

Kathryn Rehberg Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to a novice?

Experimental psychology encompasses a wide range of research topics with the overarching aim of better understanding behavior. Experimental psychologists can answer these questions by working with animals, humans, or even both. A degree in experimental psychology can lead to a diverse set of job opportunities from research, teaching, and even clinical settings.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

Psychology is one of those fields that can have a significant impact on people's lives. However, a lot of the skills needed to be an effective psychologist require a good education. Fortunately, I have had a lot of great professors who have taken the time to mentor me and continuously challenge my understanding of the world. My motivation through graduate school is that one-day I may take all the skills I have learned and pay it forward.

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

Definitely! Interdisciplinary networking can provide researchers with a fresh perspective and enable us to view topics from a new vantage point. It is like the rabbit-duck illusion, where there is an ambiguous picture where people either interpret the animal as either a duck or a rabbit; however, if you change your perspective, you can ultimately see both. Sometimes we just need to blink and we can see a whole new picture!

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

If I ever need to distress, I usually walk around Bissett Park and just find a quiet spot by the river. Somehow just watching the river flow puts all of life's stressors into perspective and reminds me how inconsequential my never-ending to do list is in the grand scheme of things.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

The last book I read for pleasure was *A Walk in the Woods*, by travel writer Bill Bryson. Now, like Bryson, I have the fool's dream of wanting to hike all 2,000 miles of the Appalachian Trail.

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

I have been very fortunate to have so many incredible professors who have taken the time to teach me many invaluable lessons. At my alma mater, William & Mary, I had two very influential professors: Dr. Janice Zeman and Dr. Joanna Schug. Additionally, my current advisor at Radford University, Dr. Niels Christensen, has been a significant figure in my academic career. Dr. Christensen has always challenged me to think beyond the basic parameters and always has a wise adage of encouragement.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

I have probably been most surprised by the culture of graduate school compared to undergrad. There is a really great social support network within the programs because of the smaller classes. Your professors genuinely want you to succeed and take a personal interest in your career even though there is no incentive for them.

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

Sure, why not? I never really thought about going to space, but I feel like there would be so many interesting psychological concepts to study. Also, if there is a way to figure out this whole humidity problem, that would be great!

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

Definitely, anything with chocolate! I try not to buy chocolate very often because it won't last very long, but sometimes you just need to get some chocolate macaroons from Our Daily Bread in Blacksburg.

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

Honestly, I am not really sure what I would be doing if I weren't in grad school. Ideally, I would be traveling the world, but the reality is that I would probably be twiddling my thumbs until I was in grad school. Although there are some days I wish I was climbing Machu Picchu or kayaking in New Zealand, I can't imagine being anywhere else at the end of the day.

When do you expect to complete your degree?

I hope to graduate in May 2016.