

Psi Chi General Body Meeting 1/28/20

Psi Chi Graduate Panel: **Grace Waldfogle** (Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology), **Stephen Adamo** (Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology), **Matthew** (Clinical Psychology), (Clinical Psychology)

Stephen Adamo: Post-doctoral student with a PhD from Arizona State

Grace: Third-year PhD student with an undergrad from Penn State

Matt: Fourth year PhD student with undergrad from North Dakota, studies alcohol use

Matt2: Clinical psychology student in fourth year with Bachelors from Arizona State, took a year off after undergrad but worked full-time after getting out of military and gap year in research before PhD

Gaby: How would you compare grad school and post-doc experience?

Stephen Adamo: Post-doc you have more freedom, taking less classes, in grad school you have a lot more excuses such as classes, etc. In post-doc they want as much output as you can get, they expect things to be done, perfect, and don't care about how much time you put into it. Your goal is to become a professor. In grad school the dissertation is the biggest thing, in post-doc you work on tons of grants that are like mini-dissertations. The stakes are higher.

Student: When does one take the GRE and start studying for it?

Grace: I think it depends on you, I didn't study, took it, had to re-evaluate my life, studied again and retook it at the last second in October, and automatically sent scores to the university. I highly suggest studying every week over the summer. It's an expensive test for a test we hate...

Matt2: And it doesn't work either! I took mine the first time at the beginning of summer, and had time to study beforehand because I wanted enough time to study. I graduated in December, not May, so I was working and had more time and money to pay and take tests.

Matt: I took it at the last second in October. There's 180 degrees in a triangle! You're gonna hear us talk how it's not predictive or whatever, but you gotta do it and that's the facts. You'll have to do it at latest mid-October. Take a practice test!

Grace: I think UCF offers an expensive class that's \$1,000... my life advice for the GRE is if you can't afford to buy the texting books, go sit in a Barnes and Noble and steal the info! Get a book that has practice exams, mine came with a CD! Use the practice tests because the math sections are short and you need to practice time management. It will also give you a grade and

calibrate the questions you're studying. I took a practice exam every Saturday the month before I took the test.

Stephen: Try a library loan! Btw the downfall to waiting to the last second, is that you'll have to deal with grad school apps, fellowship apps, researching information, on top of classes. You'll get to October and I ended up skipping a month of school just to pull off a successful GRE testing session.

Grace: I used to go to places other people were working, go to Barnes and Nobles or Starbucks, feel motivated!

Student: You took a gap year, tell me more about that?

Matt2: I took the next year after I graduated to volunteer in labs and gain more research experience.

Matt: I did the same thing, I was torn between Social Psychology and Clinical Psychology so I took the year to work in labs and figure myself out. If you have the time and the money!

Stephen: It's not unheard of to try and become a lab manager! That's an undergraduate who wants to get their feet in a higher position before going to graduate school, and there are plenty of labs that are looking for undergraduates to serve in that kind of position.

Grace: I think on a smaller scale, say, if you're stuck in Orlando - you can stay here and get as much experience as you can in labs and in volunteering positions.

Sam: A question about interviewing - what are things to avoid?

Matt: Just be your authentic self, you'll probably get some kind of question like "pitch me a thesis question." Some students are overly concerned with putting their best foot forward, and some who brag and display their achievements - authenticity will make them want to work with you.

Matt2: Grad students report back to professors about the questions students asked and how good of a fit they are. You're going to be collecting intel and doing research on those professors, ask how they developed their interest and dissertation ideas, etc.

Grace: When I did interview weekends, I printed up cheatsheets on the program such as faculty, their main research points, and INTERESTS so I could have a conversation. Talking about the area is very important, because you want to know about commutes, pricing, etc... this shows more interest than just the program, but the place!

Sam: I wrote about more than one person in my statement... is it okay to ask questions of multiple people in a program?

Matt2: I say it's pretty safe, because in a program like this at UCF, you can still collaborate, even switch labs or advisor.

Matt: And your interest in the program! You can ask questions about people's work, but don't announce your decision switches or changes in interest to faculty directly. Use this as an opportunity to understand your fit with someone.

Gabby: What was your biggest challenge as an incoming first-year graduate student?

Matt2: Workload! It's a change of pace, content of information, amount of information, level of research understanding, and the general change in things like family, friends, and area itself. Finding a place with new faculty mentors, supervisors, new everything - keep in mind everyone is going through the same thing and there to ease the transition! Savor the friendships you make in your cohort, they will be close with you!

Grace: The biggest thing for me was the moving thing, I was moving across the country and I had a month here before I started where I stared at walls and picked up knitting. The first semester is tough because you don't feel like you're doing enough. We're all working towards the same goal so you shouldn't be pitted against each other. It's hard if you're just doing work and don't have a social life, go out of your way to share experiences with your cohort.

Stephen: Imposter syndrome - you always see people in a better position and it stays with you. Learning how to fail, a lot - is great! Embrace failing, not in the context of classes... but in not achieving the things you want achieve sometimes. It's okay to be insecure, depressed, and you might not like the whole project you've been working on. The way to get through things is celebrate every little victory, because they come further in between.

Matts: You'll just wanna get published with everything!

Grace: I keep a bottle of happy juice in my fridge and I celebrate with every little victory - just to remind myself along the way that I belong here.

Matt: Work-life balance is getting more and more attention, where your advisors should help you and you should help yourself balance your life and be able to take weekends off. You need to force yourself to do that. Set rules like not checking emails past X time or on weekends, etc. This will largely be dependent on the people around you, but seek these things out yourself.

Grace: I bought a Disney pass so I could get out of the house and be happy!

Stephen: The biggest struggle I see now that I didn't see before is that you expect things to be given to them. We didn't always have the internet at our fingertips. There's this dichotomy between the faculty and students' mindsets. You should be able to self-start and learn on your

own with advising, and I see these conflicts all the time. You'll have to adjust to your faculty member's mindset on the matter.

Stephen: This one girl tried to get me kicked out of the program... at interview weekend your rep starts building up, and don't be the person that passed before they even got in the program. People talk about you! Realize you're being watched every moment in time.

Matt: Do you want to be weird funny or weird awkward?

Grace: We get wrapped up in this idea of having to love the program.. If you get to interview weekend and get a bad vibe, don't take it! You have to spend a long time there (5 years) and you do not want to jump into something uncomfortable or unsuitable. Take another year if you need to make yourself more competitive! You do not want to just jump in wherever you get accepted.

Student: Is there a point where you're taking too much time before applying?

Grace: Time off is one that can make your experience successful, I had someone come into my cohort at 48! She finished her bachelor's at 21

Salim: What is your anchor?

Matt2: For me, it is the prospect of getting to do the thing I love for a job, for a paycheck! The job wI worked before was okay, but you'll see dead ends if it's not something you love! What's keeping me on the grind is, at the end of the tunnel, I know what I want - working with patients, doing research, a faculty position! I like what I do enough here to motivate me!

Grace: Wine... just kidding. Fall in love with your research! In undergrad, I did a lot of different things that don't apply here - and I fell in love with what I do now! I love talking about what I do and my current research. Grad school is bearable because I enjoy running participants, looking at my new data - but I like seeing I contributed and something happened.

Stephen: I like learning and I like patterns - which in a nutshell explains why I'm here. Professors really really love their research, which is why they're still in it. One thing to do in interviews is to get faculty members talking about their research, because they like sharing what they do and talking about it! What did you do here, what did you come up with, what could you do differently? Ask faculty these questions, if they enjoy talking about research with you then it's ideal.

Matt: Finding the positives in everything. I want this paper done, I'm tired of this grant, student e-mails, my advisor... I've never even had a deep love of grad classes. But I love teaching, working with patients, and research. Always remind yourself of the positives! In research  $p < .05$ , but remind yourself it's fun to think of research ideas and their development into something real. Actualization! Break it down for yourself! You are also surrounded with people doing the

same thing, and we geek out with several ideas. We're the table where the server puts down the bill roughly!

Jackie: Was there a time where you were going through pre-PhD doubts?

Matt2: I didn't know the differences between a PhD, Master's, etc. This was around the beginning of my last year where I started thinking about what I wanted to do, why I liked psychology. I contacted professors from human factors psychology programs, clinical professors, hospital doctors, etc. To understand how everything differed and what I wanted. I made the determination for a PhD versus PsyD for Master's because the PhD warranted me this notion. If I liked research enough but didn't want to go that way in the future, a PsyD wouldn't have warranted me research experience and would have been expensive. So knowing I might have wanted to do research, I went for the PhD.

Grace: From a Human Factors perspective, you can go into the workforce with a Master's and do great. A lot of our major industry research is done at government levels (NASA) or technical levels (Microsoft). I knew from the get-go I wanted to teach and get people to talk to more, and I knew I wanted to be more on the research side, so a PhD was the way to go for me.

Stephen: I didn't want to pay so I went for a PhD. For Cognitive psychology, there aren't fields to go into besides academia and industry so the PhD was the way to go.

Matt2: You can get a terminal master's in clinical psychology and make a lot of money with a Master's just doing clinical work.

Matt: You can make bank doing that, so if you're interested in practice along Master's is a great choice. A PhD will afford you flexibility. When you're seeing patients down the line, having the scientific background will afford you the ability to integrate new techniques and elevate your practice with theoretical and experimental approaches. People working in hospitals or VA's will have training in empirical techniques, and what "works more better" - aka a PhD.

Student: What is a fellowship?

Stephen: Go to your meetings we had in lab last semester, I gave a talk on that. They're essays you write to get money for your research and livelihood.

Grace: Free money.

Stephen: There are a lot of diversity fellowships and there are a LOT of them and if you learn how to write in graduate school this will help you get money, get into a program, write papers, etc... and doing what you want rather than what your advisor wants. Money means freedom.

Grace: My advisor introduced me to fellowships and I didn't get any, but it's free money and the university or organizations can fund your research. In my classes to earn money I serve as a

Teaching Assistant, which is essentially my “job.” You’re working part-time for the university, but with fellowships you’re working for yourself more, because they allow you to do work without doing side-work such as teaching assistantships. Graduate research assistantships are dependent on faculty members’ grant money, so those may or may not be available.

Student: I think I’m applying to a Master’s in Industrial Psychology.

Grace: I’m partially I/O and the SPIOP website on UCF lists all their Master’s and PhD programs. Master’s programs in I/O are similar to H/F, in that they allow you to do consulting or do fieldwork.

Student: If you get a bad vibe from talking to other people, aka your potential cohort, should you write them off immediately?

Grace: I think that’s situational, if you’ve all been accepted then everyone’s dealing with “growing pains...” I didn’t vibe with my cohort in the beginning but I went out of my way and everything turned out great. If you’re pre-acceptance then it’s really more a gut feeling.

Stephen: The cohort kinda stops mattering outside the first 3 years, but you guys will drift off.. Life gets in the way and people leave. People always leave.

Matt: Graduate school is 5 years of loss basically.

Panel: Yup, everyone leaves anyways.

Stephen: When I was applying to colleges it was very cutthroat, and that can be representative of the entire program... aka a competitive versus collaborative program. It’s more what works for you.

Grace: I didn’t click with the person I’d be working with, and the only way for me to talk to a professor at this one program I had to buy them beers. Big red flag!

Sam: There is a professor I was working with who does both clinical psych and neuroscience, and this guy does a lot of neuroimaging stuff. Should I study for a different portion?

Matt: I would want a basic understanding of what he’s doing, can I comprehend what he’s talking about for the first 5 minutes! Then you can ask about his research in a conversation, but you don’t want to be lost. I would do a little research on neuroscience to keep up to par.

Dory: How many programs did you all apply to?

Matt2: I applied to 11 programs. There is some science behind this that applying to more than 15 does not increase chances of getting in.

Grace: I applied to 15 programs. HF is a relatively small field and I wanted to give myself opportunity to see what's out there. We recycle a lot in our personal statements, and this tells the story about you so you can plug in a final paragraph saying you're a great fit at X program but the rest of the application is you. The most important thing to check is if they're taking students in X cycle, e-mail before applying for each program.

Matt: Each program costs 100 or so to apply to and GRE costs, so doing the math it's \$1200 for all your apps roughly. Think about the commitment to these programs and how much you're going to invest in them.

Grace: I didn't have money to do it, so I planned for the fall semester to take out more student loans for applications. It's a lot of money but I felt it was necessary, because I wanted to capitalize on those opportunities. Only 3 interview weekends were paid for me, so it's a lot of money!

Matt2: It depends on if you want to go out-of-state too, and where you'd like to live. My wife and I determined which states we wanted to live, and that makes sense for your choices in applications. We came up with about 9-13 programs in places we'd like to live.