situations? Counterintuitively, the short answer seems to be that people are no more likely to notice something if it is dangerous than if it isn’t. He says, “Unless it is a dangerous thing that is similar to what a person was already paying attention to or that they were really looking for, they tend not to be any better at spotting it. But this is a really tricky thing to study. In the context of the police study where we had the gun on the dashboard, this was a dangerous object that our participants had been trained to respond to. But even in this situation, a lot of people failed to notice it. It didn’t automatically capture attention, although I think people assume that it would have.”

Many tragic accidents take place because something potentially harmful went unnoticed. Dr. Simons says, “Somebody described to me a case in which a maintenance worker had left a bucket and mop on the floor of a nuclear power plant, and people didn’t notice it for a couple days. And that’s not good. You don’t want things sitting around that are potentially going to be a hazard, but that sort of problem is not unusual. People don’t see something that’s unexpected and out of place, even though it is potentially dangerous.”
With a Flash of Light, Enter the Magicians

In the courtroom, understanding inattentional blindness can influence jurors' views of witnesses who might have failed to notice seemingly obvious details during a crime. And there are many other applications too.

According to Dr. Simons, “Advertising and film have both been focused for a long time on what draws attention and what doesn’t. I’m not sure how much the particular principle of inattentional blindness is being used specifically in marketing, but I’m sure that marketers have been aware of these sorts of issues too, even if their goal wasn’t to understand the underlying mechanisms.”

Dr. Simons believes that the discipline that is most directly connected to inattentional blindness is magic. He says, “Magicians have long focused on misdirection, focusing your attention on something other than what they are doing. They want you to see the effect of something vanishing or reappearing, but not how they made it happen. Often, the method they use happens at a different time or a different place. The concept of misdirection in magic has been studied by magicians for centuries, and there is now work between magicians and psychologists, and by some psychologists who are magicians, to use inattentional blindness to study magic and vice versa.”

So What Did We Miss?

People miss unusual and even important details all the time, especially when pre-occupied by something else. For example, while focused on the gorillas in the image on the last page, some readers of this article may have failed to notice the “police tricycle” in the background or the “G1R4F3” license plate, equally surprising details.

If you are wondering how you can get better at noticing things, Dr. Simons says, “There is no evidence that you can dramatically change your basic attention ability any more than you could train yourself to see ultraviolet light. Could you get slightly better? Maybe, but if you can, it is going to be at the margins—the benefits are going to be really narrow.”

Fortunately, there is one silver lining to inattentional blindness. This can be demonstrated through Dr. Simons’s work interviewing a couple of script supervisors who are responsible for catching continuity errors in movies, such as an extra person who might appear, a mug switching hands, or someone un-eating a Twinkie. When he asked them if they have a good visual memory, their response was that they don’t really need to remember everything. Instead, they remember what was important to the scene: “We know what to look for. We know how to look.”

“What they do have,” Dr. Simons explains, “is really good metacognition. They know they can’t trust their memory because they have been proven wrong, over and over. If you are convinced that somebody is holding a coffee mug in their right hand, and then you look at the film and notice that it was in the left hand, your confidence gets shaken. These script supervisors are constantly being shown the gorilla that they missed. So they adjust their beliefs. Although they might get slightly better at spotting changes, what really improves is understanding of what is likely to be detected and what isn’t.”

Based on this, the simple act of recognizing things you have missed and adjusting your beliefs may be a first step to changing your awareness of what you are likely to notice or miss. Before you can do this, you just have to learn where to look.

In the meantime, take comfort in the fact that it is not just you, but everyone, who misses things from time to time. Because inattentional blindness is so counterintuitive, even Dr. Simons often finds himself surprised by the results found when testing its limits. In many ways, these surprises are exactly what makes inattentional blindness so fascinating to study. Instances can strike anywhere and anytime, even in Westeros or a galaxy far, far away.

References


Daniel Simons, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Illinois where he heads the Visual Cognition Laboratory. Previously he was an assistant and then associate professor of psychology at Harvard University. He received his BA from Carleton College and a PhD in experimental psychology from Cornell University. He is a fellow of the Association for Psychological Science, an Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow, recipient of the 2003 APA Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology, and a 2004 winner of an Ig Nobel Prize. He also is the founding editor of Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science. His research focuses on visual cognition, including the limitations of perception, attention, and memory. Together with Christopher Chabris, he coauthored the New York Times bestselling book, The Invisible Gorilla.
Submit 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](https://www.psichi.org/page/eye-activity)

**Chapter Activities**

### EAST

**New Jersey City University**

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** On October 7, 2020, the chapter and Psychology Society hosted the PSYCH Star Speaker Series with special guest Cass Lowry (The Graduate Center, CUNY), organized by coadvisor Dr. Peri Yuksel. In his early twenties, Cass traveled to the country of Georgia, which is nestled between Turkey and Russia, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. He was first drawn there by his interest in education—he had gone to college to become an elementary school teacher. Living and traveling in the region for a year sparked an interest in language, cultural studies, and the research questions, “How do families and friends navigate situations of language contact?” and “How can the brain learn such different languages?” Cass stressed the idea that, as a researcher conducting international field work (especially in the Caucasus), you are always a guest and showered with hospitality. His engaging talk, “As a Guest: Living and Researching in the Caucasus,” was well-received by the NJCU community, including Provost Dr. Tamara Jhashi, and was followed by an interactive Q&A session that inspired many to travel abroad once the pandemic is over.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** On October 21, 2020, the chapter, Psychology Society, and the NJCU Club Save the Earth From A to Z (ASEZ) hosted a virtual community workshop, “Stress Less, Practice Mindfulness,” moderated by Brayan Ospina (officer) and organized by Haydee Soriano (president of Psychology Society). The current challenging times give enough reason to be stressed out and to find suitable and effective coping mechanisms. The workshop helped the NJCU community to understand that being mindful is not just about being aware of what is present on the surface. Maranici Strickland, a counselor for the Houston Police Department and the Harris County District Attorney’s Office, explained that it is normal to have negative emotions and feel overwhelmed. She encouraged the audience to step out of the darkness and practice self-caring and emotionally nourishing habits to brighten each day. At the end, Maranici Strickland expressed the importance of practicing to be grounded, stay in tune with the five senses, and be mindful about ongoing emotions, actions, and underlying habits. The workshop was followed by a Q&A session. The ASEZ completed the community event with an interactive activity to spread kindness, self-loving, and positive messages.

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** On November 11, 2020, the chapter, Psychology Society, and Environmental Club hosted the PSYCH Star Speaker Series with special guest Isabelle Silverman-Bodmer (president of the Psychology Society). The audience included Dr. Sue Henderson (NJCU president), Dr. Nurdan Aydinduzgoren (interim assistant provost), interdisciplinary students and faculty, as well as members of the Environmental Club. During her residency in New York City while working as a Senior ASEZ for Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Isabelle Silverman-Bodmer authored the EDF study, “Idling Gets You Nowhere.” Among others, she also successfully spearheaded NYC clean air projects such as the phase-out of highly polluting heating oils (heavy fuel oil), a congestion charge for vehicles entering Manhattan, a new law for increased energy-efficiency in buildings as well as emission reductions for school buses. The phase-out of highly polluting heating oils led to a sulfur dioxide reduction of 95% and became Mayor Bloomberg’s most successful environmental program in his 12 years as New York City Mayor. In her talk, Isabelle inspired the audience to play an active part in responding to climate change and air pollution. The talk was followed by Dr. Hanna Katz (student president of NJCU Environmental Club) with a compelling demonstration of new tools by Google to tackle climate change.

**University at Buffalo, SUNY**

**SOCIAL EVENT:** To build community during this time of social distancing, the chapter hosted a Scriblio and Snacks night over Zoom. Scriblio is a free online Pictionary game, and the snacks were BYO (bring your own) as students gathered remotely via Zoom while in their own residences. This was also an opportunity for the chapter to share information with students on how to join Psi Chi.

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** Six former psychology major alumni spoke at an alumni connections event about their careers and experiences. The alumni came from fields such as technology, medicine, research, clinical psychology, and human resources. One benefit of having this event over Zoom was that it allowed alumni remotely via Zoom while in their own residences. Further benefit of having this event was that it allowed alumni to network with each other.

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter hosted a graduate student panel on the topic of “The Process of Publishing Research Papers.” Panelists were graduate students from several different areas of psychology including clinical, social, and cognitive psychology. The graduate students were happy to provide younger students with advice, and the undergraduate students were happy to have the opportunity to hear about the graduate students’ experiences and ask them questions.

Above: The Virtual PSYCH Star Speaker Series with Cass Lowry drew the attention of the New Jersey City University community, including NJCU Provost Dr. Tamara Jhashi.
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

MIDWEST

DePaul University (IL)

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter’s first general body meeting was dedicated to graduate student and faculty presentations about their research labs. The goal of this meeting was to help match students with labs that fit their interests. Each speaker presented about the research conducted in their lab, what they were looking for in potential undergraduate research assistants, and what skills and knowledge research assistants would learn in each lab. Time was given at the end of the meeting to answer questions about labs, most of which were related to the requirements to work in a lab.

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** In October, Dr. Ralph Erber presented some of his research in social psychology. He was inspired to study how we perceive BSers versus liars. Whether BSers are perceived as more likeable depends on a person’s intent and their action’s consequences. In another study, he found that affect played a role in how people perceive others. In addition, people tried to change how they make themselves feel depending on what they anticipate.

- **Top:** University at Buffalo, SUNY, officers (top row: left to right) Stephanie Stewart-Hill (secretary), Cassondra Lyman (president), Lauren Chu (graphic designer), and Bradley Bedell (vice-president) play Scriblio via Zoom with other psychology students.
- **Upper middle:** Former University at Buffalo, SUNY, psychology major alumnus, Dr. Joshua Lynch, D.O., Director of Emergency Medicine at Kaleida Health, talking to a group of psychology students about career options in the field of medicine.
- **Lower middle:** For October’s National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month, the New Jersey City University Chapter and the Save the Earth From A to Z Club invited guest speaker Maranice Strickland, MA, LPC, LCDCI.
- **Below:** New Jersey City University PSYCH Super Star Speaker Series Special Swiss Guest Isabelle Silverman-Bodmer, JD, LLM, shows a sample of highly polluting heating oil to former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Lakehead University (Canada)

**INDUCTION CEREMONY:** Due to COVID-19, the chapter hosted its 2020 induction ceremony virtually in September 2020. This online induction was a huge success! Sixteen members were inducted and welcomed into Psi Chi. The invited speaker was Scott Chisholm, a local activist who has been nationally recognized for his work in suicide prevention. Chisholm used his personal experience with suicide to inspire social change by creating opportunities for open dialogue and developing SafeTalk, a suicide prevention training program now considered mandatory in Thunder Bay’s local school of medicine.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** The chapter hosted a monthly seminar series online for undergraduate students. These seminar series served as a professional development initiation and utilized upper-level undergraduate and graduate students to lead presentations on a variety of topics including preparing for the GRE and graduate school applications, APA formatting, careers in psychology, and the importance of gaining research experience. The series has been well-received by both the psychology department, as well as the student body. Many students have also expressed their gratitude for the chapter’s mentorship program. This program works by pairing a mentor (upper-year undergraduate/graduate student) with a mentee (undergraduate student) to offer guidance for a number of psychology relevant topics.

**FUND-RAISING:** As a fund-raising initiative, the chapter carried out its first apparel sale and most successful fund-raiser to date, with a total of 83 orders. Customized sweaters were made available in forest green, grey, and navy with an original logo designed by the chapter’s executive officers. Despite COVID-19 limitations, the officer team personally delivered all contactless orders safely and successfully. Profits from the fund-raiser will be going toward a Psi Chi Scholarship.
ROCKY MOUNTAIN

University of Sonora (Mexico)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter celebrated its second induction ceremony online on November 20, 2020, welcoming 10 new members. New chapter officials were installed and accepted their responsibilities as president (Jennifer Espinoza) and secretary (Beatriz Valenzuela). During fall 2020, the chapter also joined the pilot International Partners & Leaders (IPALS) program with the University of Trinity Washington.

SOUTHEAST

University of Mary Washington (VA)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter hosted its 2020 fall induction ceremony on October 8, 2020. All inductees, their friends and families, current members, and UMW psychology professors were encouraged to attend the induction ceremony held via Zoom. Dr. Alexandra Zelin, a psychology professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and former UMW Psi Chi copresident, was the keynote speaker. As each inductee's name was called, their video was spotlighted and attendees wrote messages of congratulations in the chat. The chat was saved and passed on to inductees as a memento. In total, 16 members were inducted into this fall.

COMMUNITY SERVICE:
The chapter wrote cards to residents at a local nursing home as a community service event in fall 2020. The chapter worked together with the Cap and Gown chapter of Mortar Board to get more students on campus involved.

West Virginia University

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter conducted its first-ever virtual induction ceremony on December 13, 2020. A new Department of Psychology faculty member, Dr. Mariya Cherkasova, delivered
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Upper left: A screenshot of the Lakehead University (Canada) Chapter’s virtual Undergraduate Seminar Series (topic GREs).

Upper right: Due to COVID-19, the University of Mary Washington (VA) Chapter couldn’t host an in-person induction ceremony, so leaders instead made a collage of the new members to celebrate the chapter’s first virtual induction.

Middle: The University of Sonora (Mexico) Chapter welcomes its newest members: Pedro, Paola, Damaris, Perla, Sofía, Nissa, Libia, Irais, Gretter, and Marcia.

Bottom: The West Virginia University Chapter hosts its first-ever virtual induction ceremony on December 13, 2020.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** The chapter sponsored an art supplies drive that benefitted a local long-term care facility for older adults. To stay within COVID-19 guidelines, all collections were completed virtually via an online shopping wish list where members could log on and choose supplies to donate, or via a bingo board fundraiser where proceeds went to purchase art supplies.

**FUND-RAISING:** The chapter hosted a socially distant fund-raiser at a local Chipotle! Thirty-three percent of the sales went to the chapter and will be used to fund future fun activities, increase the chapter’s presence on campus, and ensure members are receiving the benefits of career development, psychology-centered learning events, and networking.

**SOUTHWEST**

University of Central Arkansas

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** During fall 2020, the chapter hosted an online/Zoom book club to discuss Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race.* Members and guests met on Zoom every other week to discuss an assigned section of the book. Reading assignments, questions, thoughts, and other activities were posted online using the website www.Bookclubz.com. A counselor from the UCA Counseling Center hosted each book club meeting. The book club provided participants a powerful opportunity to learn, grow, and share.
University of North Texas

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter was struggling to inform members about industrial/organizational psychology because the university does not currently have a graduate program for I/O specialization. Thus, the chapter invited Dr. Kasia Fuiks (Alliant International University’s California School of Professional Psychology) to speak during an organization meeting on October 20. Twenty-two members and psychology students seeking induction were in attendance. Dr. Fuiks elaborately described the breakdown of industrial versus organizational psychology, and he listed the future careers offered to those interested in the field.

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter demonstrated ingenuity by celebrating Psi Chi inductees in a virtual ceremony. Officers created a slideshow presentation with the history of Psi Chi, the Platonic myth, and the informal induction script. To make the virtual Psi Chi induction ceremony more special, officers sent induction packages of T-shirts, artificial white carnations, and personal notes with the membership certificates. On December 8, the chapter inducted 18 members. The chapter ended the ceremony by playing virtual games to ease the transition from a stressful semester and year.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: In fall 2020, the chapter commenced its first-ever mentorship program with great success given the novel circumstances of this fretful year. Eight high-achieving members volunteered themselves to pose as direct advisors to underclass students in the university’s Psychology Student Association, mentoring on topics ranging from professionalism in research to graduate school application advice. This chapter put together a comprehensive packet of materials for each mentor to conduct six total meetings with their mentees throughout the semester. This program not only gave individuals an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and service to our academic community, but also fostered wonderful social connection in this new virtual world.
CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

WEST

Pacific Lutheran University (WA)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter hosted a virtual fall induction ceremony for seven inductees. In addition, PLU Psychology professors attended to show their support. The induction was highly successful; the chapter doubled its membership. A presentation was given about Psi Chi so that new members would learn the values of Psi Chi and agree to uphold those values. This was an opportunity for high-achieving psychology students to connect with psychology faculty and other upper-class students.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter sponsored a workshop hosted by Dr. Corey Cook (advisor) and recent graduate students: Clara Elizabeth (former president), and William Goff. Together, they helped students navigate how to apply to graduate school. In addition, various tips and advice were given about different graduate school programs, what to look for in these programs, and beneficial things students can do during undergraduate to prepare. It was effective to have guest speakers currently in graduate school in attendance and to have time for a Q&A session.

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter hosted a Netflix virtual watch party for The Social Dilemma, which leadership felt was relevant to psychological concepts of attention, executive functioning, addiction, and more. The Social Dilemma effectively spurred conversation among the viewers, but did not get the turnout that was hoped for. It seemed that many members were burnt out from multiple virtual events and school work. Next time, the chapter may send out a survey beforehand to try finding a time that fits people's schedules better and increase turnout.

University of California, Riverside

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The chapter hosted Psychology Lab Fair. During this event, 78 undergraduate attendees arrived to speak with research labs, network, and pursue research assistant positions. All participating research labs provided Zoom links that allowed attendees to speak with a lab representative directly. This event was created by members and prospective members. Darian Dik (president), Jesus Bravo (vice-president), Amy Chen (secretary), Karrine Cuatok (treasurer), Hallie Mey (historian), and Jenna Nguo and Jessica Pham (directors of events and outreach) hosted a Zoom meeting to guide students as they navigated the Lab Fair.
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