

Words of advice if you are applying to work in my lab as part of the Clinical Ph.D.
Program at Penn State University

Graduate applicants are frequently asking themselves if they should apply to work with a particular research advisor. Because this is such a crucial question, and because I am planning to interview for a potential new member of my lab for the Fall of 2019, I thought that I would write a few words of advice for those who might consider applying to work with me in the doctoral program of clinical psychology at Penn State.

As you can read in the document entitled "Research program" on my web page, the studies conducted in our lab cover a wide array of issues related to psychotherapy and psychopathology. At the core of our work is the investigation of how psychotherapy works, or fails to work. We are primarily interested in clarifying the role of client's characteristics before and during therapy, therapist characteristics and experience, therapeutic techniques and treatment protocols, variables related to the therapeutic relationship, as well as the interaction between these and other factors that either facilitate or interfere with improvement.

To investigate such a complex net of variables, we are working with large data sets that we have collected in naturalistic settings (such as practice-research networks involving university counseling centers, private practitioners, and therapists in training) and randomized clinical trials (such as the comparison between cognitive and integrative therapies for generalized anxiety disorder).

The applicants that we will be interviewing are primarily individuals with experience, or at least strong interest, in the most up-to-date statistical analyses (e.g., multi-level modeling to account for nested data, within and between therapists and clients across repeated assessment points, and with several thousand participants) and research methods (e.g., additive designs). Our top priority is to welcome a new student who will have these quantitative skills and/or goals, and who will be excited to help us continue our research on both the process and outcome of psychotherapy. A plus would be for this student to also have interest or experience in conducting rigorous qualitative analyses. Such methodological pluralism is a philosophy that has guided, and will continue to guide, our exploration of the complexity of therapeutic change.

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