

Interviewing

Diversifying Clinical Psychology Weekend
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Fall, 2017

Panel Members: Dr. Margaret Sheridan, Tate Halverson, Mian-Li Ong

Contributors: Dr. Jon Abramowitz, Dr. Enrique Neblett, Chloe Zachary, Matt Cohen, Julia Browne

What to expect:

- It will likely take an entire weekend
- You are “on” the entire time
- Many interviews with different faculty as well as graduate students
- Social events
- This may get expensive for you (flights, suit, etc.)
- Remember, this is your chance to assess “fit” too!

Preparation

- Research your mentor of interest
 - Look for recent pubs, read lab website, current projects, video of recent talks etc.
 - Conference presentations may be a better description of current work
 - Look for student co-authors and first authors – a good sign!
- Get mock interview experience
 - Prepare questions to ask
 - Prepare answers to common questions (see handout)
- Research the program
 - Download their clinical handbook
- Wear professional attire
- Make copies of CV

Common Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How did you become interested in psychology (or a specific topic)?
3. What are your personal strengths and weaknesses?
4. What is your long-term career path?
5. What are your research interests?
6. Tell me about your previous research experience/honors thesis. What role did you have? What did you enjoy and what was challenging?
7. Tell me about any exposure you've had to distressed or psychiatric populations.
8. Why this particular program?

Example: “Why this particular program?”

- **Poor answers:** *It’s ranked really high. I really want to live in North Carolina. You’re a big name in the field. I’ve heard good things about you.*
- **Average answer:** *There is an opportunity to gain clinical experience with a broad range of populations and learn about evidence-based therapies, and the research training is exceptional.*
- **Exceptional answer:** *Start with fit for lab. Note something the program has that others don’t e.g., specific practicums or opportunities for collaboration. Make sure you emphasize your fit on a personal level, mentor/lab-level, program-level, and school-level. Convey excitement!*

Chloe's example

- *Given my strong desire to focus my graduate training on developmental psychopathology in underserved populations, the overarching aim of Dr. Jones' lab is incredibly exciting to me. Furthermore, her Tantrum Tamers study perfectly aligns with my interest in utilizing parents in early intervention and conducting highly applied research with more immediate potential implications. The program as whole is a strong fit given my interest in gaining rich clinical training with both children and adults. For example, the anxiety and couples practicums would provide me with specialized training with leaders in the field that other schools cannot offer. Lastly, the research and clinical opportunities available at UNC fit with my career goal to eventually inform public policy to promote better outcomes for children and parents from underserved populations.*

Questions you should ask

- To ask your potential mentor:
 - Mentoring style
 - Ongoing projects and your potential role in them
 - How prescriptive is the research? Independent vs. directive, choice vs. assignment
 - Masters/dissertation topics of past lab members (use as springboard for more Q's)
 - How does one earn authorship in this lab?
 - How do collaborations work within the lab?
 - Where have past students from lab ended up (internship, careers)?
 - What are future directions of the lab?

Questions you should ask

- To ask grad students:
 - Professional atmosphere of program and lab
 - Grad student life
(work/life balance, where to live, livable stipend, culture of the area)
- To ask anyone:
 - Overview of milestones in the program
 - Ease of collaborating with other labs
 - Clinical experience gained in program
 - Probe general attitude towards clinical training
 - Summer funding opportunities
 - Teaching opportunities
 - Coursework-related questions

What stands out to faculty members?

Dr. Abramowitz: Individuals who are well-spoken about current research/conceptual models of anxiety/OCD as well as own research experience in the field

- ✓ Match with my research interests (anxiety/OCD)
- ✓ Experience conducting research in my area of interest (anxiety/OCD)
- ✓ Personal statement showing understanding and commitment to research and anxiety/OCD
- ✓ Outstanding letters of recommendation (helps if I know the recommender)
- ✓ Decent grades, but not necessarily all “A’s”, in college
- ✓ Solid GRE scores (but, pretty low on my priority list)

What stands out to faculty members?

Dr. Neblett: *Things that show initiative, intellectual curiosity, and scientific-mindedness*

- ✓ *Vision for where student wants to go in 5-10 years and a plan*
- ✓ *Thoughtful post-interview follow-up*
- ✓ *Original responses to questions, not “parroting” what they think professor wants to hear*
- ✓ *Clearly read lab’s work and can speak/ask questions comfortably about fit with our lab*
- ✓ *Ability to work independently, without a lot of “hand-holding”*
- ✓ *Confidence*
- ✓ *Student thinks big*

What stands out to faculty members?

Dr. Sheridan: *Things that show intellectual curiosity, hard work/dedication and scientific-mindedness*

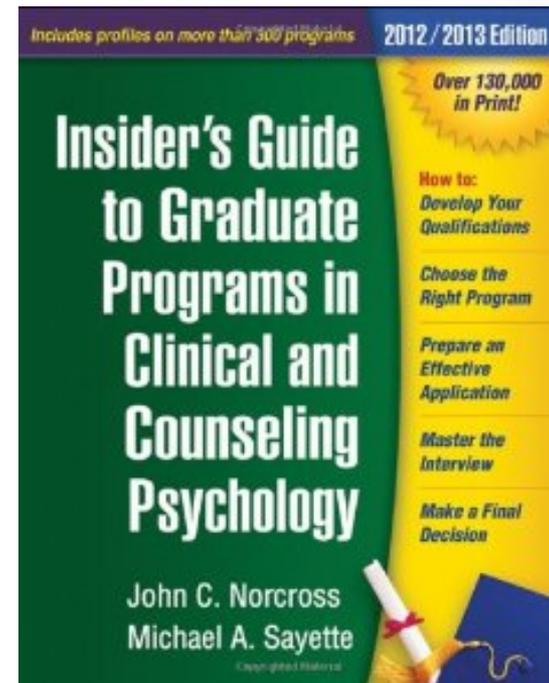
- ✓ *Vision for where student wants to go in 5-10 years and a plan*
- ✓ *Able to state clear research interests, these are related to my work*
- ✓ *Able to 'think on their feet' about research*
- ✓ *Clearly read lab's work and can speak/ask questions comfortably about fit with our lab*
- ✓ *Can describe ability to work independently & work hard*
- ✓ *Outstanding letters of recommendation that speaks to research ability*
- ✓ *Has experience with my methods (fMRI) & can describe*

What stands out to graduate students?

- Remember, many faculty members ask their graduate students for input when making final decisions about which applicants to extend offers to
 - ✓ Ask interesting questions. The interview day is a long day for graduate students too – we appreciate answering questions versus having to repeat information for the entire day
 - ✓ Be a guest you would want to host!
 - ✓ Communicate promptly and clearly
 - ✓ Graduate students often help organize events and make note of which applicants make this task harder
 - ✓ Show off your potential to be respectful, collaborative, and innovative
 - ✓ Be sincere but respectful
 - ✓ Graduate students appreciate a candid applicant and can be great sources of candid advice but remember to stay professional
 - ✓ Don't be afraid to ask questions about potential mentor's working style

Recommended Readings

- *The Insider's Guide* (By: Norcross & Sayette, 2013)
- *Mitch's Uncensored Guide* (By: UNC's very own Dr. Prinstein!): available online:
<http://mitch.web.unc.edu/files/2017/02/MitchGradSchoolAdvice.pdf>
- *The Compleat Academic* (By: APA, 2004) has a chapter on interviewing
- *What Color is your Parachute?* (By: Bolles, 2014): info on informational interviewing



Q & A