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"So What Are You?": Inappropriate Interview Questions for Psychology Doctoral and Internship Applicants

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Although psychologists and other professionals have examined biases and discriminatory practices in hiring in many professions, psychologists have not explored their own potential missteps in the interviewing of trainees. The present study sought to investigate whether applicants to psychology doctoral programs and internships were asked inappropriate or illegal questions during their interviews. Data from 303 participants (all of whom interviewed at doctoral programs, 120 of whom interviewed at internship sites) were collected from psychology listservs and from department contacts. Results indicated that nonclinical/counseling/school masters psychology doctoral programs were more likely to ask a potentially inappropriate question than clinical/counseling/school programs and masters programs. Age was unrelated to being asked one's age, although nonheterosexual and non-White participants were more likely to report being asked their sexual orientation or ethnic background, respectively. Finally, qualifications (GPA and GRE scores) were unrelated to being asked an inappropriate question on doctoral interviews, although number of direct client contact hours was negatively related to being asked an inappropriate question on internship interviews. Implications for departmental policy are discussed.

Keywords: doctoral program recruitment, internship recruitment, training, psychology programs

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Social scientists have long recognized and investigated the pervasive inequalities found in the job application process. Arvey (1979), in a review of the literature, found that applicants were evaluated differently during interviews based on their gender, race, age, and disability status. More recently, researchers have found that pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, and minorities are more likely to be evaluated negatively during job applications (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002; Hebl & Kleck, 2002). Thus, we as psychologists have keen insight into discriminatory practices that occur in other employment fields. It is surprising then that psychologists have done so little to evaluate our own field to ensure that applicants are provided with a fair, respectful, and culturally competent application experience. To minimize potentially discriminatory hiring practices, interviewers should not ask about personal qualities that may be the basis of discrimination. Whereas such practices are rigidly enforced in most workplace environments, it is unclear whether psychology professionals appropriately follow guidelines when interviewing applicants for graduate school and internship.

The current study assessed whether applicants to psychology doctoral programs and internships report being asked inappropriate questions during interviews. First, we examined whether certain types of programs were reported to be more or less likely to pose such questions during the interview process. Second, we assessed whether certain applicant characteristics were related to being asked inappropriate questions. Finally, we explored whether applicants' qualifications were associated with having been asked these questions.

Legal and Discriminatory Concerns

Beyond concern for applicants' comfort during the interview process and support for diversity, inappropriate questions asked during interviews open universities and internship sites to legal fallout. Federal laws such as the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), and Title I of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibit discrimination in the workplace (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012). State laws and statutes also provide protection against employment discrimination (Byrd & Scott, 2014). Collectively, these laws and regulations protect against employment discrimination on the basis of factors such as age, disability, race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy (Equal Opportunity Employment

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Commission, 2014). For example, under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act it is illegal to ask a woman if she has, or intends to have, children. Additionally, under the Americans with Disabilities Act it is illegal for employers to discriminate against individuals with any mental or psychological disorder (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1997).

When thinking about employment discrimination, organizations do not always consider the ramifications of questions asked during employment interviews (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012). Asking a candidate to disclose personal factors such as race, disability, or gender identity can be problematic because once an interviewer has asked for sensitive information, if an applicant does not get a position the applicant may perceptive that discrimination occurred. This perception can be hard to defend against legally and also may foster feelings of animosity toward particular institutions and the field in general. These situations can be complex and well-intentioned questions may actually be problematic (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012). For example, it is inappropriate to ask an applicant of which country they are a citizen, as that information could be used to deduce national origin which could be seen as the basis for discrimination. However, it is permissible to ask whether an applicant is legally employable in the United States or whether they may require sponsorship for visa status, as this affects hiring logistics (for example, which forms need to be filled out).

Other questions might be seen as roundabout ways of asking a different, inappropriate question, or may prompt responses that contain information it is better that an interviewer not know. For example, asking applicants whether they ever had therapy is personally intrusive and also suggests that the interviewer may be asking about mental illness (protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act), or may prompt a response in which the applicant reveals such a condition. A similar situation arises for probes about personal life issues driving desire to be a psychologist, or family history of mental illness. Likewise, questions to applicants about stances on political issues, such as whom the applicant last voted for, might be seen as casual conversation to a politically minded interviewer, but if the applicant and interviewer have political differences and the applicant is denied a position, the applicant may contend that the decision was based on differing political ideology rather than qualifications. Similarly, questions about populations that an applicant may not want to work with may solicit complicated information from applicants that might later be used against the site if the applicant mentions politically charged groups (e.g., sexual orientation or gender minorities, illegal immigrants).

Furthermore, it is not uncommon to ask potential graduate students to disclose where else they have applied or been interviewed. Graduate programs may ask this to gauge how likely they are to successfully recruit the applicant or to assess the applicant's level of focus on specific types of graduate programs. Although these questions may seem harmless to the interviewer, they are often uncomfortable or even threatening for the potential graduate student who may worry that their answer will impact their acceptance into the desired program. Beyond issues of discomfort, asking a candidate to disclose the other programs he or she is considering can be seen as a violation of the candidate's privacy. In internship interviews, information about where else an applicant has applied could be used to infer ranking decisions (forbidden by APPIC regulations). There are many ways of asking questions and getting to know applicants that are not intrusive and do not include directly requesting private information (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012). Although other employment settings may have such guidelines enforced in the hiring process, it is not clear that the same is true in academic settings.

Currently, most psychology graduate school and internship applicants are interviewed in some manner by doctoral programs and internship sites. Because interviewers may not equate these interviews to employment interviews it is possible that applicants are being asked a variety of questions that would be inappropriate in an employment interview. However, given that many graduate students and interns receive pay, perhaps it is time to view the graduate school and internship interview process in the wider context of an employment interview.

Nationally, the debate as to whether to consider graduate students as primarily students or primarily employees is increasing. Historically, graduate students have been viewed as primarily students, and thus not eligible for many of the rights and protections afforded to employees (Greenhouse, 2013). In the past year, undergraduate and graduate students have organized and attempted to join unions (Hebel, 2014). These actions have led to much debate regarding whether or not students have the right to organize and thus obtain collective bargaining power (Jaschik, 2012). Most notably, in 2013 the Graduate Student Organizing Committee at New York University (NYU) joined the United Auto Workers in a landslide vote of 620 to 10. By joining the United Auto Works, NYU graduate students now have recognition as NYU employees and the power of collective bargaining against their University (Huckabee, 2013). Actions such as this highlight the importance of viewing graduate students as employees and treating them accordingly in all stages of their graduate experience, including during interviews. In fact, these shifts in laws may have important consequences on myriad aspects of doctoral training in psychology and in other fields; in the present study we will focus on issues related to interviews.

The Interview Experience for Doctoral and Internship Applicants

Based on these developments, as well as general concerns for diversity and fostering an inclusive environment in academia, it is important to assess how we as psychologists are treating our own applicants. Indeed, Serva and Serva (2000) found that applicants for tenure-track academic positions in information systems were asked a number of inappropriate questions during the interview process, including questions about nationality, parental status, and marital status. It is possible that this occurs during psychology graduate school and internship interviews as well. Numerous online message boards include students' concerns about inappropriate questions they have been asked during interviews. For example, one student reported being asked whether "having a strong mother 'caused' [the applicant's] homosexuality" ("LGBT applicant interview advice," Student Doctor Network, 2014). Another indicated that "[the interviewer] wanted to know about my childhood and growing up and then kept asking me to delve deeper and deeper" or that "one interviewer kept pressing me to share a traumatic life event" ("Share interview questions you've been asked," Student Doctor Network, 2010). Others reported being asked questions about politics, their family background and socio-

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economic status, and their own personal mental health experiences. Although reports from anonymous public Internet forums may not be reliable or representative of the common interview experience, the experiences of the first two authors, who were asked inappropriate questions during interviews, bolster evidence that these questions do occur (the first author was asked his sexual orientation by a current graduate student, and his relationship status by a graduate student and a faculty member; the second author was asked her relationship status by graduate students). The authors are also aware of colleagues who were asked similar questions (e.g., a colleague of the first author was asked about their gender identity by a faculty member and a graduate student during doctoral program interviews). Nevertheless, it is important to move beyond anecdotal reports and assess interviewees' experiences of inappropriate questions empirically.

Additionally, materials intended for students applying to doctoral programs in psychology and internships suggest applicants should be prepared for inappropriate questions. For example, one resource recommends applicants be prepared to answer the interview question "Have you ever had personal therapy? If yes, Why? If no, Why not?" (Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, n.d.), presumably because of individuals' experiences of having been asked such an inappropriate question. Thus, we as a discipline seem to be aware that the interview process has many pitfalls but have done little to assess the scope of this situation or attempt remedies. Obvious power differences between interviewers and applicants for graduate school and internship may disempower applicants to avoid answering intrusive questions, and pressure applicants to comply with any inquiry, however invasive.

Influence of Personal Factors on Inappropriate Questions

Some of the inappropriate questions explored in this study have visible counterparts in the applicant. For example, older applicants may be asked more often about their age, and persons of color may be asked more often about their ethnic origin. Further, it is possible that sexual orientation affects some behaviors (e.g., talking about a "partner" rather than a boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife) that may make this generally invisible status more obvious and promote nonheterosexual participants being asked their sexual orientation. Research indicates that personal factors such as these can lead to employment discrimination (Krings, Sczesny, & Kluge, 2011; Tilcsik, 2011). It is also possible that qualifications affect experiences of inappropriate questions. More qualified applicants are more likely to be seen as a good fit for that position (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Thus, stronger qualifications may act to level potential power imbalances in interviews, and reduce the frequency of inappropriate questions.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Our research aimed to assess illegal or inappropriate questions asked during the interview process for psychology graduate school and internships. Seventeen questions were identified based on legal guidelines as well as questions noted in message boards that made students uncomfortable and were inappropriate. An item was also added about sexual harassment. Table 1 presents a complete list of the items used in this study.

Table 1
Potentially Inappropriate Questions List

Were you asked about your sexual orientation?
Were you asked about your gender identity (e.g., asked if you were transgender)?
Were you asked about whether you were in a relationship or married?
Were you asked whether you have children?
Were you asked what religion you follow?
Were you asked what your ethnic background is?
Were you asked what country you are a citizen of? Please note: We are asking ONLY whether you were asked this as an open-ended question (e.g., "What country do you have citizenship in?"). We are NOT asking whether you were asked specifically if you are a U.S. citizen (e.g., "Are you a U.S. citizen?").
Were you asked what your age is?
Were you asked whether you have a disability?
Were you asked whether you have been in therapy yourself?
Were you asked whether there are any groups of people you would not want to work with?
Were you asked whether your own personal issues pushed you toward becoming a psychologist?
Were you asked whether you had ever been diagnosed with a mental illness?
Were you asked whether you have a family history of mental illness?
Were you asked where else you applied or interviewed?
Were you asked any questions about your political opinions (e.g., asked who you did or would vote for, asked what political party you belong to)?
Were you approached or spoken to in a sexually suggestive manner (e.g., hit on, asked on a date)?

First, we hypothesized that individuals applying to clinical/counseling/school psychology programs would be more likely to report being asked inappropriate questions during the interview process. There is research that suggests clinical and counseling educators are concerned with gatekeeping in their profession (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014). Interviewers in this field are more likely to believe that personal characteristics and qualities are central to applicants' qualifications and seek to uncover this information during the interview process (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). Thus, in an attempt to assess whether students are up to the task of acting as practitioners, applicants expected to work with clients may be asked more probing questions during the interview process compared with applicants without a clinical/counseling focus.

Second, we hypothesized that personal characteristics would be linked to being asked corresponding inappropriate questions. Specifically, we hypothesized that age would be related to being asked one's age such that older participants would be more likely to be asked their age, that nonheterosexual participants would be more likely to be asked their sexual orientation; and that non-White participants would be more likely to be asked their ethnic background.

Finally, we hypothesized that individuals with better qualifications (GPA and GRE scores for doctoral program applicants; publications and client contact hours for internship applicants) will be less likely to be asked inappropriate questions during graduate school and internship interviews. If interviewers are less concerned about applicants' qualifications then they may be less likely to engage in behaviors that might alienate more desirable candidates.

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Method

Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Texas Tech University's Institutional Review Board. A total of 303 participants (all of whom completed doctoral interviews; 120 of whom completed internship interviews) were recruited via two methods. First, participants were recruited through psychology e-mail listservs (e.g., the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Society of Counseling Psychology). Second, a list of U.S. PhD programs divided by area of psychology was created and doctoral programs from each psychology program area were selected using a random number generator. Selected programs were emailed and asked to forward a recruitment invitation to their current students. In total 57 programs from clinical, counseling, school, and "experimental" psychology were contacted (for the purposes of this research, "experimental" programs groups all programs outside of clinical, counseling, and school psychology and thus not all programs may have been truly "experimental" psychology programs). Although we did not focus on persons who were pursuing masters degrees, we did ask about experiences of being asked potentially inappropriate questions on masters program interviews as many applicants may have also applied to those programs.

Participants were informed that the study was about potentially inappropriate questions asked during doctoral and internship interviews, and psychology doctoral students in any stage of training or within five years of completing their degrees were welcome to participate. Recruitment was timed for the end of interview season for both internship and doctoral programs (i.e., March to April, 2014) to allow for applicants during those years to participate.

Participants

Participants identified their gender as men ($n = 66$), women ($n = 233$), transgender ($n = 4$), or other ($n = 5$, including queer and genderqueer; participants were allowed to select more than one gender and overlap occurred between transgender/other and man and woman). Participants' ages were between 22 and 53 ($M = 28.45$, $SD = 4.90$, *median* = 27.00; participant age during doctoral interviews was $M = 24.20$, $SD = 4.21$; during internship interviews was $M = 28.28$, $SD = 3.90$). Participants identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native ($n = 1$), Asian or Asian American ($n = 25$), Black or African American ($n = 8$), Hispanic/Latino/a ($n = 16$), White ($n = 265$), or Other ($n = 7$; participants had the option to select more than one race/ethnicity thus the total adds up to more than 303). Participants identified as heterosexual ($n = 240$), bisexual ($n = 22$), gay or lesbian ($n = 28$), or a different identity (e.g., queer; $n = 13$).

Among participants, 155 individuals had interviews at 491 clinical programs (range = 0−12, $M = 3.17$, $SD = 2.47$ for those who did interview), 77 had interviews at 213 counseling program interviews (range = 0–10, $M = 2.77$, $SD = 2.22$), 37 had interviews at 77 school psychology programs (range = 0–12, $M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.62$), and 60 had interviews at 177 experimental programs (range = 0–12, $M = 2.95$, $SD = 2.30$). Participants reported that 236 interviewed at 777 programs that awarded PhDs (range = 0–12; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 2.45$), 78 interviewed at 156 programs that awarded PsyDs (range = 0−8; $M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.43$), 3 interviewed at 3 programs that awarded EdDs (range = 0–2; $M = 1.67$ $SD = 0.58$), and 77 interviewed at 168 programs that awarded masters degrees (range = 0–10; $M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.97$).

Regarding types of internships, 29 participants reported 130 VA hospital interviews (between 0 and 13, $M = 4.48$, $SD = 3.42$ for those who did interview); 33 interviewed at 65 community mental health sites (range = 0–10, $M = 1.97$, $SD = 2.02$); 51 interviewed at 275 university counseling center sites (range = 0–15; $M = 6.24$, $SD = 4.07$); 22 interviewed at 132 child/adolescent psychiatry/pediatrics sites (range 0–18; $M = 6.00$, $SD = 5.25$); 36 interviewed at 127 hospital sites that were not VAs (range 0–12; $M = 3.53$, $SD = 3.09$); 23 interviewed at 88 medical school sites (range 0–12; $M = 3.83$, $SD = 3.16$); and 32 interviewed at 90 interviews at other site types (range 0–11; $M = 2.81$, $SD = 2.66$).

Measures

Participants completed the study online. The online nature of the study allowed for truncation of the survey based on responses and thus length varied for each participant (e.g., individuals who were enrolled in experimental psychology programs were not asked about whether they applied for clinical internships). Participants completed a demographics page and were then asked whether they had completed doctoral and/or internship interviews. For doctoral interviews, they were asked the year(s) they interviewed, the types of programs at which they interviewed, and their GRE (highest, if taken multiple times) and GPA at the time of application. If they selected that they had completed internship interviews, they were asked for the year(s) they interviewed, the types of sites at which they interviewed, and their client contact hours (i.e., direct intervention and assessment hours) and number of publications at the time of application.

Participants then viewed a page asking them whether they had been asked one of the 17 identified potentially inappropriate questions (see Table 1); participants viewed one page asking about doctoral program interviews and, if they reported having interviewed for internship, a second page asking about internship interviews. Each of the questions had a yes/no response scale. Before the questions was a preamble stressing that participants should answer affirmatively only if they were asked these questions unsolicited and they did not themselves bring the topic up (i.e., participants were told to not check that they had been asked whether they have children if the participant had already volunteered in the interview that he or she has children).

For every question that participants responded "yes" to, the survey system unlocked a page reminding the participant what the item was (e.g., *You indicated that you were asked about your sexual orientation on doctoral program interviews. We would like to know more about that*) and prompting the participant to respond to more detailed questions (i.e., whether they had been asked the question at clinical, counseling, school, experimental, or masters program interviews, who at the programs asked the question).

After completing the survey, the participants were directed to a separate survey database into which they entered their contact information for a raffle.

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Results

Overall, 183 of 303 participants reported being asked at least one potentially inappropriate question on graduate program interviews, and 51 of 120 of the internship applicants reported being asked at least one potentially inappropriate question.

For doctoral program interviews, faculty and current graduate students asked the greatest number of inappropriate questions (264 and 252, respectively), with some questions coming from administrative staff (11). In terms of raw numbers, the most potentially inappropriate questions were asked at clinical doctoral programs (293), followed by experimental (106), counseling (90), school (25), and masters (13) program interviews. For doctoral program interviews, the most commonly asked questions were about where else students had applied (reported by 135 applicants and asked 234 times), whether there are populations with whom the applicant does not want to work (reported by 52 applicants and asked 62 times), whether applicants were in relationships or married (reported by 41 participants and asked 63 times), and being asked one's age (reported by 32 students and asked 45 times). Five participants (1.7% of the sample) reported perceiving being approached sexually or "hit on" at doctoral interviews (1 time by a faculty member and 6 times by current graduate students). Four of the students who reported being approached sexually identified as women, and one identified as genderqueer.

Because participants interviewed at a different number of each type of program, a chi-square test was used to determine whether frequency of being asked one or more potentially inappropriate questions differed by program type. Our hypothesis was that clinical/counseling/school programs would be more likely to ask potentially inappropriate questions. The results of a chi-square test indicated that the number of participants asked at least one potentially inappropriate question was not proportionate to the number of interviews at each program type, $\chi^2(4) = 204.22$, $p < .001$. Clinical programs asked slightly more inappropriate questions than expected (293 asked, 286.48 expected). However, contrary to expectations, counseling programs (90 asked, 110.71 expected) and school programs (25 asked, 37.27 expected) asked fewer than expected. Again contrary to expectations, experimental programs asked more than expected (160 asked, 80.39 expected). Masters programs asked fewer than expected (13 asked, 66.14 expected).

For internship interviews, faculty and clinical staff asked the most inappropriate questions (155) followed by current interns (112) and administrative staff (69). For internship interviews, the most common questions were about where else the participant applied (reported by 40 participants and asked 55 times), populations the participant did not want to work with (reported by 40 participants and asked 46 times), and relationship status (reported by 26 participants and asked 31 times).

We carried out further analyses to explore our specific hypotheses. First, we assessed whether participants who were older were more likely to be asked their age. Participants' current age was converted into a year of birth, which was subtracted from the year the participant applied (mean year for participants who applied more than once) to obtain an age at interview variable for both doctoral and internship interviews. We conducted a logistic regression with age at interview as the IV and whether participants were asked their age at doctoral program interviews as the DV. Results indicated that the effect of age on being asked one's age during doctoral interviews was not significant, $B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.06$, Wald (1) = 1.16, Exp(B) = 1.07, $p = .28$. The effect of age on being asked one's age during internship interviews was also not significant, $B = -0.05$, $SE = 0.09$, Wald (1) = 0.24, Exp(B) = 0.96, $p = .62$.

Next, we assessed whether identification as nonheterosexual was associated with a greater likelihood of being asked about one's sexual orientation. Sexual orientation was dichotomized into heterosexual and nonheterosexual (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, and other identities); because both variables were dichotomous a chi-square analysis was used to assess for differences. For doctoral program interviews, the chi-square test was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 4.76$, $p < .05$, $\upsilon = .13$. Fewer heterosexual participants (expected = 4, actual count = 2), and more nonheterosexual participants (expected = 1, actual count = 3), were asked about their sexual orientation than would be anticipated by chance. This effect was replicated for internship interviews, $\chi^2(1) = 6.93$, $p < .01$, $\upsilon = .24$, with fewer heterosexual participants (expected = 1.5, actual count = 0), and more nonheterosexual participants (expected = 0.5, actual count = 2), asked about their sexual orientation than would be anticipated by chance.

Next, we assessed whether participant's self-reported race was related to participants being asked about their race or ethnicity on interviews. For the purposes of analysis, race/ethnic identity was collapsed into White only (249 participants) and participants who identified as any other race/ethnicity (54). For doctoral programs, there was a significant effect, $\chi^2(1) = 36.07$, $p < .001$, $\upsilon = .36$. Non-White participants were more likely to be asked (expected = 3.4 times, actual count = 13), whereas White participants were less likely to be asked (expected = 15.6, actual count = 6). This effect was replicated for internship interviews, $\chi^2(1) = 23.96$, $p < .001$, $\upsilon = .45$. Non-White participants were asked more (expected = 1.2, actual count = 6), whereas White participants were asked less (expected = 5.8, actual count = 1) compared with chance.

Finally, we tested to see whether participant qualifications (operationalized as higher GREs and GPAs for graduate school, and more client contact hours and publications for internship) were related to being asked inappropriate questions. For doctoral interviews, the effect of GRE score was marginally nonsignificant, $B = .14$, $SE = .07$, Wald (1) = 3.62, Exp(B) = 1.15, $p = .06$, though the effect was in the opposite direction from what was hypothesized (i.e., individuals with higher GRE scores reported a trend toward being more likely to be asked an inappropriate question). The effect of GPA was not significant, $B = -.01$, $SE = .15$, Wald (1) = 0.01, Exp(B) = 0.99, $p = .94$ For internship interviews, there was a significant effect for number of client contact hours, which was negatively related to being asked a potentially inappropriate question, $B = -.28$, $SE = .13$, Wald (1) = 4.82, Exp(B) = 0.76, $p < .05$. The effect for number of publications was not significant, $B = -.37$, $SE = .22$, Wald (1) = 2.97, Exp(B) = 0.69, $p = .09$.

Discussion

The present study investigated psychology doctoral and internship applicants' experiences of being asked inappropriate questions on interviews. Among participants, 183 of 303 doctoral program applicants and 51 of 120 internship applicants reported

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being asked at least one inappropriate question. Our results suggest a need for greater care in interviews by faculty, graduate students, and staff of doctoral programs and internships to facilitate greater respect for applicants' privacy and dignity and to avoid potential legal issues.

We investigated a number of hypotheses related to the data. First, we hypothesized that participants interviewing in clinical, counseling, and school psychology would be more likely to be asked inappropriate questions on interviews compared to experimental programs. This hypothesis was not supported. Although clinical psychology programs asked slightly more inappropriate questions than expected, both counseling and school psychology asked fewer than expected. As well, experimental programs were more likely than expected to ask inappropriate questions. It is not clear from the present research what may drive the observed differences between areas. One possibility is that clinical, counseling, and school psychology programs must undergo accreditation reviews, which place enormous emphasis on ethical behavior. It is possible that ethical concerns are more salient for clinical/counseling/school psychologists; future cross-sectional and experimental work might directly assess this possibility.

We tested the data to see whether some questions were associated with related demographic variables. Contrary to our hypothesis, age was unrelated to being asked one's age, at both doctoral and internship interviews. However, nonheterosexual sexual orientation identity was related to greater likelihood of being asked one's sexual orientation at doctoral and internship interviews. Similarly, non-White racial/ethnic identity was associated with greater likelihood of being asked about one's racial/ethnic background at doctoral and internship interviews. Thus, for sexual orientation and race/ethnicity, the results suggest a potential disproportionate breach of privacy and asking questions unrelated to doctoral and internship training of both sexual orientation and racial/ethnic minority applicants.

Finally, we tested our third research question, that better qualifications would be associated with lowered likelihood of being asked potentially inappropriate questions. For doctoral programs, this hypothesis was not supported and the observed trend, found for GRE scores, was in the opposite direction from that expected. For internships, the hypothesis was supported for number of client contact hours but not for number of publications. Applicants who reported more client contact hours were less likely to be asked a potentially inappropriate question. This may suggest some support for our hypothesis, though there are many other mediating and moderating variables that may be examined as well (e.g., type of sites applied to).

Implications for Policy and Training

Overall, the results point toward a need to critically examine doctoral and internship interview practices, given the frequency with which participants reported violations of privacy and inappropriate interview questions. Several of the questions explored in this study might be viewed as errors made while attempting to get to know an applicant (e.g., asking whether the applicant is in a relationship or married). However, others appear to be flagrant violations of privacy (e.g., asking whether one has had personal therapy, asking applicants their sexual orientation or gender identity). Other questions are clearly inappropriate (e.g., approaching applicants sexually).

There is a clear need to address these types of questions in doctoral and internship programs, and emphasize to faculty, staff, and current students or interns what questions are not appropriate to ask. If the interviewer's goal is to provide information, there are many ways this might be accomplished without asking for applicants' personal information. For example, rather than asking an applicant whether he or she has children, the interviewer could simply comment on the availability of child care or the quality of schools to all applicants. However, other questions, such as an applicant's relationship status, religion, or ethnic background, are highly questionable as necessary to "get to know" an applicant.

It is likely that some of the inappropriate questions are asked for what some may feel to be a justifiable purpose. For example, many applicants might be asked their sexual orientation or gender identity not because the doctoral program or internship wishes to exclude them, but because the program *wants* to recruit sexual orientation and gender minorities. Nevertheless, the intent of the question is irrelevant to its appropriateness; whether a program does or does not want to recruit sexual or gender minorities, asking these questions leaves the program legally vulnerable. Further, even if the above were to be the case, it still implies selection for training based on sexual orientation (i.e., that heterosexuality would put an applicant at a disadvantage), and so is clearly discriminatory.

All institutions that house doctoral programs and internship sites will have at least a human resources representative, if not an entire department (or academic unit in a business or related college). Thus, doctoral programs and internship sites are able to consult with human resources professionals with relative ease. It is important that doctoral programs and internships sites build relationships and seek consultation with human resources professionals to avoid asking potentially inappropriate, and especially illegal, questions. Human resources professionals might consult with programs about good or bad question choices, as well as screen questions intended to be asked of doctoral or internship applicants. Programs may hold a training session for faculty, staff, and current students with these professionals so all stakeholders may be on the same page about the nature of appropriate interview questions.

Although the number of applicants reporting having been approached sexually is small, the fact that this occurred at all is disturbing. Most (though not all) of the offenders were graduate students. It is vital that psychology departments emphasize the complete inappropriateness of approaching applicants to doctoral programs in a manner that could be construed as sexual. This is especially important to emphasize for the more social aspects of graduate school interviews. Applicants are regularly hosted by current graduate students, and there are often social events (many times involving alcohol) before graduate school interviews. Mixing socialization, and sometimes alcohol, with the application process may blur professional boundaries and facilitate inappropriate behaviors (particularly as the boundaries would change if an applicant were to be accepted to a program, and thus change from an applicant into a peer or coworker). Although we are not suggesting these events be eliminated, graduate students must be aware of their professional obligations as representatives (and employees) of their programs during these events, and inappropriate behaviors should be addressed in preparation for interviews

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and eliminated in practice. Future research (likely qualitative because of the low base rate) is needed to explore the specific conditions under which this behavior has occurred.

Another concern is the number of internship applicants who reported being asked where else they applied or interviewed. This question is especially problematic for internship as it might implicitly suggest ranking information, which is forbidden (Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers [APPIC], 2013). Although it is possible that this question was asked only at non-APPIC member sites, this is unlikely. Thus, internship sites need to be sure that they are abiding by the letter and spirit of internship regulations, and applicants can choose to report violating sites via the APPIC problem consultation web site.

Limitations

This research must be interpreted in light of its limitations. This study was the first of its kind in its examination of inappropriate questions asked during graduate school and internship interviews. First, our recruitment notices, which described the study as related to potentially inappropriate questions on interviews, may have biased sampling. Persons who were asked inappropriate questions may have been more likely to participate or some participants may not have wanted to respond to a survey about only negative interview experiences. Second, the measure that we employed was developed for this study and does not represent an exhaustive list of potentially inappropriate questions. Further refinement of such instruments is necessary to move this area of work forward. Third, we relied upon retrospective data. Clearly, participants may have forgotten or misremember inappropriate questions, or exact wording of questions. Now that we have demonstrated that these questions occur during interviews, more comprehensive research may explore this question in more detail. An ideal design would involve following applicants through the application process, using an online diary data collection system that would allow them to log in and add data for interviews as they occur. Such a system would allow for more accurate reporting, and would enable linking participants to resources (e.g., how to file a sexual harassment complaint or how to use APPIC's problem consultation service) to empower applicants. Such a system would allow for more complex analyses than permitted here, such as examining the relationship between being asked potentially inappropriate questions and receiving offers for graduate programs, the influence of such questions on applicant rankings of internships, the influence of type of interview (e.g., telephone, videoconference, in-person), the influence of accreditation status of doctoral programs and internships, or whether the participant did or would consider reporting the behavior. Participant reactions might also be explored (e.g., many applicants may view being asked about their relationship status as a friendly, "getting-to-know-you" question and not see the potential inappropriateness of the question). Future research could examine understanding of appropriate interview techniques among those involved in doctoral and internship selection processes (including academic faculty and clinical staff, and current graduate students and interns) to increase our understanding of the origins of these problematic questions and help to end their use in interviews. Fourth, as the results of the present study indicated that application to experimental (rather than clinical/counseling/school) programs was associated with being asked proportionately more inappropriate questions, further research could examine these same questions in other academic disciplines. Building on the present results, it would also be useful to assess differences among subareas of what was here grouped as experimental psychology (cognitive, social, I/O, etc.). As our hypothesis that areas with client contact would be more likely to ask potentially inappropriate questions did not pan out, further investigation into the experimental areas is warranted. Furthermore, we examined PhD and PsyD programs applicants but systemic differences (i.e., that most PsyD programs offer clinical, not counseling or school, psychology degrees) may also be explored. Finally, the present study focused on one aspect of viewing graduate students as employees. However, this shift may have far-reaching implications for graduate training in psychology and other fields. An analysis that incorporates professional training and employment law is needed to fully understand these implications.

Conclusion

This research offers a glimpse into a dark side of the graduate and internship application process. From the data collected, it appears that graduate and internship applicants are regularly subjected to questions that constitute violations of privacy and open universities and internships to potential legal action. Such questions are also antithetical to the ethical obligations of psychologists to abide by laws, to protect the dignity of others, and to engage in beneficence and nonmaleficence. It is essential that doctoral and internship faculty, staff, and students/interns revisit ethical and legal issues surrounding recruitment processes, consult with professionals well-versed in human resources management, and revise practices to better respect applicants.

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