the Behavior Therapist

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS
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STUDENT FORUM

SPECIAL SERIES
The Graduate School Experience: Academic and Personal Opportunities and Challenges Within Psychology Doctoral Programs
Mark A. Canna, Edward B. Blanchard, and Brian M. Freidenberg, SUNY at Albany; J. Gayle Beck, SUNY at Buffalo, Elizabeth Moore, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Jennifer A. Block, Boston VAHCS

Many books and articles explain the how-to’s of getting into psychology doctoral programs. But much less is written about what the graduate school experience itself is really like. Often, newly accepted students do not have a realistic idea of what to expect. This special series offers real-world advice in the areas of most concern to psychology doctoral students. Starting with the first year and making the transition to graduate education, we discuss how to effectively manage a full course load, a huge amount of reading, and lab responsibilities. We then address specific challenges of the graduate program, such as how to most quickly attain an adequate level of competency in the lab and whether cooperation or competition with other students is likely to lead to a better outcome, as well as opportunities, such as learning exactly where one’s main interests in psychology lie and creating new, lifelong contacts. Next, we discuss the importance of actively planning your graduate career. Often students feel backed into a corner by the sheer amount of
work that needs to be done in doctoral programs. They set their sights on accomplishing what is required and initiate other projects only if time permits. However, these additional projects are what can make a graduate student stand apart from others. Through proper short- and long-term planning, and knowing what types of experiences are important to those who will evaluate us when we leave school, graduate career experiences can help us attain our ultimate goals. New graduate students may be surprised to find that the average number of years spent in a program is in excess of the expected “4 plus internship.” This can often be traced to dissertation troubles.

We will look at the dissertation process from beginning to end, paying special attention to the importance of adhering to an aggressive yet manageable time line. Finally, we discuss one of graduate students’ main goals: to secure an acceptable internship. With higher numbers of students applying for fewer internship positions, achieving this goal is not always a given. Thus, it is important to know the “rules” and begin planning for internship as early as possible. We describe how to choose a potential internship site, how to apply, how to interview, and how to use the current APPIC guidelines to your best advantage.

Planning: The Key to Success in Graduate School

Mark A. Canna, SUNY at Albany

All of us, at numerous times during our lives, are told about the importance of planning. Whether it’s a weekend ski trip, a hobby project, or saving for a secure retirement, it is not too difficult to see that a certain amount of advance planning is necessary for us to reach our goals. Obviously, planning plays an important role in graduate school success as well.

We have all seen and read the books and articles about how to get into grad school. As undergraduates we worked hard, may have joined a lab or two for research experience, and spent plenty of time and money preparing for grad school interviews. We wrote and rewrote personal statements, bought new clothes, and flew or drove to any school that was willing to see us. Once we got there, we pushed through our interviews hoping we were saying the right things, then wondered whether the “informal” party on (usually) Saturday night was really an occasion for us to unwind after the tortuous process of interviewing, or whether there was another set of interviewers behind a one-way mirror somewhere watching our every move (hey, they are psychologists!). After all the interviews were over, we returned to our homes and waited (sometimes for weeks) for the phone to ring. Eventually it did and our anxiety then turned to making the right decision (i.e., selecting the right school). Once our decision was made, we began to relax. We had accomplished our goal; we were about to begin study in a psychology doctoral program. Impressive.

Many of us spent the following summer making sure we had read all the written information about the program. We repeatedly perused the school’s Web site. We had a conversation or two with our future advisor, found a place to live, and maybe went over some financial aid papers. We were as ready as we could be.

When I arrived at the University at Albany to begin my own training the following fall, I had been lucky enough to be in e-mail contact with many of the students I had met during the application process. Many of these individuals have remained in contact with me over the years, and it was largely through these various e-mail exchanges that I got the idea to write this paper. It occurred to me that far less was written about how to survive grad school than how to get into grad school.

In my exchanges with other students, some common themes developed. For example, once a student successfully makes it to the graduate level, they generally understand the need for proper planning. Yet, almost immediately, some students begin having difficulties completing tasks on time. Most of the time, the problems arise when the student is “surprised” by an aspect of the program (formal or informal) that they had not originally included in their planning. Hopefully, this article will reveal that many surprises can be avoided or minimized through the use of proper planning.

Where to Start?

The first step in any efficient plan is to look at the big picture. What is the ultimate goal? For us, this question has a fair-
ly obvious answer. Our main goal is to successfully complete our doctoral requirements, plus any necessary postdoc and/or licensing requirements, to allow us to work in our chosen field of psychology.

Once we’ve clearly defined what we’re trying to do, how do we go about doing it? An excellent place to start is to create a very basic time line using five 1-year calendars. With these in front of you, it is easier to quantify the beginning and the end of your graduate training. This practice alone has caused gasps from some of the people who have used it for two reasons. First, some students are surprised when it finally hits them that each page of the calendar represents one year of their life (i.e., this is not a short-term project!). Second, students often realize for the first time that the timing of internships (generally in the middle or late summer) often makes it impossible to complete their internship requirements (and thus their doctoral program requirements) in time to graduate in May of their fifth year.

At this point, let’s set aside our calendar and begin to formulate a list of the tasks that must be accomplished during our tenure as students. We can start with three landmark events (or land mines, depending on how you look at it) that are required of every doctoral program. These are the qualifying exams (which may also take the form of a paper or grant proposal, depending on your specific program), the dissertation, and the aforementioned internship.

In addition to these three universal requirements, each program will have other requirements that need to be met to allow granting of your degree. Perhaps a 2-year project (sometimes with the expectation of turning it into a master’s thesis), a research tool requirement, or an array of out-of-area courses are required. This is an area where we need to exercise caution. Among the common surprises encountered by students, one relates to what I call “optional requirements.” For example, as stated above, your program may require you to submit a 2-year project, but has no formal requirement for you to defend the project as a master’s thesis in pursuit of a master’s degree. In this scenario, it is certainly possible that you might decide not to pursue the extra work (and time) to further develop and defend this work as a master’s thesis, unless you felt obtaining a master’s degree (on the way to your doctorate) would create other benefits for you. Now suppose you were to find out that 90% of former program students and all of your mentor’s former students obtained master’s degrees on the way to their doctorates. Would that change your attitude about obtaining a master’s? It very well might! For purposes of efficient planning, the key here is to learn about both the formal requirements and the optional requirements of your program and to plan for them.

**Who Has the Information I Need?**

Anyone and everyone! Whom you should ask depends on what you want to know. Generally speaking, mentors and other professors and staff are usually very keen on your program’s historical data. They can tell you what percentage of students passed their qualifying exams in prior years, how many students generally fall behind getting their dissertations done on time, and other important information. Very practical, real-time advice often comes from upperclassmen. For example, while a professor can tell you what percentage of students passed qualifying exams 3, 4, or 5 years ago, upperclassmen can tell you what, how, and how long they studied to prepare. Upperclassmen have also had to sort out the “optional requirement” question. They are an extremely important resource. This is not to say that information from professors and upperclassmen is mutually exclusive. Ideally, an informed decision on your part would utilize input from both. Finally, do not overlook departmental secretaries and other support staff. These individuals often have access to information that can make your planning tasks easier (i.e., how long will Dr. Smith be on vacation, are there rooms available for an evening study session, when will the computer in the student room be repaired, etc.).

**I Think I Know What I Have to Do . . . . Now What?**

There are a couple of important points here. First, understand that at this point you only have half the story. It’s not just about what your program wants from you. Equally important is what you want from your program (which also requires planning). Second, remember that the program’s requirements (both formal and informal) are expected to be met at specific time points (i.e., 2-year project at the end of Year 2, qualifying exams at the end of Year 3). Completion of these requirements on time shows satisfactory progress in the program. Thus, it would make sense to plan for these requirements first. Looking at our calendar, we have a beginning and an end. Obviously, everything we need to do falls somewhere in between. For now, let’s continue to create a list of tasks. We will transfer these tasks to the calendar a little later.

Earlier I mentioned three landmark events: qualifying exams, the dissertation, and preparing for an internship. Specific

**Workshops**

ON COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY: NYC

2. May 31, 2003 (note date change): Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia), Douglas Mennin, Ph.D., Yale University (rescheduled from 3/8/03)
3. April 5, 2003: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Lata K. McGinn, Ph.D., Yeshiva University
4. April 12, 2003: Helping Patients Overcome Impasses in Cognitive Therapy, Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D., Director, American Institute for Cognitive Therapy; Clinical Associate Professor, Weill-Cornell Medical College
5. April 26, 2003: Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Ingrid Kemperman, M.D., Columbia Presbyterian-New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI)
6. May 10, 2003: Phase-Based Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Marylene Cloitre, Ph.D., New York University Child Study Center
7. May 17, 2003: Sex Therapy, Ursula Ofman, Psy.D., Rutgers University and Private Practice, NYC

Go to: [http://cognitivetherapynyc.com/training.html](http://cognitivetherapynyc.com/training.html) for application.
suggestions for planning a dissertation and preparing for internship are included in other articles within this series. So let's use qualifying exams as our example. We may find out from our mentor that, for the last few years, 70% to 80% of each class passed the exam on the first try. So, this is obviously something we need to prepare for. We then speak to upperclassmen, who give us advice on how and what to study. They also tell us to plan on spending 20 hours a week for 3 months to assimilate the material we need to know and that our class should study in a group to prevent any one of us from "going off the tracks" and not knowing the material.

In this scenario, there are a couple of places we could get hung up. First, whether or not 3 months would be adequate time to prepare is a function of our own study habits and prior work record. We cannot just blindly accept the 3-month suggestion as being applicable to us. For example, how vigilant were we in the past in reading all those class articles that were assigned? Has anything happened in the last year that might be the focus of a qualifying exam question? Are we up to date with the literature on the potential psychological ramifications of this type of situation? As you can see, preparation for qualifying exams can change from year to year. The second area of concern deals with the notion of group study. Indeed, it is a good idea to have other viewpoints available to keep us from "going off the tracks" when we are developing our own answers to potential questions. However, we have all heard about group projects where the amount of finished work product was not entirely equitable between group members. In addition, scheduling conflicts, or life in general, can create situations in which the input we expect from others is either delayed or does not materialize at all. Even so, we should consider it our responsibility to anticipate these possibilities and to have alternative plans in place to deal with them.

What's a Planning Document?

Another way in which we can give ourselves an advantage is through the use of what I call planning documents. Conceptually, the point here is to identify what current professors, as well as future supervisors and employers, will be looking for, and to use this knowledge in your planning. For example, what kinds of questions do professors tend to ask on qualifying exams? If available, get copies of previous questions and look for patterns in the questions. Applying for internships next year? Download a copy of the APPIC application now and look at the kinds of things you will be asked about. If you are thinking about an academic position upon graduation, look at the CVs of professors who have recently joined the staff of your university. Identify what attributes they had at the time they applied for the position. Did you notice that most new professors appeared to have postdoctoral training at the time they applied? Go back to the APPIC site and look at some of the更换 credentials postdoc applicants are expected to have. Interested in pursuing clinical work upon graduation? Go to the state education Web site of the state where you intend to practice, and identify what pre- and postdoctoral experience is required and whether or not you'll need to complete an oral as well as the written exam.

In addition, it wouldn't hurt to discuss your plans with an area practitioner. Never be afraid to talk with someone who is acting in the professional capacity you have planned for yourself. These individuals are indispensable in explaining the day-to-day workings of the field, and my experience is that they are usually generous with their time in helping a newcomer learn the ropes.

At this point, you should have a reasonably detailed list of what needs to be done to satisfy the expectations others have of you. But as I mentioned before, this is only half the story. What do you want out of your education? The best advice on this subject is to be realistic! It is not necessary or expected that you design and implement a groundbreaking study as part of your educational requirements. Nor will you know everything there is to know about statistics during your tenure as a student. Always remember that your education does not end the day you receive your degree. Some would say that your education begins that day. However, for purposes of graduate school planning, try to develop an idea of what opportunities are available in graduate school that will be harder to obtain once you finish the program. This may take the form of a statistics course that interests you and is taught at your university by a leading expert in that area. Or perhaps there is an opportunity to work with a unique population that is concentrated in your university's particular geographic area. Again, try to identify the opportunities that exist right where you are, and try to work these into your plan.

The Extras

We are now getting into an area that I call "the extras." These are the things we do to give our academic credentials a boost. Obviously, these tasks require planning as well. Take, for example, the task of independent research. By this, I'm talking about research that is wholly your own idea and is in addition to other research you may be doing at the request of your mentor. This is certainly a worthwhile pursuit. However, ask the important questions before the research begins. Do I have a realistic time frame (i.e., is multiyear data collection really a good idea)? Is this a realistic choice of population? It may be next to impossible, for example, to find a large enough sample of children diagnosed with depression under the age of 10 who were born in Canada and subsequently relocated to the U.S. In addition, when planning your research, it is imperative to know whether or not the relevant literature can be found in your university library. If not, you should probably plan additional time to obtain this literature and complete your project. Finally, note that many of the recommendations discussed elsewhere in this series regarding dissertation research are also applicable here.

Publications can also boost academic credentials. At this point, I would like to clear up one misconception common among students: Not all publication submissions need to be based on original data collection. There are many journals (and special interest group publications) that welcome article submissions based on conceptual or philosophical issues. In addition, there is a need for real-time information (such as what you are reading here).

I consider writing to be an individual exercise. You will develop your own system of writing that may differ from those around you. Do what works for you. Perhaps you would like to be writing up your Study 1 data while collecting your Study 2 data. Or you might decide to spend longer collecting Study 1 data, and write a conceptual piece concurrently.

And don't overlook posters, symposium presentations, and panel discussions. They are an excellent way to learn to think on your feet, and they also help with networking. In fact, my colleagues and I were invited to prepare this series of papers as a result of a panel discussion I developed for the AABT conference in Philadelphia. And while we're on the topic of conferences, remember that many associations offer research awards for student-prepared conference materials (i.e., posters). Often, the only requirement for being considered for these awards is that you specifically request to be included in the judging process.

This would also be a good time to mention the cooperation vs. competition argument. Let's look at a hypothetical situation. Assume we work in a lab with two other students. We are each working on an original data collection study that will require 12 month's time from the start of data collection to submission of the results to a peer-reviewed
journal. If we choose to implement our study alone (without help), our potential outcome would be one first-author journal publication. If we were to pool our talents and work cooperatively, we would not only have one first-author publication, we would also have second and/or third authorships on two other publications. If there are more students in the lab willing to work cooperatively, this number grows even higher. This has been a successful strategy for many of the students I have talked with. Of course, your individual situation will determine how well this strategy might work for you.

Other things you can do to boost your credentials include university and/or professional association committee membership, applying for university awards, and supervisory experience (undergraduates). In addition, there are two more areas that are quite important for those seeking an academic career. The first is the willingness and ability to attract funding to complete research and to disseminate the findings through conference presentations. In fact, many professors suggest listing grant submissions on our CVs whether or not funding was actually obtained. The second important area has to do with teaching. It is the prevailing view among professors I have spoken with that those who intend to enter academia have at least one instructor-of-record reference on their CV, with the teaching of statistics looked upon very highly.

Take a Deep Breath

At this point, you are probably looking at your task list and realizing just how important planning is. In fact, it is not uncommon to feel a little frightened right about now. Actually, that's the idea. By sitting down now and seriously considering everything your program expects from you, as well as what you expect from your program and yourself, you are eliminating these tasks from surprising you later on. If you plan for them now, you'll be much better prepared for each task when it needs to be done.

The next step in the planning process is to prioritize these tasks. At the top of your list should be program requirements with very specific due dates, followed by program requirements that utilize more flexible time frames. At the bottom would be the truly optional tasks that you would like to complete. As you are responsible only to yourself for these, you can create the deadlines that work best for you. Keep in mind that the purpose of this list is not to determine how you will spend every hour of every day. This list is a blueprint of the major accomplishments you need and want as a result of your graduate school experience. Do not enter things like "studying for classes" on this list. We will talk about things of that nature shortly.

Back to the Calendar

You have prioritized your list of tasks by the flexibility of their completion dates. The completion dates for the tasks at the top of your list are not flexible at all. We will identify these tasks on our calendar using the color red. The color yellow will identify the program requirements with somewhat flexible completion dates, and the color green will identify the tasks with very flexible completion dates. Your 5-year calendar in front of you, begin by marking in the "red" tasks. Let's say you have to submit a research proposal by October 1. That date would be marked in red. That date is immovable, hence the red marking. Let's also assume that you have decided you will need to spend 2 months to prepare this proposal. You might block August–September to prepare, or, if there are too many other things going on at that time, you may prefer to block other (earlier) months. In any case, the block of time will be coded yellow, because it is somewhat moveable. One of the advantages to this system is that you can look at the big picture and see graphically just how busy you will be at any given time. But the main advantage to using this system is that it allows you to push around the yellow and green time blocks to places where you have more time to complete each task. Remember also, if you move a task, you will almost always be moving it up (i.e., working on it sooner than expected). And, of course, completing work ahead of schedule is never a bad thing. It also protects you from unanticipated events causing you to miss important deadlines. Expect that this part of planning can take a few tries. You may find that something you intend to do is just not feasible without modification of some kind. Or perhaps a project you plan for the first semester of Year 2 is better done in the second semester of Year 1. Again, use the graphical properties of the calendar to your advantage. Your goal is to reduce the number of clusters of activity by spreading out some of the work to earlier time points.

Once you have the aforementioned tasks reasonably well handled on your calendar, you can begin to add more detail. The final step involves the use of monthly calendars. A system that works well is to have detailed calendars for the current month, the past month, as well as the upcoming two months. These monthly calendars are nothing more than extensions of your big calendar. Starting with the tasks we have already scheduled, we add our day-to-day scheduling (i.e., scheduling time to read articles for class, lab meetings, etc.). These monthly calendars can be as detailed as you feel they need to be.

Here are two additional points. First, do not overlook scheduling time for yourself. No matter how good your planning is, you need to be comfortable emotionally and physically to be efficient in your work. Take time to work out, go hiking, or visit family. These things don't actually cost you time when you factor in how much more efficiently you work when you feel good. Second, I would like to say a few words to those of you either in your first year of study or soon to enter your first year. Through my communications with other students over the years, it seems fairly common that many programs are somewhat "top-heavy" in the sense that there is a disproportionately large amount of course work (as well as the usual lab responsibilities) in Year 1. Add to this the fact that, for many, this first year is sometimes their first time away from home. There is also the necessity of meeting new friends, new living situations, financial constraints, and perhaps the initiation of a long-distance relationship. Indeed, the first year is full of challenges (for more on dealing specifically with those challenges, see the article in this series by Moore, p. 238). In any event, be conservative when planning optional tasks for the first year.

In closing, I suspect that for most of us, the pursuit of a doctoral degree is the biggest challenge we have ever undertaken. It should be no surprise that this task can seem overwhelming at times. I believe that effective planning can help to even out many of the peaks and valleys and allow us to accomplish more in the same amount of time. Hopefully, the ideas discussed here and in the other articles in this series will help to show that many surprises can be avoided or minimized through the use of proper planning.

It's time to renew your AABT membership.

February 2003 237
Pop Tarts Are Not a Food Group and Right Clicking Is Not Exercise: A Practical Guide to Surviving the Transition to Graduate School

Elizabeth Moore, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

I was sitting on my only piece of furniture, a pink inflatable chair, eating Fruit Loops of a questionable expiration date for dinner. My table was a phone book—one easily five times bigger than the one from the home I had left behind. I already felt overwhelmed, stressed out, and was entertaining some serious doubts about my future. It was my first week in graduate school.

Yes, as I fondly remember, the transition to graduate school can be a rather traumatic event. But with a little planning and awareness of potential pitfalls, the first year can be well managed, productive, and much less stressful.

Movin’ On Up

Oftentimes, so much effort is placed on the daunting task of getting accepted by a graduate program of good fit that little thought is given to what to do once school actually begins. Starting a doctoral program is a huge adjustment—students are required to relocate their entire lives, trading trusted friends and comfortable surroundings for the eventual privilege of having three little letters tacked onto the ends of their names. Focusing too much on the big picture can leave students feeling overwhelmed and a bit lost, especially during the first year of school when long-term goals seem so out of reach.

On the first day of orientation, my class was greeted by the director of our program. We waited in expectant silence for what would no doubt be moving words of wisdom. And indeed they were: “You are not here because of a clerical error!” he announced. “You are here because you deserve to be.” In those few words, he voiced one of the most universal concerns of graduate students: Do I deserve to be here? It is not unusual for a student to arrive at a program feeling insecure about his or her abilities, a feeling that can persist far beyond the first year. These fears can be magnified when the progress of more advanced students, even second years, are used as a comparison.

Students should not hesitate to bring up such concerns with their advisors. A student’s graduate advisor plays a significant role in his or her course of education, much more so than in undergraduate education. A good advisor will always take the time to address a new student’s fears and help to put things in perspective. It is also helpful to speak to advanced students, who, in general, have most likely entertained the very same fears at some point—or perhaps still do. They can prove to be invaluable resource and are usually willing to not only share fears, but also provide practical, straightforward advice about every aspect of a program.

Above all, students should remember to take things one step at a time, appreciating easily overlooked progress along the way.

A student’s own classmates should also not be overlooked. At the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, students are required to take a class in interviewing techniques during their first year. To practice effective listening skills and to encourage the students to become better acquainted, they are asked to take turns speaking with each other in response to a question of the day, such as, “What do you fear the most?” or “What would people be surprised to learn about you?” In a few short weeks, we learned a great deal about one another. Along with such priceless tidbits as who likes to vacuum naked, we also gained a sense that we all shared many of the same fears and insecurities—and this awareness can prove to be surprisingly comforting. If these suggestions don’t do the trick, I suggest a CBT rational response of “I am not a clerical error” to reinforce that the secretary was not tipsy and feeling generous on the day acceptance letters were mailed.

There are also some less academic ways to feel more comfortable at a new university. At the very beginning of the first year, students often have a smaller workload for a few weeks as things get rolling. This is a commonly overlooked, albeit valuable, opportunity to begin adjusting to new surroundings. Seemingly trivial accomplishments like discovering the 24-hour doughnut shop or pinpointing the location of the closest Barnes & Noble can increase a student’s overall comfort level and promote a feeling of belonging.

I Have to Read How Many Pages? (or, There Oughta Be a Law)

A few months ago, I informally polled my class with respect to what surprised them most about their first year. The answers I received were strikingly consistent: They all mentioned the sheer amount of work. It’s not that the work itself is unreasonably difficult, it is simply a large quantity. Not only are students required to carry a full course load, they are expected to hold an assistantship, participate in lab meetings and research, and pursue their own research interests.

Almost invariably, beginning first-years attempt to thoroughly fulfill every possible demand. However, within a semester or two, it usually becomes painfully apparent that this approach is, in general, incredibly time consuming and simply not practical. In the face of becoming too overwhelmed, students must learn to be more discriminating in allocating their time and resources. For example, assigned readings can either be skimmed for the most critical points or, when necessary, selectively weeded out in terms of their usefulness (given each student’s particular interests). Also, it can be immensely helpful for students to select class paper and presentation topics that are relevant to their respective master’s theses or other main interests. This efficiency can be a great time-saver. Enlisting the help of classmates whenever appropriate can also be a valuable time-saver: Study questions can be divided up, study groups formed, and resources shared.

One of the most difficult adjustments in beginning graduate school is the shift in priorities. The importance of grades and course work becomes dwarfed by research, lab duties, placement, and a host of other, more practical professional endeavors. As my advisor says, “If you’re getting all A’s, you’re not doing enough research.” If landing a B on a term paper translates into more time to devote to running stats for your master’s thesis, then bring on SPSS! In the long run, good grades can’t hurt, but a lack of research or clinical experience most definitely can.

After 4-plus years of undergraduate experience, each student comes into graduate school possessing an individualized approach to schoolwork that fulfills his or her needs. But a system that worked for us as undergraduates may not yield similar results during the transition to graduate school. At the extremes of the continuum exist two approaches to class work—both can lead to an undue amount of stress in graduate school. The first entails being one step ahead of assignments, completing things weeks, even months, in advance. I wouldn’t know anything about this. This does, however,
describe one of my classmates, who found this approach difficult to carry out during the transition to grad school. The vast amount of work in Year 1 often precludes students from working on anything but what demands immediate attention. Continually trying to stay well on top of things often results in a continual struggle and a stressful toll. At the other extreme lies the procrastinator: the person who, as an undergraduate, mastered the advanced technique of studying while walking to class the morning of an exam. It is quite possible to succeed as an undergraduate with such an approach. However, in grad school, it is simply not possible. Papers require extensive lit searches, and students become quickly acquainted with the magic of interlibrary loan. Exams entail pages of in-depth study questions (forget about ever seeing a multiple-choice test again—they will be dead to you). The trick is to find a happy medium, a compromise between the constant frustration of attempting to be ahead of the game and the impossible crush of waiting until the last minute. It’s always a good idea to keep the larger picture in your head, but focusing on what is reasonable and most appropriate at the moment is an indispensable survival tactic.

This brings me to another significant challenge during the first year of grad school: determining just how much to take on. Provided that the program is a good fit, new students will be exposed to countless exciting opportunities in a relatively short period of time. Despite the growing piles of required reading and course work, students should take full advantage of promising activities, such as coauthoring a book chapter or moonlighting in an additional lab. But here’s where things get tricky. Students who accept every offer that comes their way will soon find themselves in over their heads. Options should be carefully weighed and prioritized.

Unfortunately, there are times when one simply has to say no, even to exciting opportunities. These opportunities will most likely still be available in a year or two, but it’s very difficult to shed overly demanding responsibilities once they’ve been taken on.

**You’re Not in This Alone**

One of the biggest differences between undergraduate and graduate school is the size and makeup of the entering class. In clinical psychology programs, classes tend to be modest in size and are often composed of individuals with a broad range of experience. I entered graduate school with a class of seven other students, seven very different people from a variety of backgrounds. But I am still struck by how quickly we banded together. It may sound strange, but the stress of adjusting to a new environment, coupled with having few or no outside friends, results in surprisingly accelerated and close-knit friendships. Classmates can serve as steadfast friends, a family away from home, invaluable allies, and a readily available support group in times of stress. Who else would dedicate a serious discussion to the best way to get sentenced to prison, for a term just long enough to get a break from school—but not so long as to hurt one’s chances at becoming a world-famous psychologist (with the uncanny ability to deftly carve a perfect replica of the DSM out of soap using only the sharpened end of a toothbrush). Also, keep in mind that, at some point in the future, these friends will likely be valuable connections as they become professionally established.

There is also the issue of whether it is more beneficial to regard fellow students in a cooperative or competitive sense. Here’s a freebie for you: cooperative. This is, of course, simply my own humble opinion, and I should say that, arguably, some competition within a program is not necessarily a bad thing. But it has been my experience that the advantages of working cooperatively distinctly overshadow the alternative and create a supportive and motivating working environment.

**There’s More to Life Than Lit Searches**

One of the products of the all-consuming nature of graduate school is the neglect of other aspects of students’ lives. Hobbies, any semblance of a social life, and eating food with any nutritional value tend to fall by the wayside. However, without some degree of balance, graduate students can quickly find themselves overwhelmed and burned out. And I can personally attest to this. During my first semester of school, I became completely immersed in my work. I made no attempt to eat well—but, honestly, you can only live on frozen pizzas for so long without getting scurvy. And the most exercise I got was the time my APA style manual fell behind my desk and I had to crawl back there to get it.

Then, one day, I ran into an accomplished upperclassman who was clearly on her way to the gym. Surprised, I asked her how she possibly found the time. She explained that she didn’t “find” the time; she simply regarded staying in shape as an important priority. This attitude, I have found, is the key to balancing the continual demands of graduate school with the rest of life. And this does not simply apply to eating well and exercising. It is also important to make time for a hiatus from work with a trip to the movies or a cutthroat game of Scrabble. Such mini-breaks should not be viewed as a waste of time but as proactive steps to ensure that a positive and productive outlook does not succumb to the hefty mental and physical demands of school.

**When You Begin to Think of K Mart Employees as “Well Off” . . .**

The graduate school stipend: not so big. Although it is possible to live on a modest stipend alone, the option of accepting financial aid should definitely be considered. I initially began graduate school determined to stick solely to my stipend. But after one long semester of optimistically digging for lost money in old winter coats, I came to the following conclusion: Graduate school is stressful enough without having to worry about having enough money to pay the rent. Choosing whether or not to apply for financial aid should not be an agonizing decision—if you’re having to cash in your bottles to buy toilet paper, don’t feel bad about having to lean a little on Uncle Sam. And for anyone not aware, as a borrower, students have the option of accepting a lower amount than offered by the government or even accepting aid for a semester or two and discontinuing once they’ve become a bit more financially secure. Another promising source of funds is fellowships. Unless a student happens to be independently wealthy, I would strongly recommend applying.

**From Humble Beginnings to Hamburger Helper**

So here I am now, having not only survived my first year, but actually plowing through my second. I’ve just finished a well-balanced meal of Hamburger Helper and a banana. All right, and a Pop Tart. And I’m rumored to have upgraded from the phone book to a very nice table. Maybe it’s well camouflaged under several layers of journal articles and course work, but I’m sure it’s there. I still feel overwhelmed at times, still get stressed, but I’ve learned to take things in stride. I can’t say that my confidence doesn’t waver every so often, but I know that I’ll make it, end up stronger because of it, and come through all in one piece. I’m sorry I can’t say the same for my inflatable chair.
2003 AABT STUDENT AWARDS

The Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy is pleased to announce its Student Award Program for 2003. All awards will be presented during the Awards Ceremony at AABT’s Annual Convention in Boston, November 20–23.

President's New Researcher Award

AABT’s President, Jacqueline B. Persons, Ph.D., invites submissions for the 25th Annual President’s New Researcher Award. The winner will receive a certificate and a cash prize of $500. Submissions will be accepted on any topic relevant to behavior therapy.

Eligible papers must (a) be authored by an individual with five years or less posttraining experience (e.g., post-Ph.D. or postresidency); and (b) have been published in the last two years or currently be in press. Submissions can consist of one’s own or any eligible candidate’s paper. Papers will be judged by a review committee consisting of Jacqueline B. Persons, Ph.D.; Richard G. Heimberg, Ph.D., AABT’s immediate Past-President; and Patricia Resick, Ph.D., the AABT President-Elect. Submissions must be received by Monday, August 18, 2003, and must include four copies of both the paper and the author’s vita. Send submissions to: AABT President’s New Researcher Award, 305 Seventh Ave., 16th floor, New York, NY 10001.

Virginia A. Roswell Student Dissertation Award

This award will be given to a student based upon his or her approved doctoral dissertation proposal. Their research should be relevant to behavior therapy. Accompanying this honor will be a $1,000 award to be used in support of research (e.g., pay subjects, purchase testing equipment, reimburse photocopying cost) and/or to facilitate travel to the AABT convention. Eligible candidates for this award should be student members, have already had their dissertation proposal approved, and be investigating an area of direct relevance to behavior therapy, broadly defined. A student’s dissertation mentor should make nominations and only a 3- to 5-page summary of the proposal should be submitted (anything longer will not be considered). The 3- to 5-page summary, together with a letter of support from the student’s dissertation chair, should be sent with nominations for the Student Dissertation Award. Please send an e-mail version as well as a hard copy of your nomination to the program chair at the address below, plus send 1 duplicate copy of your submission to AABT, Student Dissertation Award, 305 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10001. The deadline for submission is Tuesday, April 1, 2003.

Elsie Ramos Memorial Student Poster Awards

These awards will be given to three student poster presenters (student first authors only), member or nonmember, at AABT’s 37th Annual Convention in Boston, November 20 to 23, 2003. The winners will each receive a 2003 AABT Student Membership, a 1-year subscription to an AABT journal of their choice, and a complimentary general registration at AABT’s 2004 Annual Convention in New Orleans. To be eligible, students must complete the submission for this year’s AABT convention by March 3, 2003. The proposal must then pass AABT’s peer review process. AABT’s Awards and Recognition Committee will judge all student posters. Please see page 153 for submission information.
The Dissertation

Brian M. Freidenberg, SUNY at Albany

For many doctoral students, the dissertation is considered to be the light at the end of the tunnel. Of course, there is a fear that this light could be a train! But you certainly didn’t come this far in the program to turn back now. While the dissertation may be a new experience (larger and more complex than earlier works), many of the tasks involved in its construction should already be familiar to you (e.g., conducting literature searches, thinking analytically, synthesizing information, time management, and writing well). Furthermore, the dissertation can provide an opportunity to further strengthen these skills in time for your entry into the professional world (you know, the one everyone but you seems to be a part of). Guidelines are presented on how to better facilitate the completion of the dissertation.

Make a Time Line

The act of beginning can be a difficult part of the dissertation process. To avoid problems due to procrastination, consider devising a time line on which you plot where you would like to be in the process throughout a given period of time (e.g., the next 12 months). You can do this at the end of your third year in your program or, better yet, during your third year. In making a time line, it is critical to be organized and to set realistic goals that can be broken down into smaller, more manageable parts.

Although there may be no single best way to create a time line, a “reverse calendar” method may be quite beneficial. This entails working backwards from the date on which you would like to have your goals met. First identify key tasks that need to be completed. Once that is done, set a realistic date for your oral defense. Then work backwards through the calendar to set reasonable dates for the other goals you’ve identified (e.g., revisions, proposal defense, etc.) right up to the present month, week, and even day. You may want to ask your advisor for some input designating goal-completion dates. The advantage of this method is that it allows you to see how much time you have left before each deadline, which should motivate you to maintain sufficient progress toward your goals. You can also throw in some deadlines that must be kept (e.g., a volunteer seminar at your school on your project, a conference presentation of your work) to pace yourself toward meeting your ultimate goal of the oral defense.

Ask yourself where you would like to be in the process by a given date (e.g., the time you expect to leave for internship). At most programs, students do not necessarily have to complete the entire dissertation by the time they leave for internship. Some students may place this pressure on themselves, which could lead to a big disappointment. If you happen to orally defend your dissertation before you leave for internship, great! But if you are like most students, having your data collected by internship time is a more realistic goal. Keep in mind that data analysis, the write-up of the results, and the oral defense can all be done during your year of internship. Note the distinction between during your year of internship and while you are at your internship; working on your dissertation may not be permitted during your internship hours.

An additional point pertains to being behind on meeting your dissertation deadlines. If you are not meeting your goals at the rate you had planned, try not to be too discouraged. This is probably the norm because most students tend to be overly optimistic about the length of time it will take them to complete a goal. However, if you find yourself well into your fourth year and you have not done much on the project, you may want to consider taking an additional year before internship. While a student may view this as a setback, it could also be viewed as an opportunity to work on the dissertation at a more reasonable and relaxed pace. An example time line, and I stress the word example, might look something like the following: first 2 months—conduct literature searches on topic(s) that interest you, gather literature, brainstorm ideas based on what you’ve seen or haven’t seen (gaps) in the literature, select a topic, and invite potential committee members to be on your committee (each of these tasks can even be done during your third year); 3rd and 4th month—write the first draft of the proposal; 5th month—write the final draft of the proposal and deliver it to committee members; 6th month—defend the proposal; 7th through 11th month—collect data, conduct analyses, and write up the results; 12th month—conduct your oral defense.

Literature Searches and Literature Collection

If you are like most psychology graduate students, you are probably a bit on the obsessive side when it comes to conducting literature searches and gathering your literature. It is unlikely that you will need every article written on the topic or even get the opportunity to read everything that might be relevant to your topic. And regardless of the thoroughness of the search, it is doubtful that you will be able to completely master all of the literature that is relevant to the topic of interest. Thus, you may want to limit that all-inclusive search on depression covering the last 100 years. Start small by conducting a narrow search on your topic of interest to see what has been done recently on the topic and what needs more attention. For instance, if you have an interest in depression during adolescence, you may want to begin searching for literature written on adolescent depression over the last 5 years. When you gather literature from the last 5 years, you could then gather relevant literature that is cited within these articles that may be of further interest. This approach is time-efficient and can help you limit the scope of what to research while simultaneously adding depth to a narrowly defined project. Potential problems with initially trying to collect all literature concerning a broad topic of interest can include finding yourself endlessly pondering what aspects of the broad topic to research, or, conversely, trying to incorporate all of what you have read into your dissertation. Essentially, when choosing literature to review, the key is to choose wisely and avoid irrelevant, time-consuming literature.

Choosing a Feasible Project

Selecting a topic of research can be difficult. You may perceive the dissertation as a project that will propel you into a set career path. However, the dissertation project you choose does not have to be your life’s work. Frequently, students find that what they originally thought was a good research project actually turned out to be a group of smaller research endeavors. One of the projects can be designated as your dissertation project, while the other projects can be saved for later in your career. You don’t have to try to solve all of the problems relevant to your topic with this one research project. Furthermore, you do not have to continue with the line of research you do for your dissertation throughout your professional career. In fact, most researchers don’t.

On a similar note, while you may feel pulled in the direction of completing a project that makes a significant contribu-
tion to the field, try to strive for a balance between the ideal study and a feasible one. To increase the likelihood of completing the dissertation in a reasonable amount of time, the project should be something practical, within your range of competence, manageable given your time frame/resources, and, of course, something that you find interesting. Because the project might take longer to complete than first imagined, it is important to research a topic that can sustain your interest over a lengthy period of time. Working on a topic that interests you should make it easier to stay focused and motivated. Yet, do not be overly grandiose and select a topic that is too large or challenging. Remember, the purpose is to complete the dissertation. You may prefer to continue a line of research in which you have been involved. Research interests that you've already begun may contribute to the decision of choosing a topic for the dissertation.

Certain conditions, while not necessarily the case in all instances, can often make completing the dissertation a more difficult process. Some examples include treatment comparison studies (as opposed to assessment studies or uncontrolled treatment studies), projects that may increase the risk for attrition (e.g., long wait list, placebo, or other treatment conditions), population characteristics that might impede potential participants seeking out participation in your study (e.g., antisocial personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder, social phobia), prevalence of the problem interested in studying (e.g., dissociative identity disorder, somatoform disorders), and lack of a recruitment resource (e.g., research pool, hospital, support group). As a potential guideline, review completed dissertations in your department to get a sense of what types of topics and designs have been accepted and, more important, completed.

The Committee
A dissertation committee is necessary because, believe it or not, you won’t think of everything in your proposal. The committee members are invaluable to the dissertation process as they assist you in completing a quality project. The members should be viewed as your allies, not your enemies. If you are presented with the opportunity to select your dissertation committee, choose wisely. Selecting members could turn out to be as important as choosing your topic. Try to decide early (with your advisor) who else to consider asking to be on your committee. If possible, choose a committee that offers skills, expertise, and emotional support. While students typically select members based on their skill and expertise concerning the subject matter or the study's methods, emotional support is often neglected. This does not mean that each of the members must have these characteristics, but that the committee as a whole should. You may want to consider members who show interest in your topic, have good personal and communication skills, and tend to work well together. Ideally, you would like to have committee members with whom you feel comfortable discussing your research and who are capable of providing constructive criticism when warranted. After they have agreed to be on your committee, you may want to chat with them about suggestions and directions related to your topic before your proposal is completely written. Expect the members to read over your proposal, ask questions, and recommend modifications if needed. Be as flexible as you can in meeting with the committee members for your proposal defense. Meet in a location that is convenient (and preferably comfortable) for all involved.

A Preliminary Research Project
If you’re feeling ambitious enough, you could propose a small preliminary research project that is similar to what you may be interested in doing for your dissertation. This could be something that is carried out during your third year of graduate school. A pilot study can serve several purposes. By committing to do the pilot project, you will be required to obtain IRB approval. As a result, you may gain familiarity with the IRB application process and could thus learn how to better approach IRB application for approval when it comes time to work on your dissertation. This will also be an opportunity for you to evaluate your ideas, gain confidence in what you may like to do for the dissertation project, and test out whether or not you really are interested in the topic before committing yourself to the larger study. Furthermore, doing a pilot project that is similar to what you may want to do for your dissertation can help you gain insight concerning actual recruitment success, unanticipated problems, project feasibility, and potential changes, if necessary.

The Defense
Your defense can be viewed as an opportunity for you to show your committee (and yourself) what you have learned through the experience. Before your defense, get a sense of committee members’ expectations for the defense. Some expectations to address might include formality of the presentation, length of time devoted to presentation and questions, and how they may want you to address modifications in your project. It may also be valuable for you to attend other student defenses prior to your defense. For psychology graduate students, underpreparation is rarely a problem. However, the same cannot be said of overpreparation. Try not to prepare to the point of exhaustion. Learn your material well and practice your presentation in front of others. Try to relax both before and during your defense. In the days leading up to the defense be sure to get plenty of rest, eat healthy, visit with friends, and do something fun. You are much more likely to perform well at your defense if you feel rested and refreshed. Anticipate some obvious questions, even if you think the proposal addresses them. Types of questions that committee members may ask include the following: Could you briefly tell us your rationale for selecting this research project? What are your hypotheses? What was your rationale for the methods selected? Why were these dependent measures chosen? What was your reasoning for the data analysis used? What are your main findings? What are your conclusions based on these findings? What are the limitations of this study? What is the main contribution to knowledge? Do you have any recommendations for further research given your results?

Take your time in answering questions and allow the committee members to take their time in asking questions. Be thoughtful about your answers. Show the members that you’ve learned what you’ve needed to learn through this process and that you are now prepared to move forward. Don’t be afraid to ask members to rephrase questions if you do not understand them. If you do not know an answer to a particular question, don’t panic. Try to think about the question and offer possible answers. The defense isn’t necessarily about your quick, well-rehearsed answers to questions. It is more about your analytical skills. One tip that is especially important is to not become defensive. This one is certainly easier said than done. It is easy to become oversensitive and even defensive about the dissertation to which you’ve dedicated so much time and energy. If you find yourself feeling sensitive or becoming defensive, try to remember that the committee members are working in your best interest. Stay calm during the defense, and visualize the members telling you of your successful completion of the dissertation requirement.
The Predoctoral Clinical Internship: Applying, Interviewing, and Making the Most of the Year

Jennifer A. Block, Boston VAHC

Similar to the situation with graduate school in general, many books and articles have been written about the internship application process. The focus has been on "getting in," with numerous tips provided for developing an excellent application, preparing for interviews, and ranking internship sites. Although the predoctoral clinical internship is truly a unique year in the process of earning a doctoral degree, substantially less has been written about the experience of completing the internship year.

This article provides a brief overview of the application, interview, and ranking phases. Emphasis is placed on how internship training fits into the larger context of the graduate school experience. The assumption is that graduate students will seek out additional information as they approach each of the stages (e.g., Megargee, 1997; attend AABT panel discussions, participate in internship functions sponsored by AABT). The article ends with a discussion of the clinical internship's unique challenges and opportunities. The advice and perspective offered here is based on my own experiences as an intern at the Boston Consortium this year, as well as information gleaned from consultations with classmates at several other APA-approved internship sites.

Preparing for Internship Applications: You Cannot Start Too Soon

Most students begin practica and become involved in clinical research as early as the first or second year of their doctoral programs. Keeping track of these hours from the beginning will make things much easier when, several years down the road, you need to complete the AAPI (APPIC Application for Psychology Internship). Some doctoral programs have structured systems that require students to obtain supervisors' signatures to validate their hours and other aspects of experience. Whether or not your program has such a system, it is to your benefit to maintain such records.

While the specific information required on the AAPI may change from year to year, it is probably helpful to keep track of some basics. These include (a) basic demographic information about your clients, including gender, age group, race, sexual orientation, and presenting problem; (b) information about the type of therapy provided (e.g., individual, group, family, career counseling, school counseling) and the theoretical orientation(s) on which your work was based; (c) assessment instruments used and whether or not results were written up in a report; (d) other activities, including supervision (both received and provided), support activities (e.g., writing progress notes, consulting with other providers, reviewing audio/ videotapes), and other relevant volunteer experiences.

Although you will probably spend the first few years of graduate school immersed in course work, research, and teaching, it is important to begin considering training experiences that will affect your decisions about where to apply. Several factors to consider include the relative emphasis of research versus clinical experience, primary theoretical orientations, quality-of-life issues, and location. Part of this process entails the identification of (at least tentative) longer-term goals and career directions. For example, if your projected career trajectory involves a tenure-track academic position, you will probably want to apply to internship sites that include the opportunity to get involved in research. While many factors are involved in the number of hours that you work per week, some internship sites have a reputation for being more "rigorous" than others. Do you have the time, energy, and motivation to devote 70 hours per week to internship, or would you prefer to have the 9-to-5 lifestyle that you have been fantasizing about for years? Location is an often-disputed factor. On the one hand, some students wish to find the "best" internship site possible and are able to use the internship year as an opportunity to spend a year of their lives in some part of the country that they otherwise would probably never visit. On the other hand, some students have more pressing reasons for limiting themselves geographically. Ultimately, these types of questions can only be resolved by closely and repeatedly examining your personal priorities and values. The earlier this process begins, the more likely you are to make meaningful decisions when the process of the application process begins.

As a side note about location, if you are someone who, for whatever reasons, is limited to a small geographical area, it can be helpful to investigate your options and make contacts with individuals at the internship site(s) early on. Given that it can be risky to apply to a very small number of sites, building connections (e.g., through a clinical practicum or joint research projects) may increase your chances of acceptance at a particular site.

Choosing Sites: The Common Wisdom

Depending on the rate at which you are progressing through program requirements, at some point during the early fall of your third, fourth, or fifth (or later) year of graduate school, you will face the daunting task of compiling a final list of internship sites. In addition to the personal priorities discussed above, several considerations may help you to choose sites that maximize your chance of acceptance.

First, it is a good idea to find out about your graduate program's track record at particular sites. If others from your program have already impressed supervisors and training directors at a particular site with their strong training and academic background, you may have a better chance of gaining admission to that site. It may be a good idea to speak with more advanced graduate students about their impressions of specific internship sites, whether gleaned through completed or "in progress" interns or even through interviews at the sites. Faculty members can also be a very useful source of information. While it is important to be aware of potential biases that may affect others' impressions, talking to people within your department can help you narrow down what may feel like an infinite number of possibilities. The APPIC Web site (www.appic.org) is also an invaluable source of information for internship applicants. Not only does this Web site allow you to search by major and minor rotations, location, stipend, class size, and APA accreditation, you can also view the qualifications of the previous year's applicants and what types of positions the site's recent graduates have obtained. You can also learn how to obtain more information about programs (e.g., whether materials are posted on a separate Web site, or if you should call, write, or e-mail the training director to obtain the program brochure).

With regard to the number of sites to which you should apply, a general rule of thumb is to apply to between 10 and 15 sites. While this is certainly not a magic number, applying to a decent number of
sites without overextending yourself should maximize your chances of securing a position (you can even find data on this issue on the APPIC Web site). Like applying to any other type of academic program, it is a good idea to apply to a range of sites with regard to competitiveness (including some that may appear to be "safety" sites). If you later decide that a site is not a good match, you can always choose to not rank the site.

The Application Process: Pulling It All Together

If the process of choosing internship sites seemed daunting, completing the AAPI and compiling other parts of the application may seem even more overwhelming. However, with the planning and organizational skills that you have honed during graduate school, the application process need not be such a challenge. Standard components of internship applications include the AAPI, letters of recommendation, and transcripts of graduate (and sometimes undergraduate) course work. Some sites require additional material, including their own application form, a curriculum vitae (you may wish to include your CV even when a site does not require it), or work samples (e.g., reports from assessment or therapy cases, publications). As alluded to previously, I will not focus on the specifics of these components (e.g., the relative merit of three versus four letters of recommendation), given that there are numerous resources that contain a wealth of information addressing these questions. However, several points about the AAPI are worth mentioning.

First, as you approach the task of whittling down 3-plus years of experience into numbers that you enter onto a form, it is easy to get hung up on perceived weaknesses (i.e., gaps in your training). It is important to keep in mind that the AAPI is an attempt to assess every possible experience or qualification that any site might find interesting. If you are applying to programs that are predominantly cognitive-behavioral in orientation, chances are that the site's training directors will not be disappointed if you have not received training in an administration of the Rorschach. The most important variable is how your training and interests match the goals and opportunities of the training site.

Completing the AAPI also involves writing several essays. Although the specific questions change from year to year, topics in recent years have included research interests, perspectives on diversity, case conceptualization, match with the particular program, and an open-ended autobiographical statement. Writing these essays can be a good opportunity to reflect on where you have been, what you have learned over the past several years, and where you hope to go in the future. Allow yourself some time to consider these questions and think about how you will tie together what is often a diverse set of experiences.

Interviewing: It's About Match

If you are successful in compiling competitive applications, December, January, and February can be hectic months. The logistics of scheduling and the costs of traveling and dry cleaning aside, interviewing can be an enjoyable part of the application process. It is a good idea to think about the types of questions that will be asked. More advanced graduate students, as well as books/articles on the topic (e.g., Megargee, 1997), can be helpful in this regard. My overall impression of internship interviews was that they were a lot less formal than I had expected. Once again, the most important issue is one of match or your fit with the site. Use the interview as an opportunity to get a sense from the training director, faculty members, and current interns whether or not the site is a place where you would want to spend a year of your life and build connections for the future.

Guidelines for appropriate communication between interviewers and interviewees regarding the relative ranking of applicants/sites are available on the APPIC Web site (most communication of this nature is prohibited). Violations of APPIC guidelines do happen and can create challenging situations. It is important to be aware of the informal and formal systems of resolution within the organization should you find yourself in a potentially compromising position.

The Internship Experience: Unique Opportunities and Challenges

One of the most challenging aspects of the internship year is simply not having a clear sense of what to expect. The following overview will help you anticipate what to expect during the internship year and how you can make the most of its opportunities.

First and foremost, the predoctoral clinical internship provides an opportunity (for some of us, the first and last opportunity) for full-time clinical work. While we all obtained clinical experience through various practica and/or clinical research projects, this generally occurred a few days per week at most. We became proficient (or at least sufficient) at juggling our clinical responsibilities among our course requirements, our obligation to the research lab, our teaching duties, and whatever else we had on our plate at the moment. Internship year allows you to devote yourself exclusively (or almost exclusively) to clinical work. Even if you are convinced that you do or do not want to follow such a career path in the future, the internship year gives you the chance to make sure.

As we have probably all learned by the time we reach the internship application process, it is to our advantage to obtain specialized knowledge and training with a particular population or presenting problem. That said, there are obvious benefits of being well-rounded and gaining a breadth of knowledge and experience. The internship year is probably the last year to acquire a breadth of experience before moving on to a more specialized postdoctoral fellowship or a job. Depending on the structure of the internship year, you may be able to gain relatively in-depth knowledge and specialized experience in several different areas by completing three, 4-month clinical rotations or by choosing a major rotation and several elective experiences.

In addition to the accumulation of clinical knowledge and experience, there are often opportunities to get involved in ongoing research projects and volunteer for various committees. Given the plethora of training opportunities offered by most internship sites and the fact that you have but one short year to take advantage of all of these, there are choices to be made about how you spend your time. Your time may be even more limited, depending on where you are in the process of completing your dissertation. If you hope to defend your project before the end of your internship year and the site does not set aside "protected time" for dissertation or other research, you will probably be completing your dissertation on the weekends, early mornings, and evening. As always, be sure to allow time for unanticipated delays or setbacks.

Assuming that you do not already have a plan lined up for after the internship year, sometime during the first few months of internship you may begin to realize that for the first time in many years the next step in the process is not already laid out for you. When I casually remarked to one of my supervisors that this was an "interesting" phenomenon, he emphatically replied, "Are you kidding? It's terrifying!" Very quickly we are again faced with all of those pressing considerations (career goals, quality of life, location, etc.) with a slightly different twist (e.g., Should I apply for academic jobs now or do I need to do a postdoc first?), as well as with a long list of application to-do's.

Dealing with the increased responsibilities and emotional intensity of the clinical internship year (along with dissertation,

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the Behavior Therapist
job application, and other pressures) can be quite challenging. If your internship involves moving to a new area, you may feel like you are facing many of these stressors alone. It may be extremely helpful to establish a social support network, particularly with internship classmates who are facing many of the same challenges. Some internship sites facilitate this process by having interns participate in weekly support groups. Interns at other sites may get together for weekly post-seminar outings. As is the case for the entire graduate school process (and beyond), it is also essential to carve out time for activities that you enjoy. Whether this means spending time with friends or family, regular physical exercise, journal writing, or listening to music, striving for the elusive balance between work and play will allow you to keep things in perspective and find renewed enthusiasm and passion wherever the next application process takes you.

Reference

The Graduate School Experience: One Faculty Member’s Perspective
J. Gayle Beck, SUNY at Buffalo

The process of graduate school is not an easy one for most people. Despite a considerable amount of published advice about how to gain acceptance to the doctoral program of your choice in clinical psychology (e.g., Mayne, Norcross, & Sayette, 2000), little has been written about what graduate school is like, how to maximize your experience as a graduate student, and, perhaps most importantly, how to complete your graduate studies and go on to build a career as an independent professional. This unique series provides an initial glimpse at these issues, with articles written by individuals who recently have struggled with each of the transitions that take place in graduate school. While the articles in this series provide detailed, valuable advice about what to expect, what you can do to ensure success, and what steps to take in order to prevent yourself from being derailed or overwhelmed during the course of graduate school, I provide some more general comments reflecting the larger challenges with which graduate students are presented during the course of doctoral studies in clinical psychology.

Orienting to Graduate School: Getting Accepted Is Just the Beginning

Although students invest considerable energy and financial resources into the process of being admitted into a doctoral program in clinical psychology, getting accepted is just the beginning. As Liz Moore highlights (see article on p. 238), moving to a new city, getting settled, learning the ropes of the program, and acclimating to your new research mentor are large hurdles. Liz provides a number of important suggestions, involving topics as diverse as how to accomplish that vast amount of reading, the importance of your classmates, and maintaining that all-important balance between work and play. Her suggestions are sound and practical and surely will help to facilitate the orientation process.

There is another aspect of the settling-in process that deserves some mention. In many respects, your transition into the role of graduate student depends on the relationship that you forge with your mentor. Certainly, a match of research interests is critical (and often is a central factor during the “assortative mating process” that occurs during admission selection). Beyond content, it is important for you to get to know your mentor as a professional and as a person. What is their preferred style of working with graduate students? Are there certain times of day or days of the week when they concentrate on writing and should be left alone? How much of a hands-on role do they want you to assume in the lab? Although these questions may seem unimportant in your early days of being a graduate student, part of settling in involves establishing a good working relationship with your mentor, one that goes beyond occasional research meetings. Often, issues surrounding the desired degree of autonomy in your mentor’s lab, how you allocate time for research work, and other considerations are immeasurably important in the long term and will influence the research aspect of your graduate school experience. In an ideal world, your relationship with your mentor will endure beyond graduate school and may be essential for your professional advancement. As such, it is important for you to launch this relationship in a mature, professional fashion, one in which you can acknowledge your role and your mentor’s role while still being friendly, personable, and amiable. Clearly, each mentor is unique and individual, making it impossible for this article to provide how-to guidelines. Suffice it to say that some attention and effort to establish a solid relationship with your mentor is critically important in getting yourself established in graduate school.

In recognizing the many facets of the transition to graduate school, you may want to consider whether it is possible to arrive at graduate school early. Typically, incoming doctoral students arrive 1 to 2 weeks prior to the beginning of classes, resulting in a bit of scrambling when the semester starts. Often, incoming students need to get oriented to the research process, find their way around campus, organize the reading for all of their classes, and figure out where to buy groceries. Needless to say, given a substantial number of obligations at this point, many people feel totally overwhelmed from the first day of graduate school. It may be helpful to arrive earlier in the summer in order to transition in a more orderly fashion. Although not all programs will be able to provide financial support prior to the official start of your graduate studies (and your fellowship), you may want to plan on arriving early anyway if you can. This will allow you time to get to know your mentor and their research environment, learn more about the city in which you will be living and the campus, and get some of the basic tasks of moving behind you, clearing the way for a more smooth beginning as a graduate student.

Being in Graduate School: Defining Success and Living Up to the Program’s Expectations

Being in graduate school may quickly lose its shine after the first few months. You may find that you have never worked so hard in your life. You are tired, your brain is full, and your friends and family don’t necessarily understand what you are involved in, as evidenced by questions such as, “Why isn’t your prelim/master’s thesis/beginning project done yet?” Moreover, sometimes it is hard for you to tell what you are accomplishing. As discussed by Mark Canna (see article on p. 234), planning is the key to success in graduate school. Although each program has slightly different requirements, it is
clear that there will be a number of expectations throughout the course of your stay in graduate school. As well, there are a number of "extra" activities that clearly set one student apart from another—activities like submitting manuscripts to peer-reviewed publication forums, presenting your work at national-level professional meetings, attending conferences, and learning how to review empirical submissions to journals. Particularly if you are interested in pursuing a research-based career, these activities will be as important as your course work. Of course, it can be difficult to find time for these extras, unless you plan your time well and keep yourself focused on your career goals. Within this process, it is critical to remember that the habits that you establish while you are a graduate student are likely to last into your career. Thus, good habits make good sense! This includes striking a balance between professional activities and personal needs, as well as managing the way you spend time in your professional activities.

It is natural at the outset of graduate school that you may not be 100% certain as to what type of career you ultimately would like to pursue. The first 2 years of graduate school are a good time to refine your interests and goals. These are, in some respects, the hardest years, in terms of the number of core classes and the expectation that you will complete required projects on time. However, these also are formative years—a time when you can gain exposure to the wide variety of topics within clinical psychology, attend conferences with an eye toward refining the areas and topics that really appeal to you, meet others who are interested in the same areas as you, and begin to build a network of other students and professionals with interests similar to yours. These extras will help you maintain your zest and vitality for the field and further shape your career goals.

Another facet of graduate school survival involves developing an appreciation that feedback about your work is designed to help improve your work, not destroy your self-esteem. It is common for beginning graduate students to feel apprehensive about receiving feedback on their work—especially if it feels like you can "never" satisfy your mentor. It is easy to lose perspective on the feedback process during graduate school and to feel as if you personally are in the wrong, incompetent, unable to master the tasks of graduate school, etc. Remember that you are in graduate school because you don't know everything that you need to know about the profession. And this is your opportunity to master many different activities. As such, it is one of the few opportunities that you will have to receive ample feedback. Reminding yourself that feedback is about the work, not you, will help considerably in making good use of the information that you are receiving from your professors.

Getting Out of Graduate School: The End Is in Sight and It's a Little Daunting

For many people, getting out of graduate school is more difficult than getting in. In particular, several factors may slow down your departure: an ambitious dissertation, entropy, and insecurity (or uncertainty) as to the next step. Depending on your career goals, you may wish to design and execute an ambitious dissertation. For example, if you are 100% sure that you are interested in a research career and have a hot idea for a dissertation, you may wish to pursue this idea, even if it means delaying your departure from graduate school for a year. In choosing this strategy, be sure that the extra time will translate into your acquiring extra skills and novel experience. In an effort to distinguish yourself once you approach the job market, consider using your extra year to work on publications other than your dissertation work. On the other hand, if you are not certain about which direction you would prefer your career to take, it may make better sense to plan a "reasonable" dissertation, as suggested by Brian Freidenberg (see article on p. 241). This option will afford you the possibility of gaining additional research experience during a postdoc, should that become your choice. This choice clearly deserves some thought, possibly during your third year of graduate studies.

Entropy is another possible factor that may slow down your departure from graduate school. Although you are broke, tired, and overworked as a graduate student, it may feel too overwhelming to get yourself together to complete a dissertation. During my tenure within university systems, I have seen students become so involved with teaching extra courses, doing outside clinical evaluations, and working with extra clients in the training clinic that they don't make rapid progress on their dissertation. Although entropy may not technically be the correct explanation, it sure appears to describe the situation from the faculty's perspective. Trust me—although graduate school may be a known quantity, life improves dramatically once you graduate (even if it takes a major effort to do so!). In my view, entropy occurs when students spread themselves too thin during the last few years of their graduate studies. This happens sometimes because they want to earn extra income or gain additional clinical experience. The advice offered in each of the papers in this series is sound and solid. Take advantage of state and federal loans if money is tight. (Besides, it's the last opportunity that you will have for someone to lend you money without interest until you graduate.) Realize that your internship year will provide you with many, many hours of clinical experience—and that you can't apply for internship without completing program require-

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ments. And keep in mind that life improves dramatically once you graduate!

Sometimes, insecurity and uncertainty become obstacles to completing your degree. As highlighted by Jennifer Block (p. 243), the uncertainty that is intrinsic to finishing your degree is terrifying. This imminent sense of dread can stop a student in their tracks, particularly someone who has no clear idea as to what type of position to pursue after graduate school. If this seems to be happening to you, run (don’t walk) to your advisor or another faculty member with whom you have good rapport. You could benefit from a talk about how to clarify your immediate goals, particularly if this will help to ease the paralysis that is slowing down your graduate work. Although this is not common, if fear and uncertainty are getting in your way, I would encourage you to seek help with problem solving and anxiety management. The sheer number of career steps that follow completion of your internship really necessitates shoring up your stress-management skills. As emphasized by each contributor to this series, social support and scheduling time for your personal needs are essential to your mental health and, ultimately, completing your graduate work.

Final Thoughts

Graduate school in psychology has some mystery and aura to it. As this series makes clear, the process of surviving and thriving during graduate school is not mysterious at all. A combination of honing your time-management efforts, clarifying your goals, and fortifying your stress-management skills seems essential in this process. It is easy to forget the enthusiasm that you had for the field as an undergraduate—and to get bogged down in details, demoralization, or extraneous demands. Keeping “your eyes on the prize” (a career in psychology) and refining that vision is what graduate school is really about. With this goal in mind, I hope that this series will be useful to you.

Reference

we tend to use our preexisting cognitive constructs or rules in evaluating these situations (Lewicki, Hill, & Czyzewska, 1992), thus perpetuating these rules. In other words, we see what we expect to see and we find what we expect to find.

4. The implicitly learned rules and associations that form our tacit knowledge structure tend to be nonverbal (often preverbal) and therefore cannot be easily discussed or changed verbally. This may be one reason they are resistant to change. But tacit knowledge appears to be conceptually richer than explicit knowledge (Reber, 1993).

How can this be applied to cognitive therapy? Let me start by mentioning some major cognitive distortions as commonly identified in Western culture and then examining them from the point of view of cultural differences. In doing so, I hope readers will forgive my own possible ignorance of certain cultural specifics.

**Emotional thinking**—thinking something is true because you “feel” it to be true. American and Western European cultures are very rationalistic and empirically oriented. But other cultures may rely more on feelings and intuition than on abstract reasoning processes to discover “truth.” Only within the last 500 years in Western societies has empiricism been the dominant epistemology. Before that time, Authority and Faith were the important epistemologies. In some parts of the world they still are. Should we assume that people who rely on those epistemologies are and were simply wrong?

**Magnification and minimization**—magnifying the negative and minimizing the positive aspects of oneself. The American self-esteem movement (which has been sometimes labeled the “feel-good culture”) assumes that it is best to think positively about oneself. But even in the Western Christian tradition, there is a counterassumption that this will lead to a lack of humility (called pride or hubris), resulting in poor mental health. We can only make ourselves better people by observing and correcting our identified faults, not by thinking how wonderful we are. This theory is contrary to the belief that self-esteem may be a contributor to violent behavior (Engram, 2001) and data indicating that youth delinquency is positively associated with enhancement of self-esteem (Mason, 2001).

**Using imperative or should/must statements.** It is relatively easy, given the human tendency to find external excuses for our bad behavior, to “go easy” on ourselves, to tell ourselves that we are really good people despite our bad behavior. But should and must statements can be powerful motivators to foster and encourage better behavior. Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, a strong American cultural assumption is that people (especially Americans) are basically fine people who happen to have a few flaws (often unspecified). Or, as one person said, “Hell is where other people go!” But other cultures—even certain subcultures within the U.S.—have much more pessimistic views of the human condition as ultimately flawed. The assumption in these cultures is that humans tend toward evil rather than good, so we indeed must try harder and we should try harder to be better people—because we are constantly fighting human nature!

Culturally specific assumptions can also be found in more tacit forms of knowledge structures, what are called core cognitive structures (Beck, 1995) or early maladaptive schemas (EMS; Young, 1999). Core cognitive schemas are excellent examples of tacit knowledge structures that usually have strong cultural assumptions. What follows are some possible cultural forms of tacit knowledge behind a few of Jeff Young’s EMSs.

- **Enmeshment/undeveloped self.** This is described as an excessive emotional involvement with significant others at the expense of becoming fully individual. What is excessive? What is “fully individual,” and why is that important? The American culture is probably the most individualistic society in the world, where the achievement of personal autonomy and the strengthening of individuality and will are paramount. American cognitive therapists may tacitly assume that individual autonomy and separation from family are important therapeutic goals. But other cultures, such as Asian and Italian societies, place a much higher value on family connections and support. Buddhism speaks of the “imposture of the ego”—the ego that seems so powerful and causes us so much trouble while having no real existence in itself—and advocates dissolving one’s attachment to the ego and sense of selfhood as a goal. To paraphrase Freud, Buddhism advocates, Where ego is, there shall nothing be! Even the American culture is more atomized than it once was because of the disappearance of the extended family. In the U.S., family members often live hundreds, even thousands, of miles apart. While there are often economic benefits from this social trend, we pay a large price in terms of loss of social support and interpersonal nourishment.

- **Defectiveness/shame.** That one is defective, bad, or inferior in important respects is another culturally tacit belief. Earlier I argued that the American tacit cultural assumption is that humans are fundamentally good. American Optimism! But the Christian concept of original sin suggests that we are all, as human beings, defective in important respects. It is part of the human condition and its recognition is an aspect of mental health, not maladaptive thinking.

**Submission.** This is an excessive surrender of control over one’s behavior and feelings to avoid retaliation, anger, or abandonment by others. Again, what is “excessive”? The American culture tacitly assumes that autonomy is an important therapeutic goal; indeed, some American therapists have been accused of fostering it at the expense of family, friends, and relationships. But Asian cultures are much more group oriented and it would be an indicator of mental and behavioral health in those societies to subjugate one’s feelings and to avoid making others angry. Are they less healthy than Americans because they do? Are Americans more healthy because they don’t?

- **Unwillingness to assume the best.** The belief that one must always strive to meet very high standards goes against the current dominant American culture, although it once did not. This probably would not have been considered a maladaptive schema 50 or more years ago in the United States—it would have been thought of as “just the way things are (or at least the way they should be).” Other cultures may still have this tacit assumption. Is American society better because it does not hold this cultural assumption as much as it once did? Or have we simply made ourselves less competitive in the world? Are societies dominant to the extent that they hold this tacit cultural assumption?

- **Entitlement/dominance.** This is the belief that one should have whatever one wants, regardless of the cost to others. “I want what I want when I want it! And I’m entitled to it!” Americans receive many such cultural messages each day, mostly by advertisers urging them to buy a particular product because “You’re worth it!” There was even a book published in 1979 by Christopher Lasch, entitled The Culture of Narcissism, which argued that narcissism is a part of the American tacit culture, fostered in part by overly permissive and indulgent child-rearing practices. Both Buddhism and Christianity, by contrast, stress denial of the self in service of others, leading perhaps to another EMS, self-sacrifice (an excessive focus on meeting the needs of others at the expense of one’s own gratifications).

I have discussed only a few of the cognitive distortions and cognitive schemas, and probably most would agree that not all of them are equally culturally relative. There might even be a few universals in there somewhere. Nevertheless, it appears that what is considered maladaptive in
one culture may be considered adaptive in another. Furthermore, even within a culture, these assumptions may change over time. Consider, for example, the place of sexuality in Freud’s time compared to ours. Or the same change in aggression. In many ways, they have switched places. The point I want to make is that all cultures hold assumptions that differ from those in other cultures. It doesn’t mean they are worse because they are different—only that they are different. Had cognitive therapy developed in Turkey, for example, a very different set of cognitive distortions and maladaptive schemas might have emerged.

How do we overcome the constraints of our own cultural assumptions? In the end, no one can do so completely; tacit knowledge structures are by their nature resistant to change, and no one can completely step outside his or her cultural framework. There are ways to make a beginning, however. For example, we can listen (keeping our ears open and our mouths shut!) to people of and from other cultures talk about their experiences and their ways of thinking. Receptivity, not evaluation, is the key. We can spend time in other cultures, not hermetically sealed with those who share our own cultural assumptions, but with the people of the other cultures. Another suggestion is to study a foreign language, which immediately introduces new ways of thinking. Language constrains thinking at least as much as thinking develops language (Luria, 1976). One can investigate what cognitive contents, processes, and structures are considered adaptive and maladaptive in different cultures.

Having traveled extensively to other countries, usually in the company of citizens of those countries, and having lived for several months in another country, speaking a different language, I have tried to maintain a cognitive status of openness and receptivity rather than evaluation, although I am probably not the best judge of my own success. Because of these experiences, I have seen my own culture from the outside, helping me to partially transcend the limitations of my own culture blindness—but only partially. For in the end we are all children of our time and place and none of us can escape its shadows.

References


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