

NJPA Grant Essay

My name is Emily Hendershot and I am a first year Clinical Psychology student at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP). It has been an honor to receive the NJPAF grant for the 2019-2020 school year as part of my work with the Tourette Syndrome Clinic at Rutgers University. This grant has helped to remove some of the financial burden associated with my graduate education and has therefore given me some freedom to explore my interests, focus on classes and other experiences, and set solid goals for this year.

Before coming to Rutgers University, I gained a wealth of experience that prepared me for graduate school. I worked as a therapeutic staff support providing behavioral interventions for children with psychological disorders in classrooms, worked as a research assistant at the Adult Anxiety Clinic at Temple University, and coordinated nearly 40 clinical trials on psychiatric medications at Suburban Research Associates. In my spare time, I met with a mentor from APA Division 39 and learned to meditate. The combination of my experiences contributed to my interests in psychoanalytic theory, mindfulness and Third-Wave CBT practices, and working with elderly populations and other marginalized groups.

At Rutgers, I am finally learning the skills of a clinician through my fascinating classes. This semester, I am learning the basics of psychotherapy by taking Professional Development, Psychoanalytic Theory, Learning Theory and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, and Clinical Interviewing. I am also starting therapy with my first clients through the GSAPP clinic. By the end of this semester I will have one client to work with from each theoretical perspective. As part of my theory courses, I will present my therapy sessions in class on video and write papers

about these cases. I attend one hour of supervision each week for both cases as well. I will start with my first Psychoanalytic case next week. It is exciting to begin using these theories in clinical cases.

Next semester, I am taking the following courses: Supervision and Professional Development, Systems Theory and Analysis, Cognitive Assessment, Child Psychopathology, and electives of my choice. As I have found that I love both CBT and Psychoanalytic thinking and tend to consider client cases in terms of both theories, I will likely take the Psychotherapy Integration elective. To enrich my understanding of Psychoanalytic theory, I will take the additional Psychodynamic course offered. In addition to coursework I will continue therapy with my clients from the clinic.

My practicum placement for the entire 2019-2020 year is at the Tourette Syndrome Clinic at Rutgers University. As part of this clinic, I will be assigned four cases, receive three hours a week of group supervision/didactic training, and attend one hour of supervision a week for my individual cases with the clinic's director. Thus far this practicum has been an enlightening placement. Before coming to this clinic, I did not know anything about Tourette's Disorder or the unique hurdles and discrimination that people with Tourette's Disorder face. To prepare for our cases we have learned not only about Tourette's Disorder, but also about frequently comorbid disorders (ADHD, OCD, anxiety disorders) and the empirically supported therapies that are most effective for them.

Thus far I have two clients with a primary diagnosis of Tourette's Disorder. Each week we use therapeutic strategies from the Comprehensive Behavioral Intervention for Tics (CBIT) to help clients reduce the frequency of tics. I hope to gain more experience with comorbid

diagnoses with my next two cases. In January and July I will perform phone screens for the clinic and prepare paperwork for new cases. This February, I also look forward to facilitating the Social-Emotional Skills Group for Children and Teens with Tourette Syndrome, a ten-week program that helps children develop the skills needed to navigate life with tics.

The final piece of training for my 2019-2020 school year is my research fellowship, an NIH-funded study on proximal predictors of suicide with Dr. Nicole Cain. Recruitment of study participants begins with a three-hour battery, during which I will administer the MINI and C-SSRS and collect participant history, self-reports, and measures that collect information on constructs of interest. Participants also play "Cyberball," a game intended to simulate rejection. Once a participant is in the study, I will track them for 14 days with various questionnaires. Participants also wear an actiwatch that monitors their sleeping patterns. There are other duties I will perform, such as overseeing an undergraduate completing a project on one of the constructs of interest and ensuring proper data entry.

My goal for this year sounds quite simple: to build a foundation of knowledge and skills that will allow me to become an effective and demonstratively compassionate therapist. This may sound simple, but taking my first steps as a therapist has shown me how truly arduous and complicated this task is. Becoming a person who can enact therapeutic change requires personal and professional transformation. I must acquire a body of knowledge quickly; apply that body of knowledge; and understand how my own biases, learning, and interpersonal style can contribute to my effectiveness in working with different people with various psychological problems. I also must become relaxed enough in this role to be able to genuinely express compassion and empathy.

In pursuit of this goal, I have set miniature goals for this year as well. I hope to become comfortable with the basic skills involved in therapy and practice these skills with my first clients. I also want to understand the major theoretical orientations and learn when it is appropriate to apply therapies from each one. I also hope to improve my intake skills and learn how to administer psychological scales.

Thank you once again for the generous grant. I am excited to explore my interests, focus on classwork, and concentrate on learning the therapeutic skills I must hone for future work with diverse clients. It has already been wonderful to start with my clients at the Tourette Syndrome Clinic at Rutgers University.