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Seeking Truth: Put Your Training in Psychological Science to Use

Martha S. Zlokovich, PhD
Psi Chi Executive Director

What is truth? Who is telling you the truth? How do you decide if television programs, social media, newspapers, political parties, or the person in front of you are telling the truth? It certainly feels to me as if such questions have been asked more often over the last year. Since March 2020 we’ve all tried to make sense of conflicting information about the seriousness of the coronavirus, the safety of vaccines, the validity of opposing political viewpoints, and election integrity.

But those of us who study psychology have an advantage. We can apply the scientific method generally, and psychological science research findings specifically, to these questions. This perspective fits perfectly with Psi Chi Board President Dr. Deborah Harris O’Brien’s presidential theme, *Psychological Science: We Have Answers.*

In last quarter’s *Eye*, Dr. Harris O’Brien wrote about hope in the context of her theme. “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” (Harris O’Brien, 2021). She even speculated that “Perhaps the course of the pandemic would have been different had psychological science been more integrated into the response. In the same issue, past Vice-President of the southwestern region,” Shawn Charlton (2021), wrote about the growing partisan divide in the United States. Charlton described research indicating that, in the United States, political parties more often appeal to their voters in terms of what they would lose by voting for the other party’s candidate than what they would gain from voting for their own party’s candidate. Furthermore, he described hostility toward others as predominating over affiliation for members of one’s own party. In addition, Harris and Van Bavel (2021) recently described a replication of the finding that, while conservatives tend to be more dogmatic than liberals, people with the most extreme beliefs, both conservatives and liberals, are the most dogmatic and likely to perceive their views as being superior.

Health, political, and economic concerns continue to be the most pressing issues as we enter spring and summer 2021. In the face of pulling together to meet those challenges, in the United States (and elsewhere) we are doing so as a country that cannot agree on who is telling the truth. About one third of adults—but 76% of Republicans—believe there was widespread voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election (Quinnipiac University Poll, February 4, 2021). Although most Americans thought the virus was a significant economic problem in early March 2020, Democrats were more worried about health impacts of coronavirus, and the views of Republicans and Democrats continued to diverge even more over the year (Deane et al., 2021). Many people, even governors, believe and act on their belief that mask wearing is of no health benefit. Although most of us are hoping to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible, 15% of adults say they will not get it, and another 22% say they will wait and see (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021). And although it might have felt like conspiracy theories exploded over the last year or so, Enders and Smallpage (2018) argue that most Americans (over 55%) believe in at least one conspiracy theory, and that conspiracy theories are not new in U.S. politics.

Whether you are concerned with determining the answers to questions about these issues or with communicating effectively with a family member or friend, psychological science has answers. Answers start with the basics of scientific inquiry. Is science biased? It certainly could be but scientific methods were developed to eliminate as much bias as possible (think about a blind vs. a double-blind study, for example). Clear descriptions of hypotheses, research methods, analyses, and conclusions allow others to evaluate the degree of bias. In addition, converging evidence over time can eventually overcome the biases of any particular researcher or project. Aspects of good scientific method such as describing who is conducting the research, acknowledging who funds it, building on previous findings, and describing hypotheses before collecting data allow reviewers to judge the quality of the research and the researchers’ conclusions prior to publication. These aspects also allow readers to consider the quality—the truth—of the findings after publication. Scientists may disagree about applicable theories, interpretation of findings, or importance of results, but ideally they engage in robust discussion of all views. Many journals even publish responses or rebuttals from dissenting researchers to earlier research publications.

How does this relate to judging other kinds of information? Look at who wrote or produced the information. If you cannot even tell who it is, that is a red flag for disinformation. Are facts presented with citations you can verify, or is the messenger simply attempting to inflame your emotions rather than describe the facts of the matter at hand? Can you apply psychological concepts such as confirmation bias, group think, or stereotyping to your assessment of the information?

Does scientific knowledge change? Yes. However, this is how science is supposed to work! Scientific knowledge is an ever-evolving body of findings that incrementally improves and adjusts with every new research finding and with improved methods over time (e.g., Edlund et al., 2021). A willingness to acknowledge that one’s initial contentions may be only partially true, or even completely incorrect,
is an integral part of building the most accurate, scientific, body of knowledge. A dogmatic insistence that new findings must be illegitimate if they contradict what was “known” at an earlier time indicates a complete misunderstanding of how scientific knowledge progresses. In fact, unwillingness to acknowledge even the possibility of scientific advances or new information in order to adhere to old beliefs is another red flag indicating that seeking the truth may not be the messenger’s goal.

Think about writing the introduction for a research paper. How do you decide which citations to include, which are from legitimate and recognized sources? Although the occasional anonymous quote might be included in scientific writing, the bulk of citations leading up to justification for introducing a new research project cannot include citations that are not attributable to a specific author, or work that was not peer reviewed by others in the field and published in reputable journals or books, or work that is simply opinion. Readers must be able to find your sources themselves and judge for themselves if the work you cited is applicable in the way you described, or if you left out relevant research findings that did not fit your point of view.

Does researcher bias influence projects chosen, hypotheses explored, or conclusions generated? Of course (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 1981)! Research is a time-consuming endeavor, so being passionate about the topic contributes to our job satisfaction and happiness. But the processes of the scientific method are built around both reducing bias as much as possible and alerting readers to possible biases that could qualify findings or recommendations or improve future research. When messengers purport that only “others” are biased, this is another red flag indicating communicating the truth may not be their goal.

As I mentioned at the outset, we are lucky to have both scientific method and psychological research findings to “light our way” as we seek truth. If your chapter used the formal induction ceremony, you may remember recitation of the Platonic Myth. It goes something like this: All mortals come into this world barren of knowledge and innocent of all truth. Of reality we know nothing. Bewilderment is the lot of us all. Often we perceive only models of the truth. But we must go yet farther and find the very source of things with which we are dealing. We strive to free ourselves from the shackles of imperfect knowledge and attempt to come closer to a clear understanding of human thought and activity.

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The COVID pandemic just turned one (and I refuse to wish it a happy birthday). I have found dealing with a 1-year-old pandemic to be a very different experience. I can no longer look back a year and reminisce on pre-COVID life. There is no more, “Well, last April [2019] I was able to attend the Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA) convention, we had students on campus for the Arkansas Symposium for Psychology Students, and I could leave the house.” A thought that was then followed up with optimistic visions of 2021 looking much more like 2019 than the 2020 experience. Looking back a year ago now, puts me right back in the pandemic.

My challenges adjusting to the second year of COVID are an example of categorical versus continuous thinking. We have a strong tendency to view life categorically. We see this categorical thinking with the pandemic as well as in how we evaluate experiences (good/bad), race relations (Black/White), gender (female/male), politics (Democrat/Republican), and morality (right/wrong). And the more stressed and cognitively and emotionally depleted we are—isn’t that where so many of us are right now?—the more prone we are to creating simple categorical evaluations of our experiences. So while comparing April 2020 and April 2021 may result in the same categorical judgment—we were and are in a pandemic—a more nuanced, careful comparison shows that we are not in the same place. For example, restrictions have been relaxed, more people are vaccinated, we have a better scientific and medical understanding of COVID-19, and our use of technology to connect with others has increased immensely.

Cultivating a habit of seeing life experiences along a continuum, not as a dichotomy, helps build resilience and supports healthy optimism. And, even as we enter year two of the pandemic, psychological science moves forward. As you will see in the following headlines, recent research advances our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on our health, technology and its interface with our psychology, and how our personality impacts our interpretations of others. Just as parents of a toddler keep moving forward despite the challenges of parenting, psychological science presses forward.
Multitasking: Does It Work as Well as We’d Like to Think?
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Multitasking is a ubiquitous aspect of modern living. The question is: Does multitasking really work? Does it actually allow us to be more efficient and productive? Fortunately, psychological science can help us gain a better understanding of how multitasking works and what effect it has on the human brain.

When we attempt to multitask, we rely on our brain’s ability to process information. Lui and Wong (2020) identified three limitations of our information processing capabilities while multitasking: (a) response selection, (b) task-set reconfiguration, and (c) retrieval and maintenance of task information. Response selection is the process of choosing a response to a stimulus; response selection must be fast and efficient to be able to do things such as answering a phone call while simultaneously opening a new computer tab. Multitasking delays our response selection. Task-set reconfiguration is the action of switching task sets in order to perform a new task. The limitation of task-set reconfiguration is that one’s brain cannot properly create a list of things needed to do for each task and organize them in a manner that can be completed while flipping between tasks. Retrieval and maintenance has to do with the ability to remember information about the task, which is impaired when managing multiple tasks. Due to these limitations with information processing, multitasking is considered to be less effective and efficient than completing each task in turn.

Multitasking is also related to our brain’s executive functioning. Cherry (2020) explored the executive functions of the brain and how they manage multitasking. These functions decide when, what, and how tasks are completed. Executive function includes both goal shifting and role activation. Goal shifting is when you decide to do one thing over the other. Role activation is changing from rules of a previous task to rules of a new task. Excessive switching between the two stages (multitasking) can cause burnout, affecting productivity and brain health.

A concise summary of the current science of multitasking is: Just because it seems like we can do two things at once, doesn’t necessarily mean that we should. However, if you do find yourself distracted or tempted to multitask, Schmidt (2020) suggests that you can instead try to take a break, remove distractions, or work on the task for a set amount of time. Trust the researchers’ advice on this—your brain and your work will thank you!

References
Bullying is a pervasive issue that presents itself at school, work, and online. Gini et al. (2020) explain that bystander behavior plays a large role in predicting who will take action to stop bullying. Several studies have been conducted providing extensive information on why people choose to intervene and this information can be beneficial in designing effective anti-bullying programs in schools (Gini et al., 2020; Longobardi et al., 2020; Patrick et al., 2019; Troop-Gordon et al., 2019).

Park et al. (2021) assert that cyberbullying among adolescents is an increasing concern. Cyberbullying presents aspects we don’t see with many other forms of bullying: anonymity and a sense of distance from the situation. You and Lee (2019), in their study of bystander behavior and cyberbullying, demonstrated that bystanders decisions to act depends on their consideration of anonymity, the number of bystanders, and the types of intervention behaviors possible. With this under consideration, it is easier to understand why someone witnessing bullying on the internet would just pass right by, but what prevents firsthand bystanders from acting?

A number of factors influence a person’s decision to intervene in a bystander situation, especially when it comes to bullying. Troop-Gordon et al. (2019) found that low levels of perceived norms for defending and a lack of empathy in adolescents predicted behavior that perpetuated bullying. A possible solution: Longobardi et al. (2020) found that helping behavior can be taught by placing emphasis on self-motivated habits to defend and instilling an automatic negative judgement toward bullying. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2019), adolescents tend to follow masses, making peer pressure another important factor that can influence bystander behavior. Anti-bullying programs should focus on teaching positive bystander behavior tools to adolescents in their efforts to initiate change.

Studying the different aspects of bystander behavior is vital to understanding why people choose to intervene in situations where people need their help, especially when it comes to bullying. A number of anti-bullying programs are used in schools and other places that could greatly benefit from considering the research done on bystander behavior. Patrick et al. (2019) suggest that, by applying more focus on adolescents’ moral identity, self-efficacy, empathy, and motivation to defend, anti-bullying programs could be much more successful in influencing adolescents to take action in a bullying situation rather than being a passive bystander.

How Research About Bystander Behavior Can Improve Anti-Bullying Programs

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What Does Pandemic- and Political-Related Stress Mean for Your Health?

Bradley Cannon
Psi Chi Central Office

April is Stress Awareness Month! And it seems clear that this opportunity to reflect on and attempt to relieve people’s stress is much needed.

A recent survey by the American Psychological Association (2021) in January found that 84% of U.S. adults are experiencing at least one emotion related to prolonged stress. These are the highest self-reported levels since the early months of the pandemic. Of the 2,076 participants, top reasons for stress included the nation’s uncertain future (81%), COVID-19 (80%), and political unrest (7%).

Before this short article adds to any personal stress that you may be experiencing, keep in mind that stress is actually a natural biological response to threats. Stress boosts your heart rate, heightens energy supplies, and sharpens your mind. It even increases your body’s ability to repair tissues (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2019).

In the short-term, all of these effects can be useful in order to help you avoid danger. But that being said, it is fairly common knowledge that too much long-term stress can result in a variety of unpleasant issues such as depression, headaches, heart disease, weight gain, and even memory impairment. These issues occur because, when stressors are constantly present, the ongoing overexposure to cortisol and other stress hormones disrupts your body’s other processes such as the digestive system, the reproductive system, and growth processes (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2019).

It is important to recognize the differences between good anxiety and bad anxiety, the latter of which you should especially seek to reduce. Good anxiety is normal—it helps keep you productive and motivated to study, etc. On the other hand, an example of bad or irrational anxiety is to worry about things beyond your control such as what would happen if a family member suddenly passed away or frequently distressing yourself by reading argumentative news articles (Center for Growth, n.d.).

Here’s some good news. There are many relatively straightforward (and enjoyable) ways to reduce your stress. Consider these brief tips (APA, 2021; Drayer, 2021):

- Turn off social media and the news.
- Make a point to stay connected with friends and family.
- Schedule daily exercise, meditation, and/or yoga.
- Seek out nature, music, and hobbies.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Get professional counseling when needed.

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If You Are “Less Agreeable,” You Are More Sensitive to Typos and Grammar Errors

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Some people feel super-sensitive, aggravated, or bothered when they see emails, papers, and social media with grammar errors. Are you one of the kind? If the answer is yes, you are less likely to be “agreeable.”

Boland and Queen (2016) published their study in PLoS One, showing that participants’ personality traits affect how they respond to syntactic errors and typos. The main goal of their study was to examine the social judgements participants made about the writers. A total of 83 participants were asked to read email responses to an advertisement for a housemate. Those responses consisted of one of the following: (a) typo-free errors, (b) some typos, or (c) “grammatical mix-ups.” Then, they judged those writers based on what they had perceived. They also provided responses on whether they detected any grammatical errors or typos in the emails and the degree to which the errors bothered them. They also filled out a Big 5 personality assessment (John et al., 1991) that measures them on the Big 5 dimensions of personality (i.e., openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism—[OCEAN]).

The findings indicated that certain personality traits make those participants judge the writers more rigidly. Those who were introverts showed more harsh criticism toward grammar errors. Those who were less agreeable felt aggrevated or upset when they saw typos and grammatical errors. Neither typos nor grammatical mix-ups affected those who were neurotic. The authors concluded that individuals who are less agreeable seem to be “less tolerant of deviations” from social norms. How personality affects individuals’ mental processes in language processing is definitely interesting, so future researchers may want to develop broader research questions (e.g., how certain personality traits affect people’s language interpretation).

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March is designated as "Women's History Month," in which we see the notable contributions of women, especially women of color (WOC), and recognize their outstanding achievements over the course of American history in the field of psychology. This year, the theme for International Women's Day is "Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World" (UN Women, 2020). In the COVID-19 era, WOC must find pathways to balance a concerted effort to advance their education while engaging in teaching, mentorship, and service as well as carve out time for both scholarship and professional development activities. As WOC, specifically Asian women in academia, Drs. Lee and Mendoza discuss their views on the topics of diversity/inclusion/social justice, work/life balance, and tenure/promotion. Both women work in teaching-focused institutions, are early career psychologists, are involved in institutional and national service, and were born outside the United States (South Korea and the Philippines, respectively). They offer an invitation for other WOC to reflect on their own experiences, be more aware of issues affecting personal and professional development, and take steps for change.

As WOC in academia, how do you promote diversity, inclusion, and social justice and shape a more socially equitable future?

Psychology is considered highly competitive. There is no obvious solution to promote equal opportunity. We advocate for minority women, international students, and early career scholars, as they are affected by certain issues, which influence higher education in general. For example, as immigrants, we know what it is like to be a student with parents who did not go to college in this country. Thus, one strategy is to build students’ cultural capital in the campus setting (e.g., giving reminders, walking them to offices, introducing them to staff/faculty), which may be seen as “hand-holding.” However, for first-generation college students, who are often immigrants, women, and ethnic minorities (Galina, 2018), these small acts can provide them with knowledge and empower them to advocate for themselves. Another strategy is to stay abreast of current trends in research for knowledge itself, and how it affects our positions (e.g., Open Science Framework promotes diverse scholarship). With a pandemic, teaching and research are virtually available, as international scholars engage in online platforms. We see more of this coming, so this cultural shift may yield a more socially equitable future. Additionally, specialties like health psychology and applied behavior analysis are targeted fields for female and minority students, including early career psychologists, to make important contributions in their work and research studies. More importantly, as teachers of psychology, we need to understand our own biases in the face of racial tensions and be aware of how to address them, and we cannot shy away from having difficult conversations about race, privilege, and mental health with our colleagues and students. We are thankful to be in the psychology field, where resources are available to educate ourselves about these issues. In addition, organizations like Psi Chi promote diversity, inclusion, and equity with action such as offering educational and financial assistance (e.g., Mamie Phipps Clark Diversity Grant, Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for WOC) to benefit minority scholars and WOC.

Some WOC express that they may experience discomfort in higher education, such as when to say “yes” and “no” when demands are presented. What are some ways to improve work-life balance, including yours?

In academia, the topics of diversity and inclusion come up frequently; however, a good work ethic is necessary, but insufficient to convince others you belong. We are grateful to be part of an ethnic minority, but wonder what “feelings of belongingness” really mean. Clashing
Theoretical perspectives can have a strong influence on us, which was researched by many White scholars (Roberts et al., 2020). Why this is important is because these attitudes affect the types of opportunities available to us and how we are perceived when we say “no.” We are the only Asian women in our respective departments, and one of the few in our institution as WOC. However, being a solo faculty of color (FOC) carries with it added anxiety and stress as we can feel like exemplars for our race/gender/culture. Specifically, we have had thoughts at times when we were overwhelmed with tasks such as “All faculty are as busy as me,” “It is what it is,” “Who am I to complain?,” “Who am I to raise questions?,” “I should say yes because I don’t want to seem ungrateful,” and “I should say yes because I don’t want to seem like I don’t know what I am doing.” In the beginning of our careers in academia, we felt like we had to say “yes” to everything and say “yes” quickly, which created lines in our vitae but these behaviors were not sustainable, especially as we became mothers. In our current positions, we see this as a timing issue—when to say “yes” or “no”—but wonder about the optimal time to be proactive and/or disagree when necessary. Given the current pandemic, our workload has been challenging, with more demand for online teaching and Zoom meetings, etc. Work has taken precedence in our lives, even before the pandemic lockdown, which seems to be getting worse, especially for early career scholars and FOC. A strategy to help with when to say “yes” and get something in return, “yes, but” with conditions or “no” (Whitaker, 2018) is to create a needs assessment that aligns with the tenure/promotion trajectory. For example, in one year’s time, you would like to chair an honors thesis committee, support students in hosting a community event, and start an interinstitutional research project. As opportunities arise, you can revisit your needs assessment to see if you say “yes” (e.g., cosponsoring a 5K because it aligns with your goal and is a line in your vita for community engagement), say “yes, but” (e.g., representing your department at orientation in exchange for not attending open house), or say “no” (e.g., not volunteering for a task force).

Piggybacking on the topic of work-life balance, how do you meet expectations for tenure/promotion (T/P)? Have you encountered any challenges being a WOC?

Unfortunately, despite a clear path to academic promotion, there is still a huge wage gap (as assessed in Economics), with fundamental issues occurring in the promotion rate of male and female academics (Dylan & Rouse, 1997; Ginther & Khan, 2004; Roberts et al., 2020). As WOC, T/P can be difficult, as service duties that pile up unless we learn how to say “no” to protect ourselves. In fact, Flaherty (2017) discussed how female faculty take on more service work than their colleagues and mentors. We invite other WOC to share their experiences and consider us sources of support.

These mentors can empower us in writing letters of support as part of the T/P process. Another strategy is to use the Eisenhower Matrix to deal with time management more efficiently: what to “do,” what to “delete,” what to “delegate,” and what to “decide.” This helps to take conscious control of time, and overcome some challenges in the T/P process as well as to prepare for tenure and promotion, even more so with minimal guidance of “what” to do.

Lastly, it is important to consider that faculty members who perceive a sense of community and who have positive teaching/scholarship/service experiences are less likely to leave their institutions (Rosser, 2004). Retention of faculty aids in departmental stability and institutional productivity; thus, even though we have experienced discomfort in the workplace as WOC, our contributions have been recognized and commended by a network of understanding colleagues and mentors. We invite other WOC to share their experiences and consider us sources of support.

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Welcome readers to my new column! I am so glad you came. This is the first in a regular series of articles focused on different aspects of research methods, statistics, and … WAIT, WAIT! Where are you going? Why are you turning the page? Oh, I get it. You don’t like research, you say. You don’t like statistics. Statistics involve math, and math is at once both complicated and boring. Perhaps you actively avoid courses that are research and math heavy. You justify this action by noting to yourself that you don’t plan on doing research or math as part of your career. Why then should you spend a significant amount of time on something that is at once dull and hard? You would rather learn about the sexy topics in psychology. A course on the myriad types of psychopathology? Yes, please. Oh look, this class covers different treatment strategies for drug dependency. You decide to register. A class on the application of multivariate statistics in behavioral science research? You would rather swallow a bird—feathers and all.

I am not going to try and convince you to take a course in multivariate statistics (though, you should). But, I would like to make two points. First, in many respects, your mindset determines the difficulty of a subject. If you believe that math is difficult and that you will not be able to perform the appropriate operations to come to the right answers, then you are setting yourself up for failure. Second, research and the application of mathematics in research is not dull. Consider the following. We live in an infinitely complex and interesting world, and empirical research is the best tool we have to understand this world. We can answer the most knotty questions and address the most pressing problems using empirical research. And, central to the research process is the careful use of mathematics. Using statistics, we can describe phenomena with precision. We can make inferences and draw conclusions with a measurable amount of confidence. In short, through research and the application of mathematics, we come to understand what was previously incomprehensible.

I suspect the aforementioned negative perception of research and statistics is due not to the nature of the topics themselves, but rather the manner in which those topics are typically presented. Given this, the goal of this column will be to discuss research and statistics in a way that highlights their inherently interesting aspects. After reading this column, I think you might find the topics and concepts described herein to be provocative, entertaining, and indeed … sexy. You are now scoffing. Don’t try to deny it. I heard you. Just trust me and read on.
The *t* Test: Originally for Barley, Now for Everything

Everyone likes a good origin story, and this is the origin story of the *t* test. The *t* test is one of the most common statistical procedures used in research. For the uninitiated, the *t* test is typically used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between two groups.¹ So, for example, if you wanted to compare outcomes for (a) an experimental group and (b) a control group, you might use a *t* test to do this. Chances are good that you have read studies reporting the results of a *t* test, and it is entirely possible that you have conducted a *t* test yourself.

The story starts with a gentleman named William Sealy Gosset. Unlike many, Gosset actually enjoyed math and studied natural sciences and mathematics at the University of Oxford. In 1899, Gosset graduated and took a position as Head Experimental Brewer at the Guinness Brewery in Ireland, a position he held for the entirety of his professional life. As part of his work, Gosset developed many statistical procedures that helped him ensure and improve the quality of the ingredients used to make Guinness Beer. Through his work at Guinness and some time spent in the Biometrics Laboratory of Karl Pearson², Gosset developed the *t* test of statistical significance, though it was not yet known by that name. It had a different name. And, this is where the story gets interesting ...

One problem that any early 20th century brewer who is conducting experiments on their product would have to face is dealing with small sample sizes. Many of you know, as a general rule of thumb, the larger your sample, the better. Small samples are … speaking broadly … bad. In fact, many statistical analyses won’t work if your sample is too small. In the case of our brewer here, if you are interested in barley (which Gosset was) and you want to analyze the chemical properties of this ingredient (which Gosset did), you were going to have to work with a small sample. Prior to Gosset’s time, there were no established analytic techniques for effectively dealing with small samples. However, the *t* distribution and corresponding test of significance works with small samples. Hooray!

Considering that the goal of Gosset’s research on barley was to improve the quality of Guinness beer, having a valid statistical technique to apply in this research would presumably lead to a higher quality product that would sell better and, ultimately, make Old Man Guinness more money. But, if every brewery used the same technique, they would all improve their product and compete with Guinness. And, as every monopolistic business-person will tell you, competition is … broadly speaking … bad. In fact, many statistical analyses won’t work if your sample is too small. In the case of our brewer here, if you are interested in barley (which Gosset was) and you want to analyze the chemical properties of this ingredient (which Gosset did), you were going to have to work with a small sample. Prior to Gosset’s time, there were no established analytic techniques for effectively dealing with small samples. However, the *t* distribution and corresponding test of significance works with small samples. Hooray!

It should be noted that Karl Pearson is a major figure in the history of statistics. He is credited with developing the correlation coefficient, among other achievements. For context, if we were talking about major figures in the history of cooking, this would be like the guy who invented the sandwich.

¹ This statement is mostly, but not entirely accurate. In practice, this is how the *t* test is used. Technically, however, the *t* test tells you whether differences between two groups are likely due to systematic or random factors. This latter description is a bit more difficult to wrap one’s head around, and I want you to enjoy this column, so for our purposes, you can just go with the *t* test tells us whether two groups are different.

² It should be noted that Karl Pearson is a major figure in the history of statistics. He is credited with developing the correlation coefficient, among other achievements. For context, if we were talking about major figures in the history of cooking, this would be like the guy who invented the sandwich.

Still skeptical? Well, consider this. The test was originally used for brewing, but as a not-so-far-removed application of the test, it has been used to improve the quality of many products. What is a foodstuff that you enjoy? Bread! Cereal! Cheese? Let us go with cheese—a high-end soft-ripened Brie, perhaps. Go to the store and purchase this Brie. Go home. Let the Brie sit at room temperature for a bit, because as all cheese-eaters know, Brie is best at room temperature. Then, spread the Brie on a thin, crispy cracker (and not a Saltine, we’re not eating soup here). Observe the smoothness of the cheese, the soft off-white color, the somewhat funky but oddly attractive smell. Take a bite and taste the creaminess, the saltiness, the complexity that is a good Brie. Those qualities have been developed through good cheesemaking, and good cheesemaking involves researching the best ways to make cheese. This research involves the application of mathematical analyses and, in many cases, use of the *t* test. So, that lovely cheese-eating experience you are having right now, you can thank the *t* test for that.

References


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

One might be inclined to think poorly of Guinness at this point, given that in the interest of maintaining market dominance, they could have delayed the widespread communication of a groundbreaking statistical technique. But, whenever you have a negative thought about Guinness, just remember that they also created one of the best stouts to ever grace this world. So, allowances should be made.
Three Heads Are Better Than One

Questions (and Answers) About Whether to Take Time Off Before Graduate School

Julie Radico, PsyD, ABPP
Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center

R. Eric Landrum, PhD
Boise State University (ID)

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Hope College

Are you feeling “burnt out” or “financially strapped” as you approach the conclusion of your undergraduate education? If your plan is to achieve a master’s or doctoral degree in psychology, then you might be wondering: Is it a good idea to take a gap year before furthering your college education?

In this special issue, our three experts explore the pros and cons of taking a gap year. Notably, this is the first issue featuring our new expert, Dr. Julie Radico, from Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Welcome to the series, Dr. Radico! First question: What are some valid reasons for taking a year off before going to graduate school?

Julie: Pursuit of graduate school is not a decision to make lightly or quickly. All graduate programs will place demands on you in many ways including your time and finances. Therefore, it can be reasonable to take time off before engaging in this endeavor.

It can be helpful to get more exposure to and experience in the field to solidify your interest in psychology and perhaps a specific specialty within the field. Graduate programs may focus on different areas of specialty, so it is good to have a sense of what you find compelling.

It is critical to approach and engage in graduate school with good self-care, wellness, and coping strategies/routines. You can take time away from a program while enrolled (e.g., a leave of absence), but if you know you’re going to need time to ensure good personal health functioning, it can be important to take this time before you start a graduate program.

Eric: I think any reason that you select would be a valid reason for taking a year off (or more) before starting a graduate program. If, after earning your bachelor’s degree, you needed to work to save money, or take care of family members, or travel, or take some time to raise a family—whatever the reason, I would say this—if a graduate program is going to hold that against you, perhaps that’s not the type of graduate program you want to attend. People’s lives go in so many directions, and not everyone has a linear path from undergraduate education to graduate education, and that’s okay.

Scott: Just days before I left my hometown for doctoral studies, I met with an influential mentor who said, “Graduate school is an inherently miserable time of life.” I almost stopped packing and made another decision. I’m so glad I didn’t. But that aphorism has stayed with me for my whole career. One reason I remember is because I don’t agree with the claim. I enjoyed all five and a half years of graduate school. I often think about how fun it would be to go back. But I also think of this statement when I talk to students about gap/growth years. I tell them that graduate school might not be miserable, but it is stressful. Expectations are high, evaluation is more intense than in undergrad, finances can be a struggle, and competition between grad students is sometimes unhealthy. All of these barriers can be overcome if you love what you do. You can major in psychology as an undergraduate and only like psychology. But to pursue a graduate degree, particularly a doctoral degree in which you will move from a consumer of knowledge to a producer of knowledge, you need to love it. You need to imagine joy thinking about psychology as your full-time job. If there is doubt about that, a gap/growth year is a good idea.

Other good reasons to consider gap/growth years include a desire to (a) build a firmer financial foundation, (b) have more time to study for entrance exams, (c) gain work experience that will make you a more competitive applicant, or (d) ameliorate a shortcoming in your
If you have a gap between your undergraduate education and pursuit of graduate school, you need to be able to explain it and why it is an asset to your ability to thrive in a graduate program.

Recommended reading: Taking a Gap Year: A Guide for Prospective Clinical Psychology PhD.

Eric: I cannot remember any recent data about this topic, but I vaguely remember some past researchers who did report a graduate admissions advantage for older/more mature applicants. In some ways, waiting a year could give you more time to do more research or attend a conference or deepen your professional relationship with your mentors. Many positive outcomes could occur in that extra year depending on what you achieve during that time. However, waiting a year to apply also means that there will be graduate school applicants from your graduation year and the following graduation year, so in considering the entirety of the applicant pool, it is difficult to know if there are more or less applicants in waiting a year. Overall, I don’t think delaying a year will hurt, so either it will have no effect or you could help yourself depending on your activities related to psychological science during that year (or years).

Scott: I don’t think so. Most people think that the gap/growth year will increase their chances, and that is one of the main reasons why students take them. I think that is only true if the experiences are building your qualifications, such as furthering one’s research or clinical experiences. In short, you need to do something that will separate you from other applicants. A former student of mine wanted to attend medical school. She had many good experiences in volunteering, academic clubs, and intercollegiate athletics. She had good grades and a very strong MCAT. She took one year to live internationally and work for a health non-profit and one year to work in a hospital emergency room. She gained admission to two strong medical schools, but only two, out of several applications. She later reflected that, if she hadn’t had these two years, she might not have been admitted anywhere. So, gap years can pay dividends if you can get the right experiences.

If you take time off, am I less likely to ever return to school?

Julie: This question can only be answered by you. Some people will need the continued momentum to carry them from undergraduate learning into further educational pursuits, whereas others may need a break to prevent burnout/safeguard their wellness. Sometimes, it makes sense to take a break and ensure that you are in a good financial place to pursue graduate school. Whether you are pursuing a master’s or doctorate, there can be costs involved, and it is important to know how you will support yourself (and your family) while you pursue graduate study.

Be informed about the realities of graduate school costs and plan accordingly.

A survey of doctoral graduates from 2013 and 2014 found that 91 percent of the PsyD students and 77 percent of PhD students in clinical, counseling, and school psychology programs graduated with debt (Stringer, 2016, para. 5)

Eric: This is a great question, and it can only be answered meaningfully on an individual level (although it would make for an interesting national research project—hint, hint, someone). I do not know of any data available to be able to give you an evidence-informed answer. There are some individuals who know they truly want to go to graduate school, but they are so burnt out by the end of their undergraduate career that they know they need to take a gap year (or more). That’s okay. Other individuals know that they are easily distracted (what, squirrel?), and they need the momentum of their undergraduate education—the reading, the studying, the testing—to carry them into a graduate program. That’s okay. You might get a great job in the psychology workforce with your bachelor’s degree and realize that you didn’t need to go to graduate school with your current career path (and you never return to school). Or you might get that great job and then after seven years hit that glass ceiling and realize you need more education to advance in your career path—graduate programs will be there waiting and ready for you.

Scott: I warn my students that this is a risk. One of the best undergraduates who ever worked with me took time off to assist his family. His senior year I was introducing him to top scholars at top universities at conferences. I am confident that he would have secured admission to a top-tier doctoral program. He is now in his 40s; he never applied and never will. That isn’t necessarily bad. He is happy and successful (and quite wealthy, from what I can tell), pursuing business interests instead of science interests. But I think it is incumbent upon students, if they truly are committed to graduate study, to hold themselves accountable to applying and gaining admission. No one else will do that for you.

Will taking a year off hurt my chances of being accepted to graduate school later?

Julie: This really depends on a multitude of factors. If you take a year off and aren’t able to explain to an admissions committee why that year was critical for your development and/or self-care, they may have questions about your ability to handle the rigors of graduate school. Furthermore, applicants who use time off to get more experience in the field, including working, doing research, and volunteering may be more competitive applicants.
Psi Chi's Development Program: An Overview of Where We Are

Cynthia Wilson, MPA, CFRE
Psi Chi Central Office

When I first came onboard the staff with the Psi Chi Central Office five years ago, the then 87-year-old Society had only held a one-time fundraiser. My new position was to lead the building of a fully formed development program for Psi Chi that would both serve its mission and benefit members. Five years later, I am proud to say we have done just that and so much more. However, the journey has been chock full of lessons.

First, “fundraising” is a word that not all of us like. Initially in our work, we had to overcome some biases against the very idea of fundraising. Some people associate fundraising with a person holding her hand out, just waiting on a donation. Others think that fundraising is an unpleasant and heavy-handed approach. But as with all things, this can and should be reframed. As a 501c3 charitable organization, Psi Chi is fundraising not only to benefit the bottom line, but rather to increase our capacity to serve members. And with more than 800,000 members worldwide, that is a tall order indeed. Therefore, we seek gifts from those who wish to invest in Psi Chi member futures because we know that a Psi Chi membership can change lives.

It all began with an annual giving campaign in 2017. Most nonprofits conduct annual giving campaigns as a way to regularly support their programs. Psi Chi already invests $400,000 per year (in a typical year) into our member programs that include awards, research grants, and scholarships. So we were aware that by reaching out to potential donors we would be met with questions (because we were doing something completely new) by those who share Psi Chi’s values seeking excellence in psychology.

Our first-ever annual giving program was called Give Back to Psi Chi, based on the concept that many who have received benefits from Psi Chi would want to give back by paying it forward to others. The Give Back to Psi Chi campaign ran for three years. We were met with many challenges not the least of which included how we communicate to our members. Email is ubiquitous but does that mean it’s our best option? Being the large Society we are, we have found that we need to diversify our methods of communication to reach the largest number of our members.

Psi Chi’s development program also included the Psi Chi Chapter Challenge. This Challenge began based on the concept that chapters would like to challenge each other in friendly competition. It changed over the years to be more intrinsic in value, to have chapters challenge themselves, and to incorporate philanthropy into their activities. But due to low participation numbers, we have temporarily shelved the Chapter Challenge. It is our hope to survey chapters, to better understand their needs, and to bring back the Chapter Challenge in a new format that will be welcomed.

Psi Chi has also expanded offerings to members to include member discounts that result in direct benefits to members. This and many other similar partnerships are being explored as it is part of my job with Psi Chi to ensure a fulfilling membership experience. Part of this member experience has been to serve Psi Chi members via the Psi Chi COVID-19 Member Support Fund. This fund, created in 2020 in response to COVID-19, has been instrumental in dozens of students joining Psi Chi who could not have otherwise afforded the cost of a membership.

At the end of the day, development programs are a regular part of a nonprofit’s operations; they are in fact essential to serving the mission and to providing quality member benefits to all Psi Chi members. In building the Psi Chi Development Program, it has been at the top of my mind to serve Psi Chi members by providing transparency on how donations are used, to incorporate psychological principles into our work, to be guided by data, and most of all to provide the best possible member experience.

Allow me to quote a fundraising expert I follow and admire. Kay Sprinkle Grace believes that fundraising is a noble undertaking and that “Donors don’t give to institutions. They invest in ideas and people in whom they believe.”

So who are the people and ideas you believe in? Do you donate to charities? If so, what inspires you to give? Do you want to invest in Psi Chi? There are many ways by which to give and many initiatives to support. So, I ask you to please consider taking part in Psi Chi’s Development Program. The program began just five years ago and has come a long way. But we can do so much more by investing our energy into the ideas and the people in whom we believe. And we hope to be doing it for generations of Psi Chi members to come. We will continue our work to build our development program with Psi Chi and to find ways to serve our members.

If you have already given, thank you for your support of Psi Chi. If you have questions, please reach out to me directly at cynthia.wilson@psichi.org. Donations can be made at donate.psichi.org and our Annual Report is viewable here: http://psichi.com/SumEye21AnnualReport
Fund the Diverse Future of Psi Chi

The Psi Chi/Inez Beverly Prosser Scholarship for Women of Color honors the first African American woman to receive a PhD in psychology. Will you help us increase the number of women of color with a psychology education? **Become a Black Diamond donor to the Prosser campaign:** by giving just $84 per month, you can be a Black Diamond donor and support diversity in psychology.

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Drew C. Appleby, PhD
Do you remember being six years old? Yes? Good. Now, do you remember making paper snowflakes when you were six years old? Yes, of course you do. You folded a piece of paper into a shape roughly resembling a triangle, cut several bits out of the edges of this triangle, and then unfolded the paper, yielding something that roughly resembled a snowflake. With your classmates, you then hung your snowflakes from the ceiling of your delightful first-grade classroom, looking up to marvel at the multicolored construction paper blizzard. Perhaps you noticed that everyone’s snowflake was different in some way. Art imitates life, and like real snowflakes, the paper snowflakes were unique, as unique as each child who created them. Billy, a quiet and reserved classmate, cut small circles into the sides of his snowflake. Margaret, an exceedingly obnoxious and impatient girl who is constantly bragging about her My Little Pony lunchbox (“It’s a collector’s item!”… ooooohhhhh, ahhhhhh), simply tore random shapes out of her snowflake. Your friend Hadley delicately and precisely cut a variety of shapes into her snowflake, creating an intricate design that you could not imagine replicating. It is interesting, you think to yourself, that your classmates’ snowflakes seem to represent the person who created them. That is, their behavior (e.g., designing and creating a snowflake) is reflective of part of their personality. Or, perhaps their personality is determined by their behavior. You are not sure which one it is, perhaps both. Regardless, you marvel at the variety of snowflakes and at the diversity of those who created them.

People are at once remarkably different and similar. It may seem a silly analogy, but just look at human physical characteristics. The basic structure of the eye is pretty much the same in the vast majority of humans, though this organ varies in color and shape. Most folks have hair growing on top of their heads, though hair varies in color, thickness, and texture. Psychological characteristics operate similarly. All people feel and express joy, but the nature of these feelings and expressions vary in terms of frequency, duration, intensity, and so on. All humans need and seek social interaction, but the strength of this need and the manner in which people interact with others differs. We are the same, and yet we are different. That’s confusing … paradoxical almost. And, correspondingly, describing and understanding the similarities and differences among individuals is difficult. Fortunately, there is an area of psychology that attempts to do just that. That area is personality psychology.

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1 I want to be clear that I am not suggesting that some people have rectangular eyes. I am referring to the fact that the sphericity of the eye varies between people.
Personality, Defined …
the Confusion Continues

Personality psychology studies personality … pretty straightforward. But, that simple statement belies the true complexity of the subject under investigation. My guess is that you have an intuitive sense of what personality is, but if I asked you to put that into words, to accurately define personality, you will probably find this difficult. Lots of concepts in psychology are like this. We are familiar with a concept on one level, but for a variety of reasons we find ourselves lost when trying to fully describe and understand it. Personality is such a concept. Several definitions of personality exist, and these differ in important ways. But, a relatively uncontroversial definition states that personality is a dynamic but organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that manifest in particular patterns of cognition, emotion, and behavior. Personality is evidenced by consistency in thought, feeling, and action across situations, as well as by predictable variability in thought, feeling, and behavior between situations. For example, an extrovert may feel quite comfortable in social situations and consistently display positive social behavior when around others. But, the level of positive social behavior they display may also vary between social situations if, for example, they are more comfortable in smaller groups of people than in larger groups. So, there is both consistency and variability in personality … again, wicked confusing.

Confusing Concepts Yield Lots of Theories

Despite dealing with an incredibly complicated topic, personality psychologists have tried to develop comprehensive personality theories that accurately capture what personality is, how it functions, etc. As a result, personality psychologists have taken several different approaches, which has led to a variety of different theories (see Engler, 2013). Let’s review some, shall we? Yes, yes we shall. According to psychoanalytic theory, personality is divided into three components—the id (pleasure-focused), ego (internalized social norms), and the superego (morality/conscience)—with behavior the result of the interaction of these three components. According to the behaviorists, personality is the result of an individual’s learning history within a particular environment. For example, a child who is consistently rewarded for engaging in social behavior might develop into what we would call an extrovert. Social cognitive theories of personality are similar to behavioristic theories, though they emphasize the importance of observational or vicarious learning and focus on the importance of self-focused cognitions (e.g., self-efficacy). Genetic theories of personality emphasize the role of genes in producing certain personality traits, as well as how aspects of the environment influence which genes are activated and expressed as traits. Evolutionary perspectives on personality take a functional approach, focusing on how certain traits might have imparted reproductive fitness throughout human history. Notably, this is not an exhaustive list of all the major personality theories, but this does give you a sense of the variety of conceptual frameworks researchers have used to understand this complex topic.

At this point, the dominant theoretical approaches to personality are what are called trait theories and, to a lesser extent, type theories. Type theories classify people into different categories. For example, the notion that people can have a Type A or a Type B personality comes from the type theory articulated by Meyer Friedman and colleagues in the mid-20th century (Friedman & Booth-Kewley, 1987). Trait theories focus on particular patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behavior that are relatively consistent over time and across situations. However, in contrast to type theories, which attempt to categorize individuals based on the typical thoughts, feelings, and behaviors people display, trait theories assume that people vary in terms of the degree to which they display certain traits. To illustrate, a type theorist would call someone who talks a lot an extrovert, whereas a trait theorist would say that the person in question is high in extraversion. Much of the contemporary research on personality takes a trait-based approach. In fact, I bet you are very familiar with at least one trait-based approach to personality, though you may not have known it was a trait-based approach. To figure out which approach I am talking about, go grab that seashell over there … yeah, that one. Put that shell to your ear. Do you hear that? Yep, that is the OCEAN. The Big Five, also known as Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (get it? OCEAN, it’s an acronym!), are traits (see McCrae & Costa, 2005). And, researchers using the Big Five, describe personality with reference to the degree to which individuals display these traits.

Contemporary Personality Psychology …
Not as Confusing as You Might Think

Despite the multitude of theoretical frameworks, both past and present, that have shaped contemporary personality psychology, the field itself is no more confusing than other fields of psychology. As in other areas, researchers and professionals carve out a little chunk of interest and focus their work in that area. Much of this work is research-oriented in nature, as personality psychologists attempt to describe differences between individuals, to accurately measure differences between people, and to predict future behavior and outcomes based on personality characteristics (see Friedman & Schustack, 2015). The measurement of individual differences plays a central role in the field, and a number of tests and instruments have been developed to measure personality. Notable among these are projective tests, such as the Rorschach Test (i.e., inkblot tests) and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), as well as what are called objective tests. Objective tests assume that individuals are aware of their personality characteristics and can accurately describe them though self-report. So, most objective tests take the form of a questionnaire. Well-known examples of objective tests include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the NEO Personality Inventory.

Personality psychology also has a thriving applied side. In the clinical realm, we have the study and treatment of personality disorders. Personality disorders are rigid and often maladaptive patterns of thinking, functioning, and behaving that typically

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1 Consider the concept of love. We all know what love is … we have seen thousands of romantic comedies (all starring Matthew McConaughey and Jennifer Aniston) that illustrate the concept. Perhaps you have even felt love. But, try to fully and comprehensively describe what love is. Can’t do it. Or, consider happiness. What the heck is happiness? Think about that, and if you come up with something.

2 By the way, that’s how you know if you are dealing with a complex, hard-to-understand concept. If several definitions exist, that means no one definition has been agreed upon, which in turn means that experts disagree on the nature of the concept in question. If the experts disagree, then you’re in trouble.
develop during adolescence and then persist into adulthood. Examples include antisocial personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, and obsessive–compulsive personality disorder. Clinical psychologists and mental health professionals who specialize in personality disorders study, diagnose, and attempt to treat these disorders. Some bad news: personality disorders are not well-understood and notoriously difficult to treat. Some good news: that means that there is lots of opportunity for research into personality disorders and the development of novel treatment strategies. Additionally, personality psychology has been applied in the work world. Human resource departments often use the methods and tests developed by personality psychologists to perform a variety of functions. For example, for a particularly detail-oriented position, a human resources specialist may use an established instrument to assess conscientiousness in potential employees.

**Education in Personality Psychology: Everything Is Confusing Until You Learn More About It**

The career opportunities are numerous for those with a strong background in personality psychology and, more broadly, the study of individual differences. One could work for a university or college, a human resources department of a large organization, the military, the government, and so on. And, the types of jobs one could hold are quite diverse. Given this, required training for a career in this area is going to depend on the job one is pursuing. As you might expect, a career in research and/or academia will typically require a PhD. So, one following this career path would want to first complete an undergraduate degree in psychology or a related field and then apply to a graduate program in personality psychology. Similarly, a clinical psychologist specializing in the treatment of personality disorders would need a clinically oriented PhD. However, the educational requirements are often lower for other professions. For example, many positions within human resources require only an undergraduate degree. But, like with most jobs, previous experience is a plus. So, the best advice I can give is to identify what career you want, research the typical educational path of those in that career, and then follow that path to the best of your ability. However, much like people in general are quite different and unique in many respects, I should note that the paths that we can take are also different. There are many routes through the proverbial woods. Follow your own path, use your best judgment, and become who you are. Who you are will be, in many respects, very different from those around you, but that’s to be expected. After all, we are all unique snowflakes.

**Additional Reading**


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**Ethan A. McMahan, PhD,** is an associate professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Western Oregon University where he teaches courses in research methods, advanced research methods, and positive psychology. He is passionate about undergraduate education in psychology and has served Psi Chi members in several ways over the last few years, including as a faculty advisor, Psi Chi Western Region Steering Committee Member, Grants Chair, and most recently, as the Western Regional Vice-President of Psi Chi. His research interests focus on hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to well-being, folk conceptions of happiness, and the relationship between nature and human well-being. His recent work examines how exposure to immersive simulations of natural environments impact concurrent emotional state and, more broadly, how regular contact with natural environments may be one route by which individuals achieve optimal feeling and functioning. He has published in *The Journal of Positive Psychology, the Journal of Happiness Studies, Personality and Individual Differences,* and *Ecopsychology,* among other publications. He completed his undergraduate training at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and holds a PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Wyoming.
Since beginning my journey with Psi Chi, it has been very apparent how much this organization cares for its members. From the growing awards and grants programs to the multiple career resources provided, it has truly been amazing to see the growth of this almost 92-year-old organization. It is an honor to say that I believe I work with one of the most member-driven honor societies to date. As Psi Chi’s Merchandise Coordinator, that is why I take pride in making sure that merchandise shares the same values. I work to offer merchandise that Psi Chi members are excited to wear in their graduation photos or just to showcase in everyday life because this organization is truly something to be proud of. I enjoy my work and love to see members wearing merchandise because it speaks that you all love the organization just as much.

Your being accepted into Psi Chi is a great accomplishment and should be worn with pride! You have earned it and should strut it around in style, so don’t forget to tag us in your sweet threads the next time you post. We at the Central Office love to see you at your graduation day in your honor cords, stoles, and medallions. Or even while performing community service with your chapter in your shared T-shirts. You work so hard and why not look good while doing so? In saying all of this, purchasing Psi Chi merchandise not only makes you look good, but it should make you feel even better. By purchasing merchandise, you are not only supporting yourself, but the organization as a whole. Psi Chi invests $400,000 per year into our member programs, and plenty of the funds raised from merchandise goes to supporting those research grants and awards for members just like yourself. This creates a strong cycle of support between Psi Chi and its members, which in turn produces a beautiful balance within the organization that you are assisting in building.

Psi Chi could not be Psi Chi without its members. This fact cannot be repeated enough. We are so proud of the strides each of you take to progress psychological research. Many of the great minds in this field have been in your shoes! How cool is it to say that you are a part of history? Your academic achievement and career accomplishments are what sparks the interest of others, and I hope I’m not overzealous to say that the academics before you have done the same to pique your curiosity. You are making history just as those inducted before you, and what a rich history there is behind the organization. So, when you wear Psi Chi merchandise, it should be worn with great dignity. You are a part of the generation that is carrying the torch. Help keep and strengthen the link between yourself and other members by sharing the same visuals. Whether you are wearing our Psi Chi Hoodie or even just a Psi Chi Button, you can rest assured that there is someone else out there in this #PsychEverywhere world who is wearing the same seal. A seal that holds the history and carries the future of psychological academic achievement.

You can purchase all items mentioned in this article through the newly improved store e-commerce store https://store.psichi.org/. There, you will find all of your Psi Chi digs whether it be apparel, accessories, graduation regalia, or digital downloads. Chapter supplies are there as well, so if you need to update your chapter’s banner, grab stylus pens or pencils for your chapter members—we got you covered. We also partner with Herff Jones, a leading U.S. collegiate jeweler, to create the Psi Chi Curved Bracelets in both sterling silver and rose gold for that everlasting reminder of your academic accomplishment. We are consistently adding new merchandise to the store, and if you are not seeing what you are looking for, please do not hesitate to contact me here at https://www.psichi.org/page/contact_merch. We love to hear your feedback and any contributions on how to improve merchandise.

Psi Chi is its members and we want to provide the best experience for you all. With my specialty being merchandise, I want to make sure that you take pride in what we create so that we can continue to strengthen the bond within the organization. This way, when others see Psi Chi’s seal as you are walking across the commencement stage, or even just as you are running your errands, they see achievement, they see comradery, they see honor. Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology, would not thrive and grow without you all. Thank you for your hard work and thank you for representing the organization in a way that only a Psi Chi member could!
Fostering Resilience in College Students Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Denise Carballea, MS, and Rita M. Rivera, MS
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The COVID-19 pandemic will most likely continue to create confusion and instill fear on a societal level. Psychologists and other mental health professionals continue discussing and researching the psychological effects brought upon by the coronavirus pandemic. College students are considered a vulnerable population to stressors and thus, to mental illness. Therefore, public health emergencies such as the outbreak of COVID-19 can exacerbate mental health conditions faced by this population. The current emergency responses to the novel coronavirus have interrupted life in many universities and campuses across the nation. Institutions have been forced to transition to online modalities and close their facilities. Students who depended on universities’ meal plans have been facing food insecurity due to cafeterias closing. Whereas some colleges kept their residence halls open, others closed their dorms, forcing thousands of students to make last-minute arrangements. Some international students have not been able to travel home, and those who did may not be able to return to the United States for a while. Universities have also canceled social events, postponed graduation ceremonies or hosted them virtually, and made changes regarding acceptance protocols for incoming classes. Students whose families suffer from financial stressors may experience exorbitant difficulties trying to arrange housing, transportation, and tuition expenses. All of these transitions and changes have increased levels of anxiety and depression among college students.

Furthermore, in institutions where students have transitioned back to face-to-face modalities, instances may exist where students may be quarantined to prevent others within the university from possibly contracting the virus. When this occurs, the isolated students may lose scholarly opportunities, which can impede professional advancement (Conrad et al., 2020). Moreover, while being quarantined, decreased activity along with social isolation may lead the students to ruminate and, ultimately, experience feelings of hopelessness. This may all be attributed to anxiety, stress, and mood issues. Even students who are not asked to be quarantined and who are not undergoing financial hardship can still experience stress and mental health issues stemming from the constant changes that are occurring to them and their peers. Academic changes, relocations, cancellations of scholarly and social events, and other issues may pose difficult transitions for college students. Because this population was already vulnerable to experiencing mental health issues, additional stressors caused by the pandemic may potentially lead to clinically significant symptoms and conditions. During these challenging times and amid the start of a new academic year, educational institutions should consider implementing strategies that promote resilience among their students.

According to the American Psychological Association (2012), resilience is the ability to withstand and adapt to challenging situations or adversity. Over the years, psychological research has highlighted the importance of resilience and its relationship to healthy psychological well-being. Individuals with high levels of resiliency can adaptively address challenges, as well as adjust to stressful scenarios. Building resilience can strengthen an individual’s coping mechanisms, which can in turn lead to improved mental health. The following are some strategies that can help academic institutions and universities foster resilience in college students amid the pandemic.
Promote Peer Support Through the Development of Social Groups and Activities
Research has shown that social support is beneficial for psychological health when experiencing traumatic events and in the face of adversity (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008; Ozbay et al., 2007; Sippel et al., 2015). Universities can promote peer support among college students through the use of social groups such as clubs and community activities such as virtual awareness walks. Despite the physical limitations brought by social distancing regulations, academic institutions can encourage students to participate in online groups and virtual activities. These modalities can help students connect and engage with other individuals while still adhering to regulations and avoiding risk of COVID-19 infection. Being part of an organization that provides social support can help individuals regain a sense of joy and hope, as well as help them validate their feelings and experiences. Lastly, social groups can help students target feelings of isolation and disconnection.

Provide Educational Resources and Services Tailored to Student Success
During these difficult times, students may experience feelings of inadequacy, academic underachievement, and difficulties adapting to online learning. Academic institutions can support students through the use of educational resources and services focused on their success. These services can include hosting webinars and meetings discussing strategies that promote student achievements. Topics can include using organizational aids, adopting time management strategies, implementing problem-solving skills, and practicing effective study techniques. This information can also be delivered through infographics, prerecorded presentations, and tutoring services. All of these tools can help ease the transition to e-learning, increase academic productivity, and encourage college students to maintain a positive mindset (Rivera & Carballea, 2020).

Encourage the Practice of Self-Care and Mindfulness
Practicing self-care and mindfulness helps promote psychological well-being (Saul & Fish, 2019; Volanen et al., 2016). The life of a college student is generally fast-paced and busy. Some students tend to neglect their health to meet the demands of school. Overall, COVID-19 has led students to change their routines and incorporate a mindset focused on productivity. Whereas it is transitioning to online courses, working from home, or taking care of loved ones, students are understandably stressed. Due to the nature of their lifestyle, college students may also be vulnerable to fatigue and mental health exhaustion. Therefore, the stress of the pandemic has only increased the need for students to practice self-care and mindfulness. Studies have shown that prioritizing self-care can help students develop a healthier lifestyle and improve emotional wellness. The practice of mindfulness exercises has also been shown to improve attention and assist with test performance (Bamber & Morpeth, 2019; Messer et al., 2015). Academic institutions should consider implementing mindfulness techniques such as check-ins and breathing exercises in their courses as methods to promote self-care. Furthermore, colleges should provide access to online mindfulness sessions because these can be self-paced, less costly, and increasingly accessible.

Recommend Healthy Habits and Practices
Academic institutions should promote self-care activities and healthy habits such as the practice of regular exercise and a nutritious diet. Exercise is highly beneficial for college students because it can help foster a sense of well-being. Also, research has shown that being physically active increases energy levels throughout the day, improves sleep quality, and supports cognitive abilities (Gomez-Pinilla & Hillman, 2013; Petruzzello & Motl, 2006). Exercise is also considered an effective self-regulatory strategy, and psychological studies have highlighted the positive impact of exercise on a person’s mood. This has been attributed to the notion that, when performing physical activities, the
brain releases endorphins which relieves tension throughout the body and promotes relaxation (Gomez-Pinilla & Hillman, 2013). In general, exercise is beneficial for students’ physical health and can help reduce symptomatology related to anxiety and depression. Similarly, research has examined the relationship between a proper caloric diet and mental well-being. A healthy well-balanced diet can assist with reducing symptoms of fatigue, depression, cognitive decline, and lethargy (Adan et al., 2019). Generally, college students experience fast-paced and busy schedules that may prevent them from adhering to a nutritious diet. Therefore, academic institutions should emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy regimen and promote strategies to do so such as scheduling time for meal planning.

**Offer Mental Health Services**

Research has demonstrated that students who have access to mental health services have greater success academically (Eisenberg, 2009; Grotan, 2019). Therapeutic services provide a space where students can receive social-emotional support, which assists with strengthening their ability to cope with both academic and social challenges. Higher education institutions should consider offering counseling services through telehealth to promote the treatment of mental health conditions and ensure adherence to safety regulations. Therapeutic services can help students focus on both their physical and psychological well-being, as well as increase academic performance and develop problem-solving skills. Moreover, mental health counseling can facilitate the process of returning to normalcy and serve as support for students experiencing crises.

Overall, colleges and universities should strive to provide academic resources and mental health services to their students to ameliorate possible psychological effects exacerbated by the pandemic. Psychologists and other researchers continue to assess the psycho-social impact of the novel coronavirus. College students need to be provided with tools that allow them to develop coping mechanisms. Through the implementation of programs and services tailored to student success and well-being, higher education institutions can help college students develop resilience to endure the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

**References**


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Denise Carabblea is pursuing her doctorate in clinical psychology (PsyD) with a concentration in neuropsychology at Abilzu University (AU) in Miami, Florida. She is currently a student representative for the Florida Psychological Association—Division of Graduate Students, secretary for the Cognition & Cognitive Neuroscience (APA Division 21 SIG), and secretary for the Race, Ethnicity, and Culture (APA Division 20 SIG). At Abilzu University, she is the president of the Neuropsychology Club and vice-president of the Student Council. Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, she has joined the APA Interdivisional COVID-19 task force as co-chair for multiple working groups. The majority of her clinical experience has been focused on working with individuals with cognitive impairments and emotional difficulties following a brain injury. Her primary areas of research include traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and Alzheimer’s disease (AD). Ms. Carabblea is interested in contributing to the field in areas involving rehabilitation.

Rita Michelle Rivera is currently pursuing a PsyD in clinical psychology at Abilzu University in Miami, Florida. She is chair of the Florida Psychological Association Graduate Students (FPAGS), president of the Florida Graduate Coalition for Medical Psychology (FGCMP), president of the Student Council at Abilzu University, student ambassador for APA Division 15, student representative for APA Division 49, and cochair of the Gender, Sexuality, & Aging APA Division 20 SIG. Rita is also cochair of several working groups of the APA Interdivisional Covid-19 Taskforce. Her areas of interest include trauma, psychoneuroimmunology, and depressive disorders. She has clinical experience working with Hispanic patients and high-risk populations both in the United States and in her home country, Honduras.
When introducing Dr. Melba Vasquez, it would be easy to become so “caught up” in her many fantastic academic achievements that one might fail to share the real reasons that we asked her to do this interview for Women’s History Month.

In 2011, Dr. Vasquez became the first-ever Latina President of the American Psychological Association. She is also a former president of the Texas Psychological Association and of APA Divisions 35 and 17. A Fellow of 11 APA Divisions, she has also been named a Distinguished Practitioner of Psychology by the National Academics of Practice. And recently, she was selected by Psi Chi’s Board of Directors to become a Psi Chi Distinguished Member, an honor bestowed upon only 43 other professionals in psychology over the past 50 years.

But most relevant to this interview is Dr. Vasquez’s passion in providing advocacy, guidance, and opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds. Three initiatives she supported during her APA presidency include the APA Presidential Task Forces on Immigration, Educational Disparities, and Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity. Of her 100+ academic publications, many are dedicated to promoting Latinx psychology, diversity, and social justice. A first-generation college student, Dr. Vasquez started her career as a middle school English and political science teacher. And yet, despite her humble beginnings and the many challenges faced by Latinx women, through perseverance, she has risen to great heights, becoming a mentor for all.

Dr. Vasquez, thank you for joining us! For my first question, could you please tell us how you became involved in psychology and about your journey to where you are now?

My first career was as a middle school teacher. I decided to work on a master’s degree in school counseling; I’d decided to become a school counselor. In the process of taking courses, a professor, for whom I’d worked for as an undergraduate, encouraged me to apply to the doctoral program in counseling psychology. I did not know a lot about a career in that field, but trusted my professor’s view that it would be a good fit.

I love psychology, and I love my work. I feel very fortunate about where I am both personally and professionally. I feel incredibly fortunate that I have made choices that I love and have ended up being very gratified in my work at various levels. I have worked hard, had many opportunities, and learned some strategies that help my sense of well-being.

What experiences or skills do you think have been important to your professional growth?
I received my doctorate from University of Texas at Austin in 1978. Most of the professors were supportive and encouraging. Dr. Lucia Gilbert was a new young professor who encouraged feminist research. However, I did not meet a Latina/o psychologist until I attended a symposium on Chicano/a psychology in California. Drs. Amado Padilla, Martha Bernal, Manuel Ramirez, and others whom I met at this conference became people whose work and careers I started to follow. I received “mentoring from afar.” In addition, I was very lucky to become one of the first cohorts of the APA Minority Fellowship Program, whose directors Dr. Dalmas Taylor and then Dr. James Jones became mentors as well. I also believe that my cohorts in graduate school and then those later served as important sources of support and “peer mentoring.”

What message do you hope aspiring Latinx students take from your achievement as the first-ever Latinx president of the American Psychological Association?

As APA President, my theme for the 2011 APA convention was social justice, and several of my presidential initiatives were relevant to that theme (immigration, preventing discrimination, educational disparities), and I received feedback that many participants came to the convention because of that. One midcareer African American psychologist told me that he had attended once before 10 years previously and had not connected with that convention, but he was enjoying this convention very much. When “diverse leaders” are willing to give voice to their values and influence their organizations, agencies, universities, etc. with those values, it can make a difference! It takes courage and risk, and not all efforts are successful, but we must continue to try to make a difference.

Could you share some suggestions or words of inspiration for Latinx undergraduates seeking an education/career in psychology?

I have lots to say, but in summary: Find ways to be active in scholarship/publication/research, in teaching and educating others, in providing service, and in advocating at various policy levels. More specifically, take risks, persist, allow for imperfections (everyone makes mistakes—learn from them!), identify strengths and resilience in yourself and in those with whom you work (clients/patients, students, colleagues, etc.), and understand that pain is sometimes a part of life. Try to focus in areas about which you have passion, network, develop skills and confidence, stand up for yourself, articulate the value of diversity, observe models and mentors. Engage in self-care; support and connect with others; and cultivate qualities of care, kindness, and compassion for others and self. Behave ethically in all that you do.

What unique challenges do Latinx people face in order to advance within the field of psychology. And what unique skills, experiences, etc. do they have to offer?

Latinx people face numerous challenges in trying to obtain a safe and successful existence, which is what every other person in this country desires. This is particularly challenging for those of us who are members of marginalized groups because of the roles in which society places us. The intersection of various demographic factors for many of us make it especially difficult. Those of us who are women; who are in a racial/ethnic minority; who are disabled; who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; and who come from poor backgrounds, for example, have additional burdens to face in our endeavors. Life is difficult and challenging. But there are choices that each of us can make in the face of challenges that can help us develop resilience, and not only survive, but thrive. The Latinx culture offers connection and relationship to family and community as a strength that can be generalized to all other situations. A strong work ethic and commitment to others go a long way in any setting.

How can educators and policy makers encourage more Latinx women to go into STEM fields, particularly psychology?

At the same time that I was encouraged to go into psychology, I was encouraged by a law professor to apply to law school (political science was a minor, and he was a constitutional law professor). I think that would have been a good option as well, but I think psychology has been a better fit. I have no regrets. I also had a sociology professor encourage me to seek a master’s degree in sociology. It was very meaningful to have professors in the academy encourage me to seek graduate work. They essentially conveyed their belief in my abilities. It is so important for key people to identify young students’ strengths and to encourage them. Sometimes we have to hear that information numerous times from numerous people, especially if we do not have previous role models.

What about improvements in teaching about Latinx psychology?

Fortunately, with more and more Latinx psychologists in the field, more and more research and scholarship has become available. This trend will hopefully continue.

Melba Vasquez, PhD, 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. Dr. Vasquez also served a term on the APA Board of Directors. She is a former president of the Texas Psychological Association and of APA Divisions 35 and 12 and a cofounder of Division 45. She is a Fellow of eleven Divisions of the APA and holds the Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP). She currently serves as APA’s 2021 Parliamentarian and served in the same role in 2003. She is a member of the APA Needs Assessment, Sating 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.
Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all learned to be creative in living life “remotely.” From celebrating the holidays with family and friends via Zoom to enjoying livestreamed concerts to listening to course lectures delivered screencast-style, I imagine that you have become increasingly proficient at staying connected with others and exploring new opportunities from the comfort of your own home. As we approach summer, many students plan to dive deeper into their career interests and have applied for summer research internships or are considering a focused independent study with a faculty mentor. Indeed, summer is the prime time to tackle a “hands-on” and “real-world experiential” research internship, which faculty and career advisors so often encourage! This year, though, many summer research internships will be offered remotely, and you might be curious, confused, or even skeptical as to how a remote internship could possibly provide hands-on and real-world experiential learning. Although every internship opportunity will be structured differently, this article is designed to give you a sneak peek into seven sets of activities that you might engage in and/or new skills that you might develop during a summer research internship, remote-style.

1. Reviewing the Research Literature

As a summer intern, you might use a research database, such as PsycInfo or Google Scholar, to review the research literature in a subfield of psychology. Although “reviewing the literature” is a fairly broad term, it is worth noting that there are several different ways to approach a literature review, depending on your specific goals. For example, you could review the research literature to build foundational knowledge in that field of research. With this goal in mind, you might read new studies in the field, as well as highly cited and influential studies that have been published in the field over the past several decades. Second, you could review the research literature in order to discover current gaps in knowledge. As such, you might focus on recent studies in the field, paying careful attention to the limitations of contemporary studies and authors’ suggestions for future research. Third, you could conduct a comprehensive literature review to find all papers in a niche subfield, such as all interventions designed to improve social connectedness among individuals in late adulthood; this literature review could then serve as the foundation for a review paper that summarizes the current state of research in the field. As a summer research intern, you might find yourself often returning to the research literature, searching the literature with different goals in mind.

2. Preparing for Data Collection

Another component of your summer internship might be to prepare the lab for an upcoming data collection project. For instance, you could be responsible for designing stimuli to pilot in a new research study. Stimulus design can range from writing vignettes with key sentences that can be manipulated across study conditions to varying the amount of background noise in conversational audio files that will be played for participants. For online data collection studies, you might build the survey that participants will complete and then preview that survey to ensure there are no unexpected technical glitches. As a summer research intern, you could also gain experience in assembling the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application for a research project. Before beginning data collection, all research studies need to receive ethical approval from the university’s IRB, and you may be asked to design recruitment flyers or organize an appendix of study questionnaires for inclusion in the IRB application.
3. Collecting Data

In this era of COVID, many research labs are prioritizing data collection projects that can be conducted remotely, such as participants completing online surveys or answering interview questions via video conference or phone. In your internship, you might assist with recruitment efforts, contacting potential participants or key community organizations to explain and answer questions about the study. For example, in a study on COVID-related anxiety, you could reach out to local clinical psychologists and a regional chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to share information about the study. You might regularly respond to lab emails and voicemails, helping to troubleshoot any technical difficulties that arise as participants complete the research study. Also, depending on the research project, participants may receive financial reimbursement for their participation, such as a gift certificate to Amazon. You could be responsible for tracking participants as they complete the research study, ensuring that every participant who finishes the study receives a gift code and sending reminder emails to those participants who still need to complete a portion of the study.

4. Preparing for Data Analysis

After the data are collected, it might be tempting to jump straight into data analysis! Often, though, there is an interim step in which the data are processed and prepared for analysis. If participants completed questionnaires, for instance, you could be responsible for scoring those questionnaires, transforming the raw data into more meaningful summary scores. If participants provided any narrative responses in a survey or interview (e.g., describe a memory from childhood), those narrative responses might need to be coded for key themes (e.g., happy memory, sad memory). You and another summer intern may receive specialized training on how to code qualitative data, checking interrater reliability to ensure that the coding rules are applied consistently across both coders. Many research labs also have data collected pre-pandemic that is still awaiting processing; for example, if in a neuroscience-focused research lab, you might be reviewing electroencephalogram (EEG) data for eye blink artifacts.

5. Analyzing the Data

As a summer intern, you will likely have the opportunity to refresh data analysis skills that you learned in your psychological statistics course. Several different data analysis programs are used regularly in psychology, with SPSS, R, and SAS being among the most frequently used software programs. You may need to refamiliarize yourself with a statistics software that you used previously or learn to navigate a new statistics software preferred by your summer research lab. One of the first steps in data analysis is determining which participants meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for the study. For instance, many online surveys include attention manipulation checks to ensure that participants aren’t providing random or rushed responses to the survey. If participants fail these attention checks, you may need to exclude them from the data analyses. Once you’ve established a final sample of participants, and with a little guidance from a graduate student or faculty mentor, you could be running correlations, t-tests, or even ANOVAs on your data. As a final step, you will need to review the statistical output carefully to ensure that you are correctly interpreting the results of your analyses.
6. Presenting the Results
Summer internships often culminate with a celebratory poster presentation, in which multiple interns share the results of their summer research. If so, you will likely prepare a poster with the study purpose and results briefly summarized in words and important visual information depicted via figures and tables. In a remote internship, you could present your poster by giving an oral summary via a live Zoom meeting or sharing a prerecorded screencast overview of your research. An end-of-summer poster presentation is an excellent way to showcase your hard work throughout the summer and is equally valuable for learning about other students’ experiences. As a summer intern, you will likely focus on one or two research projects in-depth, and an end-of-summer poster presentation is ideal for expanding the breadth of your research interests. It may be that a different content area or research methodology catches your eye and prompts you to explore in new research directions!

7. Learning to Be a Research Professional
Finally, many research internships will include general opportunities for professional development. For instance, you might receive direct mentoring from a graduate student in the research lab. If you’ve been thinking about applying for graduate school, this is an opportune time to ask questions about “a day in the life” of a graduate student. You may regularly attend lab meetings or participate in a journal article reading club; these professional development opportunities can provide valuable insight into the theoretical framework of the lab’s research, as well as how your summer internship responsibilities fit into the broader context of this research. Finally, as a part of your summer internship, you might attend career development workshops designed to prepare you for your next professional steps, whether taking the GRE or drafting a resume for job or graduate school applications.

Summer research internships (yes, even remote ones!) are ideal for building new skill sets and areas of expertise. As a summer intern, you may not engage in all of the tasks described above; after all, most summer internships only last 8–12 weeks. However, you will almost certainly gain experience in several of these research-based tasks. After reading this description of a summer internship, you might be wondering how exactly a remote internship would differ from an in-person internship. Although certain research activities require specialized equipment and can only occur in person (e.g., fMRI neuroimaging data collection), many research studies and research tasks can be successfully navigated online. Of course, it does help that research labs have had a full year of experience in transitioning to remote operations! So, this summer, don’t let location dissuade you from pursuing your research goals. You can be a researcher with a fancy ID badge working in a state-of-the-art medical facility … but you can also be a researcher working from your kitchen table with your family cat curled up on a chair beside you. In fact, this summer, you are likely to witness firsthand the remarkable creativity, ingenuity, and adaptability of psychological scientists whose research efforts have continued and often even flourished amid a worldwide pandemic.

Camilla McMahon, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Psychological Science at Miami University (OH). She maintains the Psychology Job and Internship Opportunities Blog (https://psychologyjobsininternships.wordpress.com) to assist undergraduate students and recent graduates in their career advancement. She regularly advises Psychological Science and Psychology majors at Miami University and has received Miami University’s Master Advisor Certification.
"We’ve talked a lot recently about various forms of systemic racism, but there is SYSTEMIC SEXISM too. People of course make HUGE ASSUMPTIONS about others just by what they think is their GENDER, which might not even be the CORRECT attribution. STRUCTURAL CHANGE IS NEEDED."

— Judith Gibbons, PhD
Women face many barriers, both within the United States and beyond. So how can we better empower women? Dr. Judith Gibbons, a notable international psychologist who regularly conducts research in Guatemala, has several ideas.

She and her former doctoral student, Katlyn E. Poelker, conducted a recent study (Poelker & Gibbons, 2018) using a huge database called the Demographic and Health Surveys Program by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). About USAID, she says, “They’ve done these surveys in many different countries. For example, they surveyed over 40,000 women in Guatemala, asking them a large number of questions.”

Two of the questions that Dr. Gibbons analyzed were, “How many children would you like to have?” and “How many do you have?”

As she explains, “These questions of course weren’t to say that fewer children are better or that more children are better, but purely to determine if the women were able to achieve the number that they desired. We only looked at women who were mostly past childbearing age, and we found that, in Guatemala and Honduras, virtually no one wanted to have more children than they had. So next, we examined predictors of achieving the ideal number of children, rather than having more than the ideal.” The most significant predictor of whether women had the ideal number of children from their own point of view was education; those with more than a secondary education were more likely to have their ideal number of children.

Because of this, it is little wonder that Dr. Gibbons is such a firm believer in education. She says, “We have to promote education. Even the worst educational experiences allow people to think a little bit broader, to understand a little more. And so, I think that’s number one.”

Another fascinating predictor they found in Guatemala was that women’s earning power did not affect their ability to have the number of children they wanted. She explains, “Although people sometimes say that employed women have more power in the household because they bring actual cash in, this had no real effect. What did have an effect though, was women’s ability to say how the money was spent. In households where women could say how the money was spent, they were also evidently able to influence how many children they had.”

How can this information be used to support women’s empowerment? As Dr. Gibbons has come to believe, “We have to look for women’s empowerment in little ways such as everyday decision-making. I think that’s a key to empowerment.”
Meet Dr. Gibbons
Dr. Judith Gibbons is Professor Emerita of Psychology at Saint Louis University (MO) and an associate editor for the Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology. She received her PhD from Carnegie-Mellon University, and her research focuses on international development of adolescents, international adoption, and gender roles.

Although Dr. Gibbons always loved international issues, she was originally in psychobiology and physiological psychology. Her transition to international psychology is an interesting story—and the result of many events converging at once. First, she developed a severe allergy to rats, which she had been using for her research. Second, activists in a large animal rights movement at her university released all of her rats from their cages, which messed up those experiments. And third, a friend asked her to analyze data from a study in Iceland, which they later published.

Her research on this data and later internationally on teenagers “took off.” So when the adolescent psychologist at her university left, they let her take over his courses. And then there are the so-called ‘gringos’ and foreigners like me. It just makes it a fascinating mix of individuals and thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about life and culture.”

Not long after that first visit, Dr. Gibbons returned to the country and started conducting research. She started with research she had already conducted in Iceland and other countries with regard to asking teenagers questions about the ideal man or ideal woman that reveals their cultural values, their gender roles, etc. She has continued to conduct much of her research in Guatemala ever since.

Guatemala
For this interview, Dr. Gibbons speaks with us from the colonial city of Antigua, Guatemala, where she has based much of her time and research. About her introduction to this country, she says, “My husband and I were happy with what I do.”

He came to Guatemala in 1985 to collect some textiles and invited me to join him, just as a tourist.”

Dr. Gibbons quickly fell in love with the country. She says, “It’s just a fascinating culture. First of all, the diversity—about 50% of Guatemalans are Maya descent and speak one of the 20 Mayan languages. Then of course, there’s a colonial overlay of Spanish tradition, and then there are the so-called ‘gringos’ or foreigners like me. It just makes it a fascinating mix of individuals and thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about life and culture.”

Not long after that first visit, Dr. Gibbons returned to the country and started conducting research. She started with research she had already conducted in Iceland and other countries with regard to asking teenagers questions about the ideal man or ideal woman that reveals their cultural values, their gender roles, etc. She has continued to conduct much of her research in Guatemala ever since.

Comparing Countries
So how does women’s empowerment in the United States compare to other countries? Are there certain countries with standards we should strive to achieve?

According to Dr. Gibbons, “There are many different indicators of women’s empowerment. Overall, the United States does okay. Compared to Guatemala, it frequently has better indicators for women, which are usually based on political participation, education, and health indicators. However, the United States does fall behind some countries. I think Scandinavian countries are way ahead on women’s empowerment.”

Dr. Gibbons recently wrote a chapter with Dr. Deborah Best on how important gender is to parents (Best & Gibbons, 2019). She says, “There are now all of these gender reveal parties in the United States. Some have even turned dangerous—a bomb exploded and killed somebody the other day when they were trying to put pink stuff in a cake. These gender reveal parties are a big deal in the United States, and yet there is a movement in Norway and I think some of the other Scandinavian countries to not reveal the gender of the baby to anyone or to a child until it becomes obvious.”

Children in this movement are given gender neutral names and referred to with gender neutral pronouns so that other people cannot inflect gender stereotypes on the child. Dr. Gibbons exclaims, “These are two opposite poles! How important are children’s genders to their parents and
to their society? I think it’s a fascinating thing that we have these two extremes at this very moment in time.”

“The United States is not at the top, but they’re not at the bottom either,” she continues. “We are doing very badly in some indicators like mortality rate of children under 5. That is a different issue, but we are about the worst of the industrialized countries. On the other hand, Guatemala is struggling with the empowerment of women, though the country has almost achieved parity in education, which I think is great. There are not very high rates of educational attainment, but it is pretty equal for women and men. And like in the United States, more Guatemalan women are educated at the university level.”

**Dr. Gibbons’ Advice for Conducting International Research**

Reader, are you considering working internationally to advance psychology and the understanding of different cultures? Dr. Gibbons has many tips for you:

First, a warning: Please avoid what they call “helicopter” or “Safari research.” Don’t just take your instrument into a totally different culture, give it to people, and then leave again. I think that doesn’t tell us very much.

Second: If it’s a quantitative study that uses a questionnaire basis, some items may not be relevant to participants. For example, I used to give the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents, and one of the questions is, “On a date, should the boy pay all the expenses?” But dating isn’t permitted in many parts of the world, so how could someone who lives in that setting even respond to that question? There are tons of other examples of this.

Third: Sometimes you get unexpected results. In Iceland, we gave the same scale, and one of the items asks whether girls are as smart as boys. Lots of the Icelandic girls said “no,” but then they wrote notes in the margin that girls are actually smarter than boys. So we were getting completely contradictory results to the meaning of the questionnaire.

Fourth: Be really careful about imposing your own sets of values in a different cultural setting. Before introducing interventions, use caution because these are based on assumptions that you might not have thought through.

Fifth: If you have to learn a new language then learn the language. You have to possess enough experience that you can really speak to it. One of my role models is Michael Bond, a Canadian who has lived in Hong Kong for most of his professional life. He has written about how it takes him a long time to really understand what’s going on around him in his psychology department and in Hong Kong. I think that kind of deep interaction and deep engagement with the culture is really important to understand.

**How Can We Further Empower Women?**

Dr. Gibbons believes that empowerment in general involves accompanying people, and particularly women. She says, “For 35 years, I was at a Jesuit university, and they talk about accompaniment. That is, if you want to help people, you don’t come in to save them. You walk along in their footsteps. You understand what they are going through. And you are their companion in the process.”

This applies to supporting young scholars too. Almost all of Dr. Gibbons’ collaborators are women, and her top professional goal now is to help empower young psychologists to publish their research. “So, I accompany them,” she says. “I don’t tell them what to do. I collaborate with them on research projects and we work it out together. I think for me that process is important.”

Coming full circle, Dr. Gibbons’ interview concludes similarly to how it began. She leaves you with these words: “As psychologists, we have to set a goal of becoming more international and understanding that people behave and think differently in different parts of the world. We are just sort of starting that journey. Psychology will become a richer discipline as a result of these international efforts.”

**References**


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HOW TESTS WITHOUT CROSS-CULTURAL DEPTH COULD BE AFFECTING YOUR SUCCESS

INTERVIEW WITH KURT F. GEISINGER, PHD

Bradley Cannon
Psi Chi Central Office

TIME LEFT: 2:16
QUESTION 5

TIME LEFT: 4:23
QUESTION 8 (1 point)

TIME LEFT: 6:26
QUESTION 5 (2 points)
there is no one way to test people cross-culturally. Dr. Kurt F. Geisinger, the Director of the Buros Center for Testing, experienced this first-hand when trying to implement a popular, open-answer, critical thinking test across five countries outside the United States. The test in question was a variant of the Collegiate Learning Assessment, published by Cooperative Assistance to Education (CAE), and which is a measure that has been used by over 1,300 colleagues and universities in the United States to assess critical thinking and was being adapted for use by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development for making higher education comparisons internationally in terms of critical thinking.

The scenario presented in the test goes something like this: An endangered fish only lives in a single river between two lakes. The city wants to construct a dam to produce electricity that likely will further endanger the fish in question. The test taker has been hired as a consultant to figure out what to do. With only this information to go by, the respondent might then write an essay about a process to construct the dam but spare the fish. Or one might even write about building the dam and letting the fish go extinct. There is no completely correct response, but the measure demonstrates the college student's capacity to think through the various issues and to balance them. This test, or another form of it, has been given at around a third of all universities in the United States. In Slovakia, the test was translated into their language. Slovakia is a Western country located in Eastern Europe, and participants also answered the test question without difficulty. And yet, in the other four countries where the test was also administered, numerous challenges ensued.

For example, Dr. Geisinger and colleagues took the test to Kuwait, but there are no rivers or lakes in that country. Some college students might have never even seen a river or lake, and so the question had to be adapted for them. In this case, the scenario was changed to the country desiring to harness power from coastal ocean waves, which happened to be the only place where a particular endangered fish lived.

Next, they took the test to Colombia. Spanish versions of the test had already been translated and given in Mexico. However, because of many major, country-to-country language differences, some language changes still had to be made to ensure that the test was appropriate for college graduates from Columbia.

The test was also translated for South Korea, and yet the data from the pretest results did not make sense. Curious about this, Dr. Geisinger asked one of his Korean graduate students to look at the test. She told him, “There aren't any for-profit electric companies in Korea. The government controls all electricity. So, this question doesn’t really make sense to people in Korea.” Once the scenario was modified to reflect that the government was trying to keep electric costs for the citizens down by building a dam to provide electricity, the question suddenly worked well.

Finally, Dr. Geisinger’s team also tested the scenario in Egypt during the revolution. Again, the results found in the test data were flawed at first, this time because the participants did not trust their government. The participants thought that the Egyptian Government would never hire any consultants because they thought that the government believed it already knew everything. This time, the scenario was adapted to tell participants that they had been hired to consult for a U.S. company.

These are perfect examples of how a few tweaks to an assessment result in it being universally cross-cultural. This variability also holds true for professors’ course materials and exams. If as a test taker, a student faces either a cultural issue or a disability that prevents that student from demonstrating that he or she understands course materials, Dr. Geisinger believes that professors should not penalize the student for that. Specific adaptations or accommodations are needed each time.

So, how can tests be adapted to fit the needs of their unique test takers? Who better to ask than Dr. Geisinger?

During his impressive career, Dr. Geisinger has been a professor and department chair, dean of arts and sciences, academic vice-president, and vice-president for academic affairs at Fordham University (NY), SUNY-Oswego, Le Moyne College, and the University of St. Thomas, respectively. He is currently a distinguished University Professor and Director of the Buros Center for Testing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Further, Dr. Geisinger has been a council representative for the Division of Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics in the APA, president of that same division, and is currently president-elect of the Division of International Psychology; president of the Coalition for Academic, Scientific, and Applied Psychology; and a board member (and former president) of the International Test Commission, the International Association of Applied Psychology, and the APA. We are honored to have him share his extensive knowledge with us about admissions testing, testing individuals with disabilities, and adapting or translating tests to other languages and cultures.

Hi, Dr. Geisinger. Thank you for speaking with us. First of all, let’s begin with a couple “softball” questions. Were you good at tests when you were a student?

I am going to say yes and no. My father was a psychologist too. He was a professor at Drexel University in Philadelphia. And my mother was a librarian and English teacher, so I grew up in a pretty educationally oriented house.

In fact, my dad took me to Temple University to be tested when I was a little kid. I never knew how I did until I was a teenager leaving my pediatrician for the last time. They gave me all my records to take to the regular MD, and I looked through them while I was traveling and saw some of my test scores, so I knew I had done well.

I always did much better in mathematics than I did in reading and writing. I just turned 70, and this academic year I am going to law school halftime in addition to working full-time; still, reading some complex legal stuff remains difficult for me.

Like almost everybody else in the world, I am good at some things and not so good at others. The key is to find things one likes and things one is good at—hopefully, there is some overlap there and then a person can build a career out of that.
"For example, my own institution has said they are not going to use the ACT for the next two years in making admissions decisions. We are also not using the GRE to make graduate admissions decisions for the next two years to attempt to see how our decisions work without such test scores."

Do you have a favorite kind of question like multiple Choice, Likert-type, or open answer?

With Likert-type, there is no wrong answer, so that presents a certain advantage. If I know the material, I probably prefer an open (essay) answer. If I know it less well, multiple choice testing is good.

I have spent a lot of my life building multiple-choice tests. I can’t do such work at the Buros Center for Testing because we are like the Consumer Reports of the testing industry—if we built tests too, that would be a conflict of interest. But for 10 or 12 years of my life, I had a fulltime teaching job at Fordham University where I started my career, and on the side, I built police, fire fighting, and other civil service exams for New York City’s Civil Service Commission. Those tests were mostly multiple choice, which they had to be because 50,000 people in the City of New York could take the police officer test. But I developed or helped develop other types of tests too.

I think multiple choice tests can be quite effective. Suppose people took a writing or editing test that included both multiple choice and essay parts.

If students wrote another essay, the multiple-choice test would generally predict student performance better than the first essay did. There is research showing that one can access more skills on a multiple-choice test than one can in an essay test. One of the problems with writing tests is that there is so much specificity of content. I might be able to write a really nice essay on psychology, but if I got asked to write an essay on how cars work or something like that, I would not know what to say other than to turn the key and step on the gas pedal.

Why did testing services become “big business” in the United States and now increasingly in other countries? And do you think that’s beginning to change?

Testing was seen as highly valuable for placing soldiers in specific roles in the United States military during the first and second World Wars. It was those successful efforts that primarily caused testing use to explode in our country.

I think in the short term right now, big testing companies like ACT and ETS are in fact contracting. Lots of colleges all over the country have said, “We are not going to use admissions measures,” in selecting students at least in part because of the Black Lives Matter initiative. For example, my own institution has said they are not going to use the ACT for the next two years in making admissions decisions. We are also not using the GRE to make graduate admissions decisions for the next two years to attempt to see how our decisions work without such test scores.

Tests like the SAT and ACT probably keep some people out, but not that many people, believe it or not. And certainly, anyone can go to a community college without taking tests. That is an easy way to get into college right now if you don’t want to take tests. If one goes to community college, does well, and he or she will get accepted at many colleges and universities.

Having mentioned the ACT and the SAT, the University of California system spent a lot of time and money over the last three or four years to study how well the SAT and the ACT did in predicting failures and dropouts. They found that the tests did seven times better at predicting college success than did using high school grades, and the tests particularly worked better for ethnic minority students. Using both together works best, however.

I was a university administrator (dean and vice president) for 14 years. One of the things that is really difficult for administrators and their institutions is if a school loses a lot of students in a class. For example, if a university accepts 3,500 students every year, and 1,000 people drop out after the first year, they are going to have budget problems for the next few years because the institution was counting on getting a certain amount of money from those students, who all of a sudden are no longer there. From both an educational and a financial perspective for colleges, it is really a bad thing when many students drop out, voluntarily or involuntarily. Students who drop out waste a lot of their own and the institution’s time and do not find the experience engaging. But even more than that, for the college or university it is a waste of resources because they too have spent a lot of time and effort on people who are now gone, and their time is wasted too. Perhaps that student took a spot that another applicant may have held. The students could have gone off
and worked for a year instead of going to college. So, in the next few years if colleges find that more people are failing out or dropping out, then I think the admissions testing will come back.

Presently, the testing profession is at a low ebb, but it has been full employment for testing people for probably 30 years. Since the 1990s, the government has pushed educational testing for accountability purposes. President George H. W. Bush proposed that we should have one test that allowed the country to make decisions on both high school graduation and college admissions. I would have been against such a test because the test would probably not have reflected what students learned in high school. Richard Atkinson, a psychologist who is former president of the University of California system and former Director of the National Science Foundation, made the same argument two decades ago. But there has been a push on using testing in the country by at least four presidents in a row. That is one of the things that has led to such an emphasis on testing in education.

I remember when President Barack Obama was running that he made the argument—not about the SAT or the ACT—but needing accountability measures both at high school and at college because we need to know the kids are learning. The bottom line is this: I think a huge amount of money in the country is spent on education, so we want to know that we are actually accomplishing something too. Also, too many people evaluate schools based on the college entrance examination scores of the students there. A better measure is what the students do after they graduate where they demonstrate the many skills that they learned as students.

Right now, I think, there are clear contractions in the testing industry. The big testing companies have laid off a lot of people in the last six months, just as many other companies have. It is difficult with COVID. All the states that required testing last year were told they did not have to test students by the Secretary of Education due to the pandemic, and some of the people who work for these states might have been laid off. We are not sure what is going to happen this year because of COVID, so we have to wait and see.

I imagine that there are some best practices that professors should take into consideration when developing tests, particularly so the tests will be cross-cultural. Do you have any advice for that?

There is no one way to be cross-cultural. Being fair and appropriate cross-culturally for one group of people is not the same as for another group of people. We all need to be flexible, to care, and to work at such practices. We need to be welcoming for all students.

For example, when I was chair of the Psychology Department at Fordham, we hired somebody from South Korea. His father visited at one point; when I met him, he bowed, and so I bowed to him. That is just something that is a cultural custom for Koreans. It is a very nice one based on politeness and respect. But I am sure that if you did that in other countries, perhaps including the United States,
people wouldn’t understand. We need to find out about people from different cultures and then learn issues and traditions that are important in their own cultures and make every effort to support those perspectives, if at all possible.

I went to graduate school from 1972 to 1977, and I never heard the word “culture.” At that point, most psychologists were not talking about culture. I spent my junior year abroad in Germany, which is about as close to the United States in terms of Western culture as one could get, but even there, one had to learn many different customs. And I had months to travel to Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Scandinavia, and even Northern Africa. I experienced many really different cultures! And just as Psi Chi has been and is becoming increasingly international, I encourage students to do so too!

It is important to learn to be receptive and respectful to people and to their cultures. For example, I have done a fair amount of work in the last decade in Saudi Arabia. I have been there five or six times, and their culture is very different from ours when it comes to gender equality and some other issues. But one must accept any culture, whether one finds it to be in keeping with one’s own values or not—one must suspend their own values—at least temporarily on how they make decisions.

As an example, a few years ago, I had a graduate student from China. At first, she needed to improve to succeed at Nebraska, but she did really well, and she got her masters’ degree. We did a publication together based on her masters’ thesis, in fact, and then she told me she was getting married and having a child, so she felt that she needed to leave school. I said to her, “Well, you could stay in grad school, even at a distance.” But she let me know that her family and in-laws had both told her, “Once you had a child, you should not go to graduate school, period. You are a mother, and that is what you are.”

I had some interactions with her again recently, and she said she was working professionally because she really wanted to work. But she had cultural norms that she had to deal with herself. You just have to accept different people’s cultural norms as right for them. If they think it is wrong for them, they will leave the country.

**What can professors do in their classes to ensure that all of their students can understand course content and that the information being relayed is appropriate?**

I think it takes some work. A professor has to ask some questions about what students’ lives are like, and they have to care. For example, one of the times I went to Saudi Arabia, I asked a grad assistant to prepare some slides for my talks. One of the examples she came up with was a card-playing example to demonstrate a probability problem. I already knew that gambling is forbidden in Muslim countries, and so I looked into the possibility of using a deck of cards as an example, and I found out that playing cards are an illegal item in Saudi Arabia. One needs to be sensitive and learning a few words in the languages of students (please, thank you, yes, and no) is also helpful.

With the World Wide Web, the world has gotten so much smaller. I remember spending a whole year in Europe where I never called anyone back in the United States. I never even talked to my parents for the year. I never talked to anybody in the states; I wrote letters that took almost two weeks to get replies. But now, you can go to Europe and you can Zoom or Skype back. Things have gotten so much easier. I am on two different international psychology boards presently. We have board meetings with individuals from around the world, all with Zoom or other services like it. It is just amazingly easier to communicate with people from different countries.

**What about from a student perspective? Say a student is taking a test and realizes that it is not right for them culturally, or maybe they even have a disability that is preventing them from being able to answer the questions. How should they approach that? Should they say something?**

Yes, they should. Absolutely.

As for the disability part of your question, I have been an expert witness in about ten cases on people testing others with disabilities, in favor of the students. I have represented students with many kinds of disabilities, including learning disabilities, on many of the major admissions measures and some licensing tests as well.

Certainly, it is a student’s responsibility to advocate for their needs. If they want a reasonable accommodation by law, it is there. If I am their teacher, I don’t have to give them reasonable accommodations unless they ask for it. But once they ask for it, it is my responsibility to do so. From a disability perspective, this is really simple. For example, it would be inappropriate to administer a certain kind of test, like a map reading test, if the student is blind. I mean, that would make no sense at all.

"Yes, we should be able to make accommodations for people if testing is really the stumbling block that is going to keep them from coming."
There are also cultural issues that you have account for. Here is an example: I was a dean of arts and sciences for five years, and I had a professor in biology who taught a course in population genetics or something like that. For a final exam, he had his students give 10-minute presentations, and then the professor graded each student by listening to them talk and asking them questions. One student had to present on different ways to control population, and so the professor asked him, “You’re not mentioning abortion or birth control?” When the student replied, “I’m Catholic. I don’t believe those are acceptable answers,” the professor failed him.

The student then came to me with sort of what amounts to an academic freedom issue. Although you may not know this, one of the worst things an academic administrator can do is change a grade given by a professor. You probably have the power to do it. But that’s not entirely clear legally, and so you don’t because it will cause a fight between faculty and administration. So, I said to this student, “Look, here’s the deal. I can’t grade you on this. I don’t know anything about population, ethics, and genetics. All I can do is waive a rule and allow you to withdraw from the course without a grade. I can’t give you your money back because you sat through the course the whole time. You will have to take that or another course again, but I will withdraw you and take the F off your record.”

This is a situation where I would put religion in with culture, and that is not even probably my personal belief. I think you have to try to see the world from others’ perspectives and deal with them accordingly. That can be very tricky though.

As another example, when I was a department chair, we accepted a student from Africa. The department did not know much about the country he came from. We assigned him an advisor as we did for all students, and because he wasn’t doing very well in the coursework, we asked him on several occasions in writing to meet with his advisor. But he wouldn’t do that. Finally, we asked some students who knew him what was going on, and they said he is from a culture where it is not appropriate to ask a woman for help. So, we discussed as a department whether we should give him a male advisor now to help him, or because he was here in America where we believe in equality of genders, tell him to go to the assigned advisor. In this case, we actually made the latter decision. We did not assign him a male advisor simply because he refused to ask a woman for help. Those are all the tough kinds of questions that one has to deal with if facing cultural issues. I think religion and culture are very integrally intertwined.

You mentioned the SAT earlier. What if a student was having difficulty with one of these bigger tests? Is there a way that they can report that or try to request special assistance?

It depends on whether you have a disability or not. If you have a disability, clearly you can get different accommodations like 50% extra time or double time. If you are anxious, there are good treatment programs for working with test anxiety, which unfortunately usually means taking lots and lots of tests—first short tests and then longer and longer tests, until it no longer feels nerve wracking. Language minorities in some instances can also receive accommodations.

When I was a dean, we got an application from a student who wanted to be in my college (Arts and Sciences). She wanted to be an English major, and she did not want to take the “big test.” She asked if we would accept her if she just submitted a portfolio of her writings. I walked down to the admissions office; asked them, and they said, “Yes, we can do that.”

Many colleges are making a big deal now because they are allowing students not to take and supply test scores, but for most colleges, I think there have always been exceptions over the years. They certainly have done it for music majors, acting majors, and athletes at many schools. Yes, we should be able to make accommodations for people if testing is really the stumbling block that is going to keep them from coming.

I once gave a talk to the presidents of German universities, where they do not have any national admissions test system. Having studied in Germany, I can report that their school year ends around July 15 and then it starts again around October 15. To graduate from a German high school, you have to pass a test that is specific to the high school. The high school teachers put it together separately at every school. It is an essay test, and it is like a final exam for all your courses rolled together. It is a huge deal that would drive most of us in the United States crazy. Because this exam takes a while to score, they may not have scores or pass-fail determinations until sometime in August. Colleges and universities won’t even look at applicants until they have earned their high school diploma. So, the colleges are making many fast decisions with only two months lead tune, and yet their dropout rate is no higher than ours.

There are many ways to do all of these things. I think it helps to know that there are different options when it comes to testing.

Thank you, Dr. Geisinger, for such fascinating and vivid examples throughout this interview. Reader, whether you are taking a brief quiz or implementing a major assessment, keep in mind that the content should be presented in ways that are appropriate and conducive for all test takers’ success. Fortunately, people like Dr. Geisinger have dedicated their lives to ensuring that tests are fair, accurate, and do not disadvantage others based on their culture, disabilities, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic backgrounds. Although the perfect test does not exist, always keep an open mind about modifying evaluations in order to best meet the needs of those being assessed.

Kurt F. Geisinger, PhD, is Director of the Buros Center on Testing and Distinguished University Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During his career, Dr. Geisinger has been a professor and department chair, dean of arts and sciences, academic vice-president, and vice-president for academic affairs at Fordham University (NY), SUNY Oswego, Le Moyne College, the University of St. Thomas, respectively. Further, Dr. Geisinger has been a council representative and president for the Division of Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics for the American Psychological Association (APA); president-elect of the APA Division of International Psychology; a president of the International Test Commission; and a board of directors’ member for the American Psychological Association and the International Association of Applied Psychology.
As I sit at my desk considering this article, it is a year since we went into quarantine mode and our way of life changed. An anniversary can be a challenging thing. Perhaps you feel optimistic that things are getting better, perhaps you feel afraid to be hopeful because there always seems to be another challenge around the corner. As you read this article you may be looking at the 1-year anniversary of when reality sunk in—that going through the pandemic safely wasn’t going to be a matter of weeks, but rather months or years. These anniversaries are an opportunity to look back and consider what has changed, what we have lost, what we have gained. It is not unusual for the emotions of an anniversary to take us by surprise; we don’t expect a calendar timeline to have such an impact. We can use this time to reflect and consider what we have learned.

I’m teaching Death, Dying, & Bereavement this semester, and it is every bit the challenge for myself and my students that I expected it to be. The pandemic has raised challenges for those going through death, loss, and bereavement. Humans as social beings do not benefit from isolation when going through bereavement (or during life in general). Many colleagues and students have talked to me about having a family member die, and having no gathering, no funeral, no rituals to gather and acknowledge the loss and support one another through the grief. Many more individuals are grieving the loss of life as they expected it to be—life events put off, milestones skipped or unrecognizable. Graduates receiving a diploma by mail and celebrating via Zoom. High school dances and sports canceled. Life in general put on hold, as if that is a reasonable thing. Many of these losses and challenges remain unacknowledged; our social systems overwhelmed, and compassion fatigue the order of the day.

What might happen, I wondered, if I teach this class on death and dying and open the pandemic up for a topic of conversation? How will students react? Will it end up being a support group instead of an academic class? Will students drop the course or be tired of talking about it? The reality has so far turned out so much better than I expected. This great group of students have embraced the conversation and shared many of the challenges they experienced and the strengths they are gaining from these challenging times. What follows is a list of lessons learned and points to consider as you reflect on your experience with the pandemic.

Lesson 1. These events have happened before, and the psychological and social reactions of people were predictable.

The class discussed historical research on times of pandemic such as the time of the Black Death in Europe (14th century); people looked for scapegoats, often those who had a more nomadic lifestyle such as the Romany or Jewish peoples. Several students noted comparisons between racism and discrimination during the Black Death and more recent pandemic experiences; “I read that in New York not only racism but racist attacks have increased by 190% in the last year against Asian Americans. I think when things that are so unknown, powerful, and deadly, our culture automatically looks to blame. We do this to grasp for a sense of how and why because, for some reason, we totally rely
on making sense of things, and sometimes things just don’t make sense. In my opinion, a virus that has killed over 2 million people is just something that doesn’t and won’t make sense big picture but a lot of people look deeper and want to cast blame.” (Tatum Messmer, 2021)

Another student noted that fear of death leads to blaming outgroups such as Asian Americans as a way to control the fear; "The Jews who were tortured into admitting to 'poisoning' the water source were obviously not at fault for the plague, but having a villain to blame seems to help balance the fear of an unknown cause of death." (Justine Forster, 2021)

During the Black Death there was also a wave of hedonism or fatalistic behavior where people ignored laws and social roles, and lived for the moment eating, drinking, even stealing goods from homes where people already died. A student noticed this similarity to the occurrences of parties and social gatherings in defiance of health guidelines.

"During the Black Death in Europe, some people decided that if they were going to die anyway, they might as well spend their time in enjoyment. They went around and partied until they either lived or died. During the current pandemic, many people refuse to follow health guidelines and get together as if nothing is wrong in similar defiance of death. I have heard people saying that, if it is their time to die, why should they try to prolong it by uncomfortable masks and lonely isolation. For many in both occurrences though, this culminated in a self-fulfilling prophesy where they only became ill or died because they did not protect themselves." (Eleanor Vernon, 2021)

Seeking explanations that provide a sense of control is common throughout pandemic situations in history. A student noted similar processes during the current pandemic;

"Something that I saw ... was the amount of conspiracy theories surrounding the virus, and the different ways people were trying to explain its occurrence. I thought this was similar to how people were coming up with all these wild explanations for the plague because, in that time, they really didn’t understand how it spread. But now people know how viruses are spread, and there are still theories on 5G radiation causing people to get sick." (Jesse Saiz, 2021)

In our current pandemic such ideas helped give people immediate options for explanation and a sense of control, while science was taking its slow, methodical but accurate approach to finding solutions. Hoarding and other fear-based impulsive actions were apparent in the bubonic plague as they were at the beginning of the current pandemic;

"There was a lot of fear, and people chose to feel relief by buying mountains worth of toiletries and disinfectants. Although different, the principle is the same. People need that sense of control, and doing those things makes them feel as if they do." (Fernando Otoniel Ramos Vasquez, 2021)

During times when mortality salience is high, terror management theory (Pyszczynski et al., 2002) predicts that people will grasp at options that provide denial of and control over death.

Lesson 2.
Resistance is futile.

Grasping at methods to control the situation quickly became ineffective during the early months of the pandemic. Those who were hoarding were condemned by society, attempts to impose structure and order to things like online learning or grocery shopping were difficult and sometimes impractical. Waiting for the governmental systems to assist with recommended guidelines stretched out, and people naturally started to respond more passively. Learned helplessness is defined as the process of giving up attempts at control when all prior attempts have no impact. It is not surprising that many people found the need to impose one’s own structure to their day a difficult adjustment made more difficult by the constant changing demands for what that structure might need to be. The burden of constant stress and fear has been with humanity throughout the pandemics of history including this one;

"I’m sure the reactions of people during the Black Death were similar to the reactions we are having today about COVID-19. Always having a sense of fear in the back of your mind, frustration that this situation is occurring and it is out of our control, and great feelings of sadness knowing and seeing so many people be taken by a disease that we have no cure for." (Corinne Leonard, 2021)
Lesson 3.
It is okay to not be okay and to need help.
Students reported learning that being aware of their own well-being and reaching out for help was much more important during the pandemic.

"The constant stress of our rapidly changing society as a response to COVID has definitely left a lot of people feeling isolated and depressed. Many changes in the expression of art and even religious art showed similar feelings of confusion and isolation for those alive during the Black Death. It was very fascinating to me to see how, while the Black Death had a profound effect on society and culture in a very different world than the one we live in today, people still went through similar psychological problems." (Anonymous, 2021)

Lesson 4.
Every challenge is an opportunity.
Isolation is a challenge that was predictable given the requirements for quarantine even as far back as the Black Death. The challenge of quarantine has become, for some, an opportunity to develop new creative outlets and new ways to engage in meaningful endeavors.

"A current pandemic event is the act of isolation. We quarantine when we get sick, and for so long we were ordered to stay in our houses. As I type this, I myself am quarantined. Some people have been isolating since the very beginning and haven't stopped, others isolated for a period of time before attempting to return to the new normal. During the plague, no one wanted to be around one another in fear of the disease. The people who did travel for 'essential' (religious) things were at a high risk, just like our essential people during COVID." (Hannah Wilford, 2021)

People are turning within to find ways to keep occupied; some silly, some more deeply meaningful. People are also taking a good hard look at their priorities and how they spend their time. Family has become more important, and having meaningful connections with others even through remote tools such as Zoom has brought some families closer together.

"Obviously, within all the bad that we've experienced coming out of the pandemic ... we've turned to our hobbies (while) being in quarantine. We've maybe even turned to religion during these times to look for answers or hope to get out of our current state of living, we've turned to art, music, or things to make us comfortable during these trying times." (Megan Thompson, 2021)

Lesson 5.
We are more resilient than we thought we would be.
Many students report that they are now considering what they have learned from getting through the difficult times in the pandemic and realizing that they have more strength and resilience that they thought they had. Resilience is like a muscle that has had a big workout with many students finding themselves stronger now than they were before and more able to share their strength with others who are in need.

"I love my life and if I died tomorrow, I know that the people in my life would be okay with how we left off and with what I have accomplished, because I do my best to reach out to everyone and make them feel loved, because tomorrow isn't promised." (Hannah Waggoner, 2021)

Some of the students have talked about how they focus more on meaningful engagement in the here and now, rather than living for some unspecified future that is unpredictable.

"So many of us live life thinking 'I will be miserable and work this awful job and go to classes I hate so I can be
happy later.’ And when we are faced with death (aka the pandemic), we regret having never been happy in the present moment.” (Anonymous 2021)

The challenges of the pandemic, the threat of unpredictable illness, the increased possibility of death and the chaotic social upheaval have prompted many students to re-evaluate their lives and their choices, focus more on living without regret, and live life in a way that is more personally meaningful.

"One of the quotes that I live by is 'In the end, we only regret the chances we didn’t take.' I used to live my life in a sort of 'safe zone' where I was content with not taking risks, but I really didn't feel good about how I was living so I decided to start taking more risks.” (Kaylie Hughes, 2021)

"Another one of my top priorities sounds very cheesy but it’s true—I prioritize my own relationship with myself. This hasn't always been something I've done, but I would say that, during the past couple years, I have made a more conscious effort to pay attention to how I am speaking to myself and treating myself. One of my main priorities in life is to leave every conversation with my loved ones in a way that I feel good about. Even if I am upset, I never want to walk away from a conversation with someone I love after saying something hurtful or something I regret.” (Grace Sluss, 2021)

"And so, I find meaning in several ways. One is in helping the people around me. I find joy in helping other people find hope and direction in life. This is why I am in college, the knowledge I am gaining here will help me be more effective and qualify me to help in more ways.” (Eleanor Vernon, 2021)

"Knowing that you could die at any time does change my outlook. It just reminds me that life is short and you still need to take care of what you need to do, but you also need to enjoy your life. I know I need to do something that makes me happy. Ultimately, I am here to be kind and to live a great life with my friends and family, and do something I love.” (Dawson McCann, 2021)

These students have gained wisdom and experience through the pandemic because they are willing to examine the impact of the context they are experiencing, the ways in which they are struggling and how to seek and find help, and the ways that uncertainty of life has helped them prioritize how they spend their time. Many of these students have focused on coping by finding meaningful activities they do on a daily basis that reflects their values, whether it is through education, religion, creativity, contact with the natural world, connecting with family and friends, and/or helping others.

References

Susan Becker, PhD, is a professor of psychology at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction Colorado. She received her doctoral degree from the University of Arizona in clinical psychology. She has devoted her career to training undergraduates in the introductory skills of clinical and counseling psychology and research on suicide intervention and death studies. She has served as a regional Vice-President on the Board of Psi Chi and more recently as the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association as president.

To Explore Your Resilience, Ask Yourself the Following Questions:

1. What are your struggles and reactions that are blinding you to how you behave?
2. What do you need to help you feel better about your struggles and who can help?
3. What have you learned about your strengths from this pandemic?
4. What (and who) are your most important life priorities?
5. What are the most meaningful ways you spend your time?
6. How can you make your days more meaningful to you?
Submission Guidelines

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

Activities are listed in the following categories:

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

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

**Submission deadlines**

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

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

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**Chapter Activities**

**East**

Fordham University at Lincoln Center (NY)

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The chapter hosted another active fall semester in 2020 despite coronavirus. With kind support from a Deans’ Challenge Grant, the chapter hosted a series of six law psychology webinars, featuring Professor David M. Diamond (University of South Florida), Chief John W. Ayala (Guardian Angels-Washington, DC), Director Rosemarie D'Alessandro (Joan's Joy Foundation), Dr. Thomas A. Caffrey (forensic psychologist), Janette E. Fennell and Amber Rollins (www.KidsAndCars.org), and social justice attorney Cory H. Morris (www.coryhmorris.com).

**CONVENTION/CONFERENCE:** With Chiara C. Diona (president), the chapter hosted its 31st annual Fordham Forum on Careers in Psychology, featuring seven experts to advise students on career preparation. Noted I/O psychologist Dr. Ronald G. Shapiro of Rhode Island offered a workshop on “What Is Human Factors?” The chapter is now working with psychologists at the United Nations to offer a global webinar series in spring 2021.

**Pillar College (NJ)**

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** The chapter collaborated with Embracing Arms, Inc. in the Community Outreach project to provide much needed COVID-19 care packages to The Covenant House, a residential transition home for teens, for seniors in the Southward of Newark, NJ, and families in Newark with an identified positive COVID diagnosis in the family. Items were collected by members, who also solicited donations from the community. The collection drive took place September 1 through September 30, 2020. Items were distributed on October 15 to 17. Generous supplies of masks, gloves, hand sanitizers and air sprays were collected and packaged for distribution.

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The National Day of Racial Healing event occurred January 19, 2021. The chapter responded to the American Association of Colleges & Universities’ call for colleges and universities to dedicate activities that foster racial healing. To this end, the chapter invited faculty to connect course content with racial healing during the week and culminated the event with a webinar dedicated to reconciliation in order to promote healing and foster engagement around the issues of racism, bias, inequity, and injustice in society. The event was well-attended and supported by the community. It included songs, prayers, discussions and Dr. Rosette Adera as the main speaker. Dr. Rosette Adera is a former refugee from Rwanda who now calls New Jersey home. She shared about her experiences and strategies she utilized toward forgiveness and maintaining positive mental health. She is the chair of the Business Administration Department at Pillar College where she also serves as the Director of International Programs. She also serves on the Board of Garden of Hope Foundation, an initiative lifting the lives of youth, women, and children from the slums of Nairobi. The annual observance of the National Day of Racial healing is hosted by W. K. Kellogg Foundation. At the core of this event is racial healing and racial equity. This annual observance occurs on the Tuesday following Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** On January 13, 2021, the chapter sponsored a community-wide webinar entitled: “The ABCs of Succeeding in a Graduate Program.” The main speaker was Dr. Joanne Noel, associate dean on nontraditional programs at Pillar College. Dr. Joanne J. Noel is a graduate of Union Institute and University where she earned a PhD in humanities and culture and certificates in creative writing and women and gender studies. Dr. Noel is a dynamic, self-motivated, resourceful academic leader with more than 20 years of experience in teaching literature, rhetoric and composition, curriculum design, and development and faculty development. Dr. Noel is an advocate for women’s empowerment, and is passionate in empowering the next generation of transformational leaders. Her presentation was cogent and was well-received. After the presentation, members fielded questions posed by the audience.
**Community Service:** The New York City area was hit hard early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the 2020–21 academic year, the economic devastation that followed the mid-March lockdown had already been felt by the families of many New York college students. These circumstances caused existing food insecurity to become a more widespread, urgent problem. In response to this crisis, the chapter sponsored a food collection drive. Following COVID-19 safety protocols, members collected nonperishable food items across the SUNY Cortland campus. Officers delivered the donated items to the SUNY Cortland Cupboard at the College Interfaith Center to assist their peers. Chapter secretary, Brilynn, noted that students cannot succeed academically under the stress of food insecurity.

**Midwest**

**DePaul University (IL)**

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** The chapter hosted a graduate school informational session on Zoom. A panel of five psychology graduate students from different programs talked about their journeys to graduate school and what it is like to be graduate students. The graduate students answered members’ questions such as whether they should earn a master’s before applying to a PhD program, the importance of a university being accredited, what the graduate school interview process is like, and what kinds of research experiences they should look for as undergraduates in order to be competitive for graduate school. Forty-five students attended the meeting.

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** Dr. Kim Quinn, associate professor in psychology, delivered a fascinating presentation explaining what led to the open science movement and why she has embraced open science. After explaining the problem of irreproducible research and the factors that lead to it, Dr. Quinn focused her talk around two forms of bias: publication bias and HARKing. Dr. Quinn explained ways to avoid these biases and how transparency in research can be achieved using open science. Finally, Dr. Quinn recommended a few science podcasts and invited students to join DePaul’s chapter of ReproducibiliTea. Forty-four students attended this important presentation.

**Recruitment:** Officers participated in DePaul University’s Virtual Involvement Fair. Various student organizations participated, and each organization was assigned its own breakout room on Zoom. Prospective members attended to learn more about the mission of Psi Chi, eligibility requirements to join, benefits of joining, and the various meetings, speaker events, and service events that the chapter organizes each year. This was a great opportunity to see fellow students and talk about how everyone has been coping during the past year.

**Governors State University (IL)**

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** The chapter hosted a virtual professional development event on expectations post undergrad, steps to successfully apply to graduate programs, and alternative options for students uncertain about graduate school. The panel of professors with different degrees and faculty roles highlighted the importance of being prepared through a variety of ways: establishing connections through mentorship, contacting prospective advisors, directing focus on personal accomplishments when submitting application statements, and choosing the best plan of action to fit your goals, values, personal characteristics and situation. The professors also shared their paths post undergrad that brought them to where they are today.

**Minnesota State University Moorhead**

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** Our chapter hosted an alumni graduate school panel featuring Luke Gietzen (Minnesota State University Mankato, clinical psychology), Anna Ellenson (Minnesota State University Moorhead, counseling psychology), Lexi Rademacher (Minnesota State University Moorhead, school psychology), and Natalie Feldhake (St. Cloud State University, I/O psychology). These MSUM alumni met with Dr. Brenda Koneczny (advisor) for a Q&A webinar to discuss their graduate school application, interviews, and decision-making processes. As former MSUM students, each discussed how the psychology program at MSUM prepared them for success in their current graduate programs and discussed the differences between undergraduate and graduate work-life-school balance.

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** The chapter sponsored “What Is Cyberpsychology?” featuring Quan Ren Yeo, MS. He joined the chapter 14 hours in the future from Singapore to discuss the elements of cyberpsychology and how interested students may be able to forge a path in this discipline. It was an amazing evening of learning about a complex and highly multidisciplinary field of psychology.

**Northwest Missouri State University**

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** The chapter hosted a graduate school panel open to all students in the academic unit.
The panel consisted of faculty and graduate students who were chapter alumni members. Panelists included Northwest faculty Dr. Chase O’Gwin, Dr. Jessica Cascio, Dr. Keely Cline, and Dr. Bradlee Gamblin; and graduate students Cameron Morrison (Northwest Missouri State University), Hannah Johnson (University of Missouri), and Ashley Hastert (South Dakota State University). With campus mitigations in place, the event was hosted via Zoom. This also made it feasible for alumni in various locations to join. The event was structured as a Q&A, offering insight on topics such as applying for graduate school, the GRE, and graduate assistantships.

Summary

Social Media
Depression, Cyberbullying, Addiction, Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO)

Gaming
Freemium Games, Loot boxes & Gambling, Video Game Violence, Addiction

Cybersecurity
Human Factors of Cybersecurity, Social

The panel consisted of faculty and graduate students who were chapter alumni members. Panelists included Northwest faculty Dr. Chase O’Gwin, Dr. Jessica Cascio, Dr. Keely Cline, and Dr. Bradlee Gamblin; and graduate students Cameron Morrison (Northwest Missouri State University), Hannah Johnson (University of Missouri), and Ashley Hastert (South Dakota State University). With campus mitigations in place, the event was hosted via Zoom. This also made it feasible for alumni in various locations to join. The event was structured as a Q&A, offering insight on topics such as applying for graduate school, the GRE, and graduate assistantships.

Southwest
Unidadad del Valle de Guatemala
MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: For Suicide Prevention Day (September 10), the chapter organized two online seminars open to the public, using Facebook Live. The first one focused on family relationships during confinement, presented by Dr. Lourdes Corado de Herrera from Universidad Francisco Marroquín (Guatemala). The second webinar was focused on suicide prevention in the context of the pandemic, presented by Dr. María del Pilar Grazioso, director of Proyecto Aiglé Guatemala.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: For Mental Health Day (October 10), the chapter shared a mental health challenge every day for a week using social media in order to promote mental health and discuss myths about this topic. In total, 24 research projects were posted using this website. The chapter worked to publicize the site to current students and alumni members. The chapter also encouraged student engagement on the site through comments on peers’ projects. For members, the chapter boosted the potential for engagements by offering points toward free graduation cords as incentive. This event was so successful the chapter plans to continue going forward as a partnership with the department.

Southeast
University of Mary Washington (VA)
CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: Given the constraints set forth by COVID-19, the chapter could not host its traditional poster session at the end of the fall semester. Instead, the faculty developed a research website where psychology students were able to share their research and get feedback even though the showcase was not able to occur in person. The website also gave professors and other students the ability to comment and ask questions about the research. In total, 24 research projects were posted using this website. The chapter worked to publicize the site to current students and alumni members. The chapter also encouraged student engagement on the site through comments on peers’ projects. For members, the chapter boosted the potential for engagements by offering points toward free graduation cords as incentive. This event was so successful the chapter plans to continue going forward as a partnership with the department.
three conferences about mental health from different psychological perspectives. The presenters included faculty members at Universidad del Valle de Guatemala: Dr. Sara Estrada-Villalta, presenting the social psychology perspective; Dr. Dina Elías, presenting the community psychology perspective; and Dr. Claudia García de la Cadena, presenting the neuropsychology perspective. At the end of the webinar, the chapter announced the three winners of the mental health challenge week contest.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: On Suicide Survivors Day (November 21), the chapter organized three online talks through Facebook Live, including a candle ceremony to commemorate the people who have died by suicide. The first talk was led by Karen Hastedt, the founder and president of Asociación AMAVIDA, an organization that promotes mental health in Guatemala. The second talk focused on the impact of suicide on families, and was led by Alejandra Auyón, faculty member at Universidad del Valle de Guatemala). The third talk focused on suicide survivors, led by Dr. Carlos Salazar, also a faculty member.

West

University of British Columbia–Vancouver

COMMUNITY SERVICE: This year, the chapter hosted multiple Psi Chi: Expert Talk Series for senior psychology undergraduates. Diverse experts in fields of psychology (clinical, sport, marketing, and more) were invited to share their experiences, network with students, and respond to questions about postsecondary education, along with career decisions. One expert included Dr. Shirley Ley, a clinical psychologist, who compared Western and Indigenous worldviews on mental health and shared her tips on transitioning to graduate studies. So far, the Psi Chi: Expert Talk Series has provided more than 300 students with the opportunity to further explore specialty fields in psychology to discover their own paths.

University of California, Santa Barbara

COMMUNITY SERVICE: For the second year in a row, the chapter fund-raised for the Alzheimer’s Association’s “Walk to End Alzheimer’s” from October 24 to November 6. Although the walkathon was held virtually this year, moving it online did not prevent the chapter from raising $209 through the support of UCSB’s generous community—including organizations like the Society of Undergraduate Psychologists. The chapter hopes to make this an ongoing tradition and is excited to rejoin the Alzheimer walkathon next year!

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: On Tuesday, December 1, the chapter hosted a graduate student Q&A panel. Current graduate students in the fields of school, clinical, social, and cognitive psychology, as well as a licensed marriage and family therapist, answered questions about their various routes to and information about graduate school. In total, 22 attendees received information on the difference between a PsyD and a PhD, how to obtain lab experience during COVID-19, the difference between an MA degree and a PhD, and how they should be spending their gap years.

University of La Verne (CA)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: The chapter conducted a fall induction ceremony on Friday, November 13, 2020, over Zoom for 19 inductees. Officers took turns reading the rituals and the platonic myth, and Dr. Ngoc Bui (advisor; Psi Chi President-Elect) gave a keynote address. Members were asked to have candles ready for the candle ceremony. The chapter wanted to continue the tradition of hosting a ceremony and celebrating the accomplishments of the new members, even during the pandemic.

Left: University of California, Santa Barbara Chapter’s graduate student Q&A panel.
Right: Dr. Shirley Ley speaking on “From Survival to Finding Power: Fostering BIPOC Affirming Spaces (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)” during a talk series hosted by the University of British Columbia–Vancouver Chapter.
Bottom: University of La Verne (CA) Chapter’s fall 2020 induction ceremony over Zoom.
Remember to Order Your Graduation Regalia AT LEAST THREE WEEKS in Advance!

Check online for additional items and special discount codes. Supplies are limited.

Get Your Psych Gear at Store.PsiChi.org

Check online for additional items and special discount codes. Supplies are limited.