

Prediction of Violence (continued)

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STUDENT'S FORUM

(Editor's Note: The two articles that follow were written by advanced clinical graduate students at the University of Delaware. Mr. Burt is currently interning at Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles. Ms. Kingsley interned at Rutgers Medical School during 1983-1984.)

REFLECTIONS ON INTERVIEWING FOR INTERNSHIP

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My internship interviews were unlike any interviews that I had had before. Unlike applying for graduate school, I felt more clearly that I was a consumer who had a right to comparison shopping. The sites that I visited were, in fact, ready to tell me about what they had to offer, and many sites had experiences I had hardly realized were options before. I was amazed by what psychologists can choose to do. However, I enjoyed watching and being part of the courtship the most, and this is the topic here.

The first requirement for having a successful interview would seem to be to arrive on time (although this expectation was not borne out on call day). Being on time proved to be a challenge. I planned to arrive at the sites an hour before appointment time, yet this cannot be assumed to be enough time to find parking. I drove to Washington, D.C. for one of my interviews and arrived a half an hour early. As had been suggested beforehand, I began following the signs for "visitor parking" around a vast hospital complex. I circled the buildings twice following those signs and parked in a 15 minute zone. I came through the door of the psychology department exactly on time and with only a moment in advance to re-read their brochure. At least I had a chance to check the director's name. On another occasion, I arrived an hour early, found the site, and went to look for a quick lunch. Despite the suburban setting, the old neighborhoods had left few spaces for McDonalds. The traffic seemed like mud as I faced lights that went through their cycles twice before I got to go through. My

anxiety about being on time and looking over the brochure one last time urged an immediate although hungry return to the internship's offices; my stomach argued that a Burger King had to be around the next corner. Forty minutes later I found a McDonalds. I steered with my knee and struggled to keep the Russian dressing off my clothes and the shift knob. I returned to the site at exactly appointment time only to take an elevator to the wrong floor and have to return, which wouldn't have been a problem had the elevator not taken 5 full minutes in each direction or if the stairs didn't have doors rigged with fire alarms.

The problem arose in other ways as well. I went to the second interview at one site only to find that that interviewer had expected me to be a half an hour earlier, at the time of my first interview. I managed to schedule another time for later in the day, but the idle time gave me a chance to look at my schedule and wonder what had happened. I had no reason to believe that I had made a mistake, but I doubted that the interviewer had any reason to believe that he had made a mistake either. I resented the position that I found myself in, especially after having driven hundreds of miles, for such a misunderstanding would be at least an irritant if not viewed as a testimony to my reliability. Was this some test of my ability to handle touchy situations, I thought suspiciously. Despite my desire for a graceful solution, I found myself biting my tongue.

As to the interviews themselves, despite feeling relatively self-assured, I found my relaxation skills unequal to keeping my palms dry and I frequented lavatories so that decaffeinated coffee could complete its rounds. The first interview fulfilled my expectations concerning personal questions, as the director of a hospital's psychology department asked what my adolescence had been like and whether I had ever been in therapy. I don't recall another interviewer asking those questions in the other seven interviews that I had, yet I felt that these later interviewers were getting the information that they wanted simply through my bearing in the room and the way I answered questions in general.

Most interviews started with sociable questions about where I had gone to school, how the drive was, and so forth. Periodically the discussions might return to such casual, but important, topics as who we both happened to know. I was asked what my main interests were and what I wanted to gain from the internship. I was asked whether I had dealt with clients with certain diagnoses and how I felt about medications. Some interviewers asked how I had or would handle a particular type of problem, yet the situation asked about was relatively unpredictable. I was frequently asked how comfortable I felt about psychiatrists, a question usually followed by the interviewer's estimation of the state of psychologist-psychiatrist relations at the site and, where tension was unusually high, the comment that things were that way at most places.

However, most of the interviews rested largely on my shoulders: what did I want to know. I tried to assemble questions for each site based upon their literature, and I had different questions for directors and supervisors and interns. I asked supervisors what their specialties were, how they did supervision (from notes, audio- or video-tapes, or live), how much influence was placed on particular approaches, what populations were served, and how the different professions worked together. In addition to these questions, I tended to ask directors how seminars were run and how rotations were decided. I often asked about stipends and benefits, but I found myself steering clear of these subjects where I knew the stipends were low because I didn't want to jeopardize the impression that I was interested in the site with a compulsive wince at how low the stipend was. I saved some of the most important questions for the interns: I asked about how they liked their experiences and what they got to do and how much time they spent doing it. I gradually headed into more telling

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