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“THE WORST EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE”: THE INTERNSHIP CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS

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“The worst experience of my life”: The internship crisis and its impact on students

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Abstract

Objectives. The objective of the present study was to understand how internship applicants perceive themselves as being affected by the ongoing imbalance between the number of internship spots available and the number of applicants to internship.

Method. The present paper undertook a mixed methods (qualitative, and supplemental quantitative) analysis of 1076 internship applicant responses to an item included in the 2011 post-match survey asking participants how the internship crisis has impacted them.

Results. Results indicated that the internship application process in general was viewed overwhelmingly negatively. Respondents described personal stress and system issues in their responses. Respondents described reciprocal stresses; applications spur on stresses, which are compounded by fears of not matching. Such fears cast negative light on training. Participants also described resiliencies that buffered against stresses and perceptions of discrimination or bias that add to stress.

Conclusions. The implications of these findings for supporting students, working to resolve the internship crisis, and adapting policy are discussed.

Keywords: Internship, training, APPIC

“The worst experience of my life”: The internship crisis and its impact on students

The doctoral internship is a critical phase in the training of health service psychologists. Internship represents a capstone training experience intended to be an opportunity for emerging psychologists to integrate multiple facets of professional identity (Madson, Hasan, Williams-Nickelson, Kettmann, & van Sickle, 2007). Unfortunately, the internship has been marked by a significant imbalance between the number of applicants for internship and the number of available internship positions. This crisis has worsened over the past decade with only very recent signs (match years 2013 and 2014) of potential plateauing (Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers, [APPIC], 2014b; Larkin, 2012). (The present article refers to the imbalance as a “crisis,” consistent with the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students [APAGS]’ position that the imbalance represents a crisis for students--a position supported by the results of the present study; Madson et al., 2007; Wells et al., 2014.) Although legal or professional issues surrounding the internship crisis have garnered attention (Parent & Williamson, 2010; Stedman, Schoenfeld, Carroll, & Allen, 2009), little is known about applicants’ experiences of the internship crisis. In the present study, we sought to explore internship applicants’ reactions to the internship crisis to better understand how the crisis impacts emerging professionals in our field.

Doctoral Internships

Prior to World War II (WWII), doctoral training in psychology emphasized research and assessment over psychotherapy (Routh, 2000). After WWII, an increased need for mental health services emerged, yet there were not enough clinicians to meet these demands (Belar, 1998). This led to the mandate at the Boulder Conference to require a one year, full-time, doctoral internship to obtain a doctoral degree in clinical psychology (Raimy, 1950), a standard later

adopted by counseling psychology (Stedman, 2006). By 1956, the American Psychological Association's [APA] office of accreditation began accrediting internships to ensure quality control (Stedman, 2006). Interest in clinical work grew during the 1960s and 1970s with more psychologists engaging in clinical practice than research or assessment, and the development of professional schools and the doctor of psychology (PsyD) degree (Korman, 1976).

APPIC was established in 1968 to oversee pre- and post doctoral field training in clinical and counseling psychology (Keilin, 1998). APPIC maintains a database of internship sites and commissions the online internship application and computerized internship match systems. The internship has been transformed in structure and function in a variety of ways over the decades, but remains a predoctoral experience intended to integrate accumulated knowledge with service provision (Madson et al., 2007; Wells et al., 2014).

Despite being one of the many steps in professional psychology graduate training, internship is a major component of individuals' professional pedigree (Callahan, Collins, & Klonoff, 2010). The doctoral internship allows for professional growth, leading trainees into postdoctoral fellowships or entry-level employment leading to licensure. Thus, it is imperative that the internship be consistent with trainees' goals and objectives to increase the likelihood of successful placement within their desired area of professional psychology.

The Internship Crisis

The doctoral internship has long been marked by a disparity between the number of applicants and available internships. In the most recent match year for which data are available at the time of this writing (2014), there were 4335 applicants to internship who applied to a total of 3501 positions; enough positions for 81% of applicants. The situation is more dire when one considers that of the available positions, only 2588 were accredited (the rest being unaccredited

APPIC member sites); enough spots for only 60% of applicants. Over the past decade and a half both the number of available internships and the number of applicants have grown almost every year, with the growth of applicants outpacing the growth of internships and, especially, APA-accredited internships (APPIC, 2014b). The impact of the disparity is far-reaching, with not matching leading to financial, personal, and professional costs (Wells et al., 2014). Unmatched applicants may be delayed from entering the workforce, become disillusioned by the field (Miville, Adams, & Juntunen, 2007), and/or choose to accept positions at unaccredited, and potentially unfunded, sites. Such a decision can restrict future job opportunities (e.g., Veteran's Administration and correctional facilities require APA accreditation for employment).

APPIC, APA, APAGS, and other organizations within psychology have made statements regarding the negative impact of the internship crisis on the profession and on individual students (Baker, McCutcheon, & Keilin, 2007; DeAngelis, 2013; Wells et al., 2014). APAGS, in particular, has been instrumental in raising awareness, providing possible solutions, and collaborating in efforts to address the internship crisis (Wells et al., 2014). Belief in the critical need to address the crisis is also present among professionals in the field; one survey of training directors and interns indicated that, even a decade ago, 84% of internship training directors and 88% of interns surveyed thought there were too many doctoral students being trained, and nearly half of all training directors and interns named the crisis as the "single most important professional issue" (Robiner, Ax, Stamm, & Harowski, 2002, p. 277) facing the field.

Professional psychologists have suggested a variety of explanations and solutions for the crisis. Most commonly, solutions emphasize the development of more internship sites and voluntary reductions in program size (Baker et al., 2007). Others have taken the position that a small number of programs are disproportionately responsible for the internship imbalance

(Parent & Williamson, 2010; Stedman et al., 2009), that the focus should be on internship creation (Lally & Paszkiewicz, 2011), or that internship itself is an outmoded requirement and should be abolished (Thorp, O'Donohue, & Gregg, 2005).

This scholarship, while important to inform policy within the profession, has left largely unaddressed the personal impact on internship applicants. Although graduate training is known to be stressful (Clark, Murdock, & Koetting, 2008; Dearing, Maddux, & Tangney, 2005), a recent report suggests that the experience of going unmatched is particularly difficult (Hogan et al., 2014). In that study, applicants' subjective well-being was assessed before and after match notification. Following notification, unmatched applicants evidenced a significant decline in subjective well-being, generating a large effect size. The aim of the present study was to explore the internship crisis through the eyes of internship applicants themselves. We hoped that using the voices of those who were in the midst of the match process would further scholarship and advocacy within and beyond professional psychology associations.

Method

This study used free-response data collected by APPIC from participants in the 2011 post-match survey (the only year in which the free-response item was asked). We followed guidelines for secondary data analysis of qualitative data (Seale, 2011). We assessed the data using a mixed methods approach first using a qualitative approach, inasmuch as the present data were archival and thus the research team lacked the ability to enact some defining aspects of most approaches to qualitative research (e.g., asking clarifying questions, giving prompts).

Our methodological approach was unique in that this study reflects the combined efforts of two teams that were initially engaged in this research independently. The first, second, and fifth author, and the third and fourth author, had assembled into two separate teams and were

simultaneously working on qualitative analyses of the data. Upon discovering this, the teams resolved to combine efforts. This resulted in two distinct (but similar) initial approaches to the data (described in the data analysis section) that were amalgamated by the two teams.

Research Team

The research team was composed of the five authors. Three authors are Ph.D. psychologists (two counseling psychology and one clinical psychology). One author is a graduate student working under the mentorship of the first author. The remaining author was an undergraduate intern working under the supervision of the fourth author. The first, second, and third authors served as primary coders. The first author was the lead on manuscript preparation and quantitative analysis. The first and fourth authors were leads on qualitative analysis, while the fourth and fifth authors served as code auditors and assisted with manuscript preparation.

The first author is a counseling psychologist in an academic faculty position. He previously served for multiple years in APAGS (and knew the fourth author through this work) and division leadership. His professional roles focus on research, teaching, supervision, and mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students. He has authored prior publications on the internship crisis (Parent & Williamson, 2010; Wells et al., 2014). He recently went through the internship application process, which he found to be time-consuming, expensive, distracting from research, and somewhat stressful. Having skimmed through a small number of the APPIC responses posted online prior to this study for personal interest and APAGS projects, he was already familiar with the general negative tone of the entries and expected this to be the case for most entries. Further, aware of student opinions from work in APAGS, he expected the content of the entries to be negative toward the APA, professional schools, and PsyD programs. He approaches research and advocacy from a social justice perspective, meaning that he directs his

attention to issues of discrimination, power imbalances, bias, and (Parent, Weiser, & McCourt, 2015)). Due to this perspective, he was especially likely to examine responses for statements of perceived discrimination as well as mentions of strengths and resilience. He wrote reflective memos on reactions to participant responses to keep this bias in mind, and discussed and consulted on this bias with colleagues who were familiar with the internship process but not involved in this research project. As the advisor of the second author, the first and second author had conversations pertaining to the second author's professional identity related to the present study. The first author previously collaborated with the fourth and fifth authors (Callahan, Ruggero, & Parent, 2013; Wells et al., 2014).

The second author is a graduate student under the mentorship of the first author. Prior to this project, the second author had no awareness of the internship imbalance; his master's degree was not in psychology, and his understanding was that an internship was simply the last step needed to obtain a psychology Ph.D. Despite the disheartening tone he perceived amongst applicants' responses, the second author used the information from this study to be more purposeful in his approach to graduate school (e.g., professional involvement; specific practicum placement) including identifying possible strategies to implement during the internship application process (e.g., do not geographically restrict; apply based upon fit) to increase his likelihood of matching. The second author processed his reactions to the material through discussion with the first author (his mentor) and peers uninvolved with this research.

The third author, during the development of this publication, served as a research and administrative intern for APAGS. Although initially accepting this employment in hopes of gaining experience she could utilize when applying for graduate psychology programs, the data and its implications ultimately deterred her from applying to graduate psychology programs. She

felt irrevocably discouraged to pursue a career that would require her to endure the internship application process and felt shocked by the data used in this study. She currently works in the nonprofit sector in fundraising and grant allocation.

The fourth author completed APA accredited doctoral and internship programs. He found the internship application process stressful; while confident that "something would work out," he had little insight into the process and began doubting his own strengths as a trainee. Delving into the archival data for this study, he began to feel more lucky than meritorious, and was upset that so many students appeared to internalize system issues as personal failures. Since 2011, he has worked full-time as the Assistant Director of APAGS. In this role, he provided support to APAGS student leaders in the development of a position statement about the internship crisis, which he worked on with the first author. Responsible for carrying out the APAGS mission of promoting high quality graduate training experiences, he works regularly on solutions and strategies to address the crisis while representing the concerns of graduate student members, the APAGS committee, and the larger association.

The fifth author is the Director of Clinical Training for an APA-accredited doctoral (Ph.D.) scientist-practitioner program in Clinical Psychology. She is board certified in Clinical Psychology. She went through the match process in 2002 and has mentored dozens of students through the process, sharing in the joys or sorrows associated with each of their match outcomes. A primary objective of her research is to contribute to the development of an evidence-based approach to training for the purpose of ultimately improving the quality of psychological care (during the training years, but also to positively influence effectiveness trajectories). She has published numerous empirical studies pertaining to internship (Callahan et al., 2010; Callahan, Hogan, Klonoff, & Collins, 2014).

Participants

Participants were 1076 applicants for internship in the 2011 internship cycle (i.e., applying for internships spanning 2011-2012) who completed the qualitative item on the annual post-match survey in 2011. There were 4199 registered applicants for internship in the 2011 applicant year and 2731 applicants completed the post-match survey (65% response rate); this represents a response rate of 25.6% for the entire pool of applicants in 2011 and 39.3% of the respondents to the survey.

It is not possible to link the qualitative responses to the full APPIC survey for confidentiality reasons (i.e., participants, especially those with unique demographics or at small programs, would be easily identifiable). Additionally, because the free-response prompt does not ask for demographic data, we are only able to approximate the demographics of the present sample based on the 2731 persons who responded to the complete survey. An extensive breakdown of these participants is available online from APPIC (APPIC, 2011a). Briefly, participants were between 23 and 64 years of age ($M = 30.1$, $SD = 5.5$, $Mdn = 29$); most (85%) did not have children; about half (53%) were married or partnered; most were United States citizens (91%) or Canadians (6%); most were White (75%), Hispanic/Latino (8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (7%), or African American/Black (6%); most were heterosexual (92%); most reported not having a disability (93%). Participants were from clinical (79%), counseling (13%), school (5%), combined (3%) and other (1%) programs. Participants were seeking PhDs (54%), PsyDs (45%), and EdDs or other degrees (less than 1% each). Participants reported their gender [*sic*; the APPIC survey asks for “gender” but gives response options for sex] as female (79%), male (21%), and “other (e.g., trans, intersex)” (less than 1%). Most (94%) were from APA/CPA accredited programs, and most (95%) were from in programs in the U.S. A small majority (59%)

reported having no geographic restriction for applications; of those who did, 41% restricted to a region of the country, 29% to a single town or city, 16% to a single state or province, and 14% had a different restriction.

Instruments

Data were collected from an instrument administered by APPIC. Each year, APPIC sends out a survey to participants in the match, which is used to generate data on patterns in match rates and other variables (e.g., debt levels, number of client contact hours). The full surveys for multiple years are available on the APPIC web site (<http://www.appic.org/Match/Match-Statistics>). In one year, a qualitative response item was added. The item read,

"How has the current imbalance between applicants and positions affected you, personally and/or professionally? In other words, if you had the ear of the education and training community, what would you like to tell them about this issue? How has your life and the lives of others been affected? You may wish to share your own personal experiences, the impact on yourself, other students, and/or your academic program, suggestions for how to improve the situation, or other thoughts, feelings, and/or concerns." (APPIC, 2011b)

Participants were given a large text box in which to type their response to this question. They were made aware that their responses would be published on the Internet, and were asked to not include potentially identifying information. APPIC asserts that the responses were posted online unedited (APPIC; 2011b). It is important to note that it is possible that response bias was present in the responding sample. For instance, respondents who had a particularly negative experience or who did not match may have been more likely to respond while others who had more positive experiences may have ignored the survey or skipped the free-response item.

Data Analysis

In the initial stage of analysis the two teams were unaware of each other's work and proceeded independently. Team one (first, second, and fifth authors) began by transferring the free responses into a "tall and skinny" data file in a spreadsheet. The first author read through the first 100 responses in detail and reflected on the content of the responses. An aspect of this reflection was recognition of the fact that, due to the very large nature of the data set strict adherence to the intended research methodology, Grounded Theory (GT; Glaser & Strauss, 1967)) would likely be impossible as it would not be feasible to consider all of the more than one thousand responses simultaneously. Instead, it seemed that emergent themes were important to reduce the data set to a manageable number of categories at an early phase of analysis, most consistent with a Template Analysis (TA; Brooks & King, 2012; Cassell & Symon, 2004; Crabtree & Miller, 1992). TA is particularly useful for larger data sets (Brooks & King, 2012), and allows for development of a flexible template from a subset of data, which can be used by researchers to understand the larger data set while remaining open to adjusting the template based on data that emerge during analysis. Next, the first author reviewed the first 100 responses and broke each down into primary codes that divided the responses at the level of thought units (e.g., if a participant wrote, "the internship application process was expensive and time-consuming," the first five words were set as one thought unit and the last two as another thought unit). Consistent with in vivo coding, exact phrasing was retained (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and the phrases were coded for the concepts they contained (e.g., in the example, costs of internship applications, financial cost of applying, time cost of applying). Next, the first and second authors consulted and constructed more conceptual secondary categories that captured themes within the concepts and helped to merge important concepts into categories while dropping infrequent

concepts (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990), consistent with an open coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This led to organization of thought units based on content (e.g., financial costs) and temporality (e.g., financial costs of doctoral program, financial costs of applying to internship, financial costs of not matching), and formulation of “problem” and “solution” categories distinct from personal experiences. The temporal organization was also used to understand action/interaction with other categories, and consequences of categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The first author, due to his own desire to shed light on perceptions of discriminatory or biased practices and on experiences of resiliency and growth, also examined the responses for indications of the themes of “discrimination/bias” and “resiliency” while assessing the data to see if such themes were actually present in the data.

Due to the unfeasibility of applying standard GT to the entire data set, secondary codes from the first 100 participants were used to generate prototypical categories. These prototypes simplified the secondary codes and the iterative process allowed for the expansion of open codes past the first 100 responses using constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2008) as necessary to accommodate additional categories introduced by the participants. Prevalent and conceptually distinct axial codes were retained while other categories were merged due to conceptual similarity or dropped due to very low frequency, and these categories were used as the template from which to continue the coding process.

During this same time, the second team (third and fourth authors) was also completing initial analysis of the free responses. The team began by reading the first one hundred responses to understand the range, tones, and types of textual data. Then the authors jointly parsed each response into meaningful units in the same manner as the first team while using constant comparative method to compare emerging units of meaning with existing ones (Corbin &

Strauss, 1990, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After the first 50 responses, the authors worked individually on approximately 100 more responses, and then compared coding and discussed discrepancies to further clarify and specify the category definitions. The pair discussed at length several categories to clarify definitions, treated the codebook as a living document by remaining open to altering definitions and categories, kept individual journals to record questions and reactions, and came to consensus before moving forward on each decision point in the analysis. Again, this approach (isolating an early subset of data to use to generate a template) reflected use of a TA approach.

At this time the simultaneous efforts were discovered. The first and fourth authors consulted and decided to combine efforts. The first and fourth authors generated the author string and commensurate responsibilities for authors. They then consulted with the other authors about this plan, and all consented to combining efforts. The first and fourth author shared via email coding books that had been developed to this point with the goal of merging the code books into a single set of categories. The code books overlapped considerably, with about 66% of the categories being direct matches (e.g., both contained categories for frustration, anxiety, unethicity of the match process, suggested solutions, attributions of responsibility, resilience, and many other categories). Consulting over email, phone, and videoconference while reviewing code books, the primary alterations were separation of some categories temporally (e.g., dividing financial strain into strain during doctoral programs and strain during applications), retaining resiliency categories, and collapsing several vague and low-frequency distress categories (e.g., “pain,” “crazy-making”) into a single distress-other category. A videoconference meeting was called among the first through fourth authors and the coding system was discussed in detail, along with clarifications on specific aspects of the categories. Consensus for the meaning and

scope of categories was achieved among all participants by discussing the categories and considering example participant responses until all four authors expressed agreement and had no further questions. Subsequent questions or clarifications for atypical entries were addressed via email conversations and in regular monthly videoconference meetings (excluding the fifth author) over the course of analysis. The teams then began to apply the merged set of categories to the data set, using constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to watch for the emergence of new themes in the responses. All responses were coded in blocks of 50 participants by one of the first three authors, and coded blocks of entries were reviewed by one of the other first three authors who examined the codes and suggested potential alterations or identified any errors. Alterations based on recommendations from the reviewing author were discussed until agreement among the pairs of coders was achieved.

The fourth author was lead on code audits. First, the fourth author took a random subset of 10% of the responses for participants 1-350, and coded those responses independently. Responses were compared to the coding completed by the first to third authors, and indicated an acceptable kappa of .73. The first and fourth author reviewed all discrepancies and discussed the coding until 100% agreement was achieved. The fourth author then reviewed a random subset of 10% of responses from participants 351-1076, and those codes were compared to codes generated by the first, second, and third authors. Again, an acceptable kappa of .71 emerged. The first and fourth author discussed discrepancies until 100% agreement was achieved. The first author then returned to the complete data set to check for any deviations from categories or modifications based on the audits. The fifth author, who had until this point been intentionally removed from discussion of categories, was then sent an electronic version of the codebook and a randomly-selected subset of 5% of all responses for further auditing. Her independent codes

were compared to the finalized codes from the team, and a kappa of .71 was found. This kappa represents “substantial” agreement among the authors on the codes (Landis & Koch, 1977), especially given the limitations of secondary qualitative data analysis (e.g., the inability to ask clarifying questions of the participants, reliance on a question prompt developed by others).

Results

Table 1 lists the categories by frequency and gives the definition as well as representative quotes. Quotes were chosen for representativeness of the theme. As noted in the table, some of the quotes contain more than one unit of meaning and thus fell into multiple categories.

Theory

With a primary commitment to truthful representation of participant data, the team identified two core categories around which the 64 axial code categories were organized. The authors initially placed these categories into a Bronfenbrenner Ecological Theory model (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Upon recommendations from the reviewers of the manuscript, this was altered and the authors revisited their process of theory generation. Themes again were organized around two core categories; (1) impacts within the respondent’s personal and professional lives across time (personal stress), and (2) explicit or implicit reactions, solutions, system issues, and responsible parties (system issues).

In the first core category, personal and professional life themes mostly closely fell along a timeline and were relatively clear (Fig. 1), with events occurring before, during, and after the match. Using a selective coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), the authors examined all categories within the first core category and considered as many interconnections and organizing themes as possible, developing a coherent description of the central categories that appeared to emerge in the analysis. In the first core category (focusing on personal costs), the available data

suggested the following theory (Fig. 2): Applicants for the internship match experience various costs, which promote personal stress. Stress is further compounded with the costs of doctoral education and increasing saliency of fears about costs of not matching. In turn, fears of not matching lead to increased costs for applying (e.g., applying to more sites at greater financial cost) and increased costs of training (e.g., focusing on practica to the detriment of research). Two additional processes occur in the model: Resilience acts throughout the process to mitigate the effects of costs and stress, while perceptions of discrimination or bias add to stress-related outcomes.

In the second core category, themes related to systems-oriented ideas emerged, but participant responses were less clearly defined and differentiated (Fig. 1). That is, many participants appeared to recognize issues of responsibility, potential solutions, system issues, and reactions to the crisis but the interrelationships among these constructs was less clear, possibly reflecting a challenge for participants in understanding all of the complexities of the internship crisis or lack of prompting for specific systems-level thinking in the qualitative response prompt. In this core category, no clear theory emerged. It appeared that either participants did not have a full understanding of the issues related to the internship crisis and thus were not able to articulate clearly cohesive ideas related to those systems, or that participants did not provide completely cohesive narratives related to system issues.

Quantitative Analysis

We examined a number of quantitative questions to supplement the qualitative analysis. First, we sought to examine whether differences existed among those who stated they did and did not match, as it was possible that unmatched individuals experienced and reported more stress than those who matched. Due to the number of chi-square tests performed to assess for these

differences, a Bonferroni correction was applied to significance values. Twenty-one comparisons were planned, and thus a $p < .0002$ cutoff for significance of chi-square test was used (corresponding to a chi-square value of 11.24 at one degree of freedom).

Participants who reported matching ($n = 228$) were compared to participants who reported that they did not match ($n = 128$). Participants who did not match had proportionately more responses coded as “self-qualified” (56 of 128) than those who matched (21 of 228; $\chi^2[1] = 57.69, p < .001, \phi = .40$). Participants who did not match had proportionately more responses coded as “distress-other” (69 of 128) than those who matched (80 of 228; $\chi^2[1] = 11.93, p < .001, \phi = .11$). Participants who did not match had proportionately more responses coded as “financial cost of not matching” (69 of 128) than those who matched (80 of 228; $\chi^2[1] = 26.60, p < .001, \phi = .27$). Participants who did not match had proportionately more responses coded as “delayed children/family” (16 of 128) than those who matched (7 of 228; $\chi^2[1] = 12.06, p < .001, \phi = .18$). Participants who did not match had proportionately more responses coded as “delayed-other” (31 of 128) than those who matched (24 of 228; $\chi^2[1] = 11.77, p < .001, \phi = .18$). Other codes were more common among those who did match. Participants who matched had proportionately more responses coded as “stress /anxiety” (112 of 228) than those who did not match (18 of 128; $\chi^2[1] = 43.47, p < .001, \phi = .20$). Participants who matched had proportionately more responses coded as “resilience-sympathy” (34 of 228) than those who did not match (3 of 128; $\chi^2[1] = 13.91, p < .001, \phi = .20$). No other codes were different at the Bonferroni-corrected χ^2 critical value.

Next, to explore relationships within the data to inform future research, we conducted a correlation analysis of all codes. We identified code pairs that had greater than $|.20|$ correlations, representing a small effect size (no code pairs had correlations greater than $|.50|$; visual representations of the links are presented in Fig. 1 as arrows). *Financial cost of program* and

Time cost of program were correlated, $r = .41$. *Affects families* was correlated $r = .32$ with *Affects friends*, $r = .24$ with *Delayed children/family*, and $r = .24$ with *Geographic restriction*. *Financial cost of applying*, *Time cost of applying*, and *Energy cost of applying* were intercorrelated with each other (*Financial-Energy* $r = .25$, *Financial-Time* $r = .49$, *Energy-Time* $r = .45$). *Emotional cost of applying* was correlated with *Physical well-being*, $r = .26$.

Financial cost of not matching was associated with *Delayed graduation*, $r = .26$, *Delayed children/family*, $r = .21$, and *Delayed-other*, $r = .22$. *Delayed Graduation* was also correlated with *Delayed career*, $r = .21$, *Delayed career* was correlated with *Delayed children/family*, $r = .25$, and *Delayed children/family* was correlated with *Delayed-other*, $r = .21$.

Ridiculous for 1 year of training was correlated with *Resilience-family*, $r = .22$. *Lack of action* was correlated with *Imperative*, $r = .23$, and *Responsibility-APA*, $r = .25$. *Too few internships – APA* was correlated with *Problem-accreditation*, $r = .21$. Finally, *Responsibility-APA* and *Responsibility-other* were correlated, $r = .24$.

Discussion

The sample revealed an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the internship imbalance as well as to the process of applying for internship in general. The qualitative theoretical model offer parsimonious means by which to understand this complex data and move forward scholarship and advocacy efforts. We present two themes in this discussion—personal stress and system issues—embedding each with suggestions to ameliorate the internship crisis.

Personal Stress

Stress, in varying forms, was the dominant response of participants. Though participants described their stresses generally along an inferred or explicit axis of time, our theory suggests that stress may not develop linearly. Specifically, we posit that costs of attending doctoral

training do not inherently activate stress in regard to the internship match—that is, that applicants would be more positive about the costs of doctoral training if the application process were less stressful and there was no risk of not matching due to the crisis. Similarly, the costs of not matching may exacerbate the costs of applying. Applicants, out of fear of not matching, will incur greater psychological and practical costs. Finally, while resilience may reduce perceived costs of training and applying for internship, as well as reduced stress, perceived discrimination and bias increases personal stress. This model reflects a negative recursive relationship in which the crisis taints the rest of training, even acting retroactively to alter perceptions of past training.

System Issues

Unlike participant perceptions of personal stress, perceptions of system issues appeared to be less well-formed, potentially as a result of either participants having less clear perceptions of this area or because the question prompt did not specifically ask participant to describe their thoughts in this domain. Though we grouped these themes loosely into four clusters that may be interrelated, specific interrelations are less clear. Participants did identify parties perceived to be responsible; the internship crisis was viewed as originating due to, and being maintained by, problems in the training of psychologists at the level of professional organizations and individuals programs. The fault for not matching was not defined as a problem with applicants, but a problem with regulation and oversight in the profession.

Conclusions

Drawing from the above models, some conclusions may be drawn and points from which to move forward identified. Although efforts have been made to combat the imbalance (DeAngelis, 2013; Grus, McCutcheon, & Berry, 2011), respondents appeared to be unaware of these efforts or to see them as inadequate. Although the present data were from applicants in the

2011 match, many initiatives to address the imbalance were already underway at that time and continue now. Given that the respondents in this study viewed these systems as directly responsible for the internship crisis, and indirectly responsible for their burdens and distresses, it is possible that this perception of inaction plays a role in the decreased membership in APA among early career professionals (Anderson, 2010).

Participants appeared to desire a fundamental shift in the orientation of the profession toward the internship crisis (e.g., stringent enforcement of tying of match rates to program accreditation). Such fundamental shifts have been proposed, and are legal and feasible (Parent & Williamson, 2010; Stedman et al., 2009). For example, rather than focus on creating new internships, in this sample the recommendation that the number of individuals admitted to doctoral training should be reduced was more common.

In addition to seeking guidance from and adopting strategies used by other professions, participants identified the need to better inform potential doctoral students about the internship crisis. One relatively easy and cost-effective method of addressing this suggestion is to require accredited programs to post, in addition to match rates, a uniform statement about the meaning of match rates (e.g., possible consequences of not obtaining an internship or obtaining a non-accredited internship, comparison of program match rates with averages for other programs) in their student admissions, outcomes, and other data public disclosures.

Students also expressed the desire to obtain feedback from sites about unsuccessful applications. APPIC could engage in a more collaborative approach with applicants and doctoral program directors of training to respond to this call for action. Currently, internship sites are informed as to whether and where applicants they ranked matched. Not providing parallel feedback to doctoral programs or applicants reflects unequal treatment of constituent groups.

One potential solution would be to have internship sites rate applicants via a checkbox format when sites submit rank order lists, (e.g., “minimum requirements met but applicant is insufficiently competitive for site,” “applicant not ranked,” etc.). Data could be released to students and directors of training on notification day. This would provide applicants and directors of clinical training with basic yet informative evaluative feedback.

Finally, participants largely saw the solution to the internship crisis as a reduction in the number of applicants and an increase in the number of internships. Importantly, recent movement in this direction is being made. Beginning with the 2018 internship cohort, only students enrolled in accredited doctoral programs will be allowed to enter the internship match (APPIC, 2013). However, as only 212 of the 2896 respondents (i.e., 7%) to the 2014 APPIC survey were from unaccredited programs, and 47% of those applicants did not match in 2014 anyway (APPIC, 2014a), this step will not resolve the imbalance. Further solutions, both in the immediate future and safeguarding the profession in the long-term, are still urgently needed.

Limitations

The present study must be interpreted in light of its limitations. First, data were collected via an archival source, and we were limited in tools typically available to qualitative researchers (e.g., the ability to ask clarifying questions). Second, the response rate was about half of the respondents to the general survey and one quarter of the full population for that year. Although our tests for differences among respondents suggested that matched and unmatched applicants reported similar perceptions, individuals who did not respond may have had markedly different perceptions of the internship crisis. Third, though we endeavored to represent the data as accurately as possible and engaged in multiple auditing measures, it is possible that errors occurred in applicants representing their thoughts and feelings in an incomplete way, or in the

coders misunderstanding responses. Finally, our inability to link qualitative response to quantitative data about participant demographic characteristics limits our ability to fully describe the present sample and prohibits quantitative analysis of reactions by such variables. Despite these limitations, the present study offers the first examination of applicant perceptions of the internship crisis, and we hope that it can lead to future qualitative and quantitative work.

Future Directions

The present mixed-methods study suggests a number of opportunities for research. First, longitudinal work could explore different manifestations of stress before, during, and after the match and its impact on student learning and performance, and identify ways to help students cope with stress specific to the internship crisis. Second, students named many potential ways to reduce burden on applicants (e.g., videoconference interviews). This might be further empirically explored. Third, students named ways in which they perceived the internship application process to be discriminatory or biased. These reports of bias require additional dedicated qualitative and quantitative research, and explicit non-discrimination policies may need to be enforced should some of these perceptions of discrimination bear out, as other research suggests factors such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, having children, and disability status do not significantly influence matching (Callahan et al., 2010; Callahan et al., 2014). Fourth, resiliencies and opportunities for growth might be explored among applicants who did not match, to better help applicants maximize the time between application cycles.

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Table 1

Categories, frequency, and categories

Themes and categories		Quote	Freq.
<i>Match data</i>			
Matched	Participants were coded for clear statements about their match status.	(Participant clearly reports having matched)	228
Did not match	Participants were coded for clear statements about their match status.	(Participant clearly reports not having matched)	128
Did not match last year	Participants were coded for clear statements about their match status.	(Participant clearly reports not having matched in the prior year)	81
<i>Training</i>			
Financial cost of program	The financial burden of attending a graduate program, including debt, was viewed a challenge for participants	It is unreasonable to ask young people to go significantly into debt, complete years of education, write a dissertation, and then be denied a degree because of a lack of internships (P163) [also coded as Time cost of program and Too few internships] If I had to do it again, I would probably not have chosen to complete my doctorate degree due to the financial strain (P797)	116
Time cost of program	Participants commented about the time cost of graduate training and responses contained little diversity. Responses conveyed that training in psychology is long, and linked this length of training to the internship crisis.	It is unfair for individuals to go through years of graduate schooling only to find themselves unable to "finish." (P525) [also coded as Unfair] It is unreasonable to ask young people to ... complete years of education ... and then be denied a degree because of a lack of internships (P163) It seems impractical to seek a doctoral degree given one can earn a similar wage and do similar things with a master's degree which requires far less time (P204)	95
Affects academic training	Participants linked the imbalance to consequences for professional training, including difficulty finishing dissertations, getting publications, attending classes, and diminished attention to clinical work.	The increased emphasis on accruing more and more clinical hours in order to make yourself a competitive candidate for internship detracts from time that could be spent conducting research and producing scholarly publications (P276) As far as I know, terror and exploratory learning do not go together (P361)	34
Historically good program	Participants reported that they came from programs with historically strong internship match rates. Participants reported minimized concern about the imbalance as a function of coming from such a program.	I think the internship imbalance has finally impacted our program (P39) I come from a program where nearly every student matches the first time they apply (P220) While we have had 100% match rate since I began grad school 6 years ago, last year only 2 of 6 students matched (P668)	33
<i>Applications begin</i>			

Stress/anxiety	Stress or anxiety was the most common theme across participants, often simply using words such as “stressful” or “anxiety-provoking” as descriptors of the process. Participants attributed much of this stress to the internship crisis itself.	It is not only that this imbalance causes tremendous anxiety to those applying, we carry this anxiety onto our daily work (P11) [The imbalance] has affected me tremendously both personally and professionally. I felt an immense amount of pressure, stress, and anxiety about matching, much more so than if such a discrepancy between applicants and positions didn't exist (P899)	440
Distress - other	Participants described distress that did not fall into the specific categories, including shame, disappointment, general sadness, or loss of control.	Throughout my graduate training, I had this dark cloud looming – the match deficit grows every year (P2) I felt a great deal of disappointment and shame when I did not match last year (P576) I still felt that much of the outcome was out of my control simply due to the volume of applicants (P755)	327
Others-qualified	Participants named as qualified others who were distressed by the match process or who did not match. Typically, this code reflected a statement that the participant felt others were qualified but did not match.	I find it hard to believe that I and my 900 unmatched colleagues simply didn't have the right qualifications or clinical experiences for the sites we applied to (P7) Some of the best students in my class did not match (P20) I know multiple graduate students who did not match the first time around, and they are well-qualified, highly regarded students with sound clinical training (P680)	207
Financial cost of applying	Participants reported costs to apply to internship and to travel to interviews placed financial pressure on applicants.	Going through this process twice has been extremely expensive (all together about \$12,000) (P94) By the end of this process, I had less money than I have had in several years and was seriously very much concerned about my financial situation (P273)	134
Self-qualified	Participants described perceiving themselves as qualified. Often, these statements were made in conjunction with statements about feeling stress over the match process or not matching. These statements also appeared to buffer against not matching.	Despite having a 4.0 GPA, more publications than most people in my program, attending a APA accredited program, having experiences in a variety of practicum sites and great letters of reference, I did not match (P82) I applied for the match this year as a highly qualified candidate from a competitive PhD program. I remained unmatched following the Phase I results (P777)	126
Affects families	Participants reported the match affected their families or partners and that stress spread throughout their support system, and prevented them from making concrete plans for the future with their partners. Participants also reported challenges in speaking with their partners about the match.	Students should not be expected to move away from family members in order to obtain high-quality training in the field (P66) Significant others also bear the brunt of such stress (P806) Now I will be helping my daughter through college on an internship salary (P850) I think that personally it affects my life in that I feel stuck and cannot make concrete plans with my partner for the future (P876) [Also coded as Delayed-other]	116
Frustration/anger	Participants described the internship imbalance as provoking anger or frustration, often directed toward the training system.	This whole process makes me livid (P20) The stress, the pressure and the numbers being against me all provided me not only with the most intense stress I have ever felt, but the most prolonged, drawing my uncertainty out over months and months. I hope that nothing I ever do will be this infuriating (P765) [Also coded as Stress/anxiety]	94

Time cost of applying	Participants reported that applications are a time investment, and detract from other areas of their lives. The phrase “waste of time” was recurrent.	Researching sites, reading 50 page brochures, and writing detailed cover letters takes hours and hours. It’s a waste of time for students to do that (P89) [The application process was a] waste of time (P425, P428, P938) [Estimates of time cost ranging from 6 months (P443, P778, P1024) to a year (P160, P906, P938)]	75
Fear	Participants described the internship imbalance as eliciting fear or dread. Fear was often mentioned in juxtaposition to an imagined alternative, in which the internship match process was rewarding or positive.	Overall, I feel that the internship application process is not exciting, as it should be, but is feared and dreaded (P65) Just knowing that so many people are left unmatched is scary (P72) It's just a terrifying process (P660)	68
Self-doubt	Participants described themselves, peers, or applicants in general as experiencing self-doubt as a result of going through the match process.	After I didn't match last year, I went through several months where I had to re-convince myself of my worth as a clinician (P350) It is so easy to internalize the rejection that is experienced (P893)	60
Disillusionment with profession	Participants reported that their impressions of psychology as a field and profession changed. Some participants desired to stop others from joining the field.	I actively discourage people I know to go into psychology (P6) [The field has] completely neglected its own (P82) APA has sent me to the wolves and I will not forget it. Clearly this is not an organization that cares about me or my well-being (P226) [Also coded as Responsibility-APA]	50
Geographic restriction	Participants described the supply of nearby internships as low or as insufficient due to demand. Many participants reported geographic restriction to be unavoidable and the idea of moving away from their family untenable.	Now there are very few, if any, accredited internship positions within driving distance from where I live (P51) I also had to remind myself that my limited geographical location, in an area saturated with Ivy institutions [...] was a death knell to my application (P968)	46
Based on factors other than training	Participants reported pursuing strategies to match at the expense of optimal training experiences during internship.	I think the attitude that ‘any internship is better than waiting another year’ is unfortunate for our training and is a direct result of the imbalance (P460)	44
Emotional cost of applying	Participants described that applying to internship had substantial emotional costs. Some participants described vague emotional pain or an emotional toll from applying.	When 30% of the applicant pool doesn't match, EVERYONE BECOMES AN EMOTIONAL MESS (P117) This process is emotionally taxing (P734) For me this experience has been so difficult and my anxiety so great but I thought it was something that I had to suffer in silence (P954) [Also coded as Stress/anxiety]	39
Energy cost of applying	Participants reported that the process of applying to internship was exhausting. For many, energy seemed to be part of a larger demand on applicants’ resources including time and money.	I have put in countless hours and huge amounts of energy [to my application] (P1065) [Also coded as Time cost of applying] “Exhausting”/“Exhausted” (P416, P421, P662, P696, P799, P981, P1024)	32

Physical well-being	Participants described the stress of the match process as impacting their physical health. Participants mentioned loss of sleep. Participants reported that pressure to travel to interviews during winter was also a hazard.	The stress [of the internship application process] put me into labor with our first child prematurely! (P412) I felt that I was unable to live a balanced an healthy life because of these demands (P420) [Loss of sleep mentioned] (P23,P131, P210, P266, P465, P535, P879, P1056)	31
Increases competitiveness	Participants reported that the internship crisis increases a sense of competition among members of a cohort. Participants noted that competition reduced cooperation, increased comparison, led people to avoid each other, and led peers to stop seeking each other out for support.	[The imbalance] causes tension between people who should be helping each other learn and succeed and creates a negative climate in our education (P69) Even though we didn't apply to the same sites it somehow felt like we were all competing against each other (P674)	19
Affects friends	Participants reported that the crisis adversely affected their social relationships with friends (non-cohort members).	The incredible amount of effort I have put into this process and the high level of anxiety over 6 months caused by the uncertainty and high probability of not matching negatively affected ... my social and family relationships. (P256) [also coded as Stress/anxiety]	15
Extreme qualifications needed	Participants perceived that extreme levels of qualifications are needed to successfully match.	[Matching] seems to require experiences that would once have been thought impressive on the CV of a tenured professor (P7) applicants are held to ridiculous standards for students at the beginning of their careers (P219)	12
<i>After match day</i>			
Financial cost of not matching	Participants reported that there was a financial impact of not matching to an internship.	I will now incur an extra year of tuition costs and will place further financial burden on my family (P145) Right now, I feel and wish that I had never chosen the field. Though it is something I love it does not seem worth the financial drain it will put on me for the rest of my life (P996)	127
Delayed graduation	Participants reported concerns regarding delayed graduation as a result of not matching.	Students should not be punished like that and denied graduation because of the problem with the system (P256)	95
Delayed - other	Participants felt that life was on hold in general due to not matching, or the possibility of not matching. Participants reported not having a place in their psychology programs anymore because they are done with classes or dissertation, and may not be able to complete another practicum.	I was really disappointed that I would not be able to get on with my life (P631) ["Limbo"] (P213, P328, P396; P733; P814; P939; P984; P1038)	93
Delayed career	Participants expressed their fear of an inability to find professional success by saying they were unable to begin their careers. The delay in beginning a career was perceived as a source of stress and discouragement before, during, and after the application process.	It is extremely frustrating to be unable to move forward in my career, much less begin it (P9) [Also coded as Frustration/anger] Not being matched...means waiting another year without much pay, putting a hold on one's career (P386)	69

Having to go through match again	The prospect of repeating the process was aversive to participants.	I panicked at the thought that I might not place not because I would have to wait another year but because I would have to go through submitting applications all over again (P592)	39
Delayed children/family	Many participants reported that not matching resulted in delays in having children or starting a family, given that many graduate students applying for internship are at an age developmentally where peers are choosing to get married and have children.	[Not matching] has led to my being in grad school for one and probably two extra years. Which means I have to wait to have a child one or two extra years if I choose to have one. This increases my chance of fertility difficulty (P40) For many people, not matching means delaying starting a family (P67)	35
Guilt for matching	Participants reported feelings of guilt for matching while many other students did not. Participants also reported an inability to enjoy their success if they did match; participants expressed guilt for achieving a placement when their fellow match participants did not.	My classmates who matched could not celebrate because the majority of my class was writhing in pain and they had survivor's guilt (P2) I felt guilty for wanting more for myself professionally and that in reality in doing so someone did not get an internship and must put their career on hold for a year (P341)	5
<i>Resilience</i>			
Resilience - Sympathy	Participants reported feeling sympathy for applicants who did not match or described how difficult it was to see others go unmatched.	I was also very sad for the nearly 1,000 individuals who must have been crushed by their outcome (P63) I have shed tears on behalf of my friends who didn't match (P751)	62
Resilience - Strategy	Participants reported making the best of the situation by preparing for the possibility of not matching or improving chances of matching.	I found myself constantly developing various Plan B models (P1025) [Not matching] has not stopped me from addressing my weaknesses and trying again next year (P1069).	37
Resilience - Growth	Participants reported an opportunity to gain professional experience was reported as a positive outcome of not matching.	I feel had I matched last year, I would not have gotten the quality of training that I will be getting in my current match site (P35) [Also coded as Did not match last year]	16
Resilience - Family	Participants reported receiving support from partners and/or family members	For several months, I had to live off of the support of my parents (P554) Luckily, I have a husband who has a good salary that can cover this for a bit (P555)	15
Resilience - Faculty involvement	Program faculty members who provided support to students participating in the match were reported as important sources of guidance and help.	I had the benefit of having a training director who was extremely encouraging throughout the process, which is a MUST esp. when the match is such a stressful process (P212) [also coded as Stress/anxiety]	14
<i>Discrimination/bias</i>			
Discrimination/ bias - Other	Participants described a range of other perceptions of bias or discrimination, including perceived perception against them for having completed training in counseling or school psychology, having a family or children, or having a particular identity.	I believe that sites are less favorable towards counseling psychology students. Counseling Psychology students tended to be acceptable rather than preferred (P464) I believe that sites discriminate against school psychology students and this is completely unfair (P167) There are many great candidates that are discriminated against for being moms [or] pregnant (P499) I felt that being a Caucasian female hindered me and that I was excluded from opportunities because of being a Caucasian female (P789)	47

Discrimination/ bias - Low SES	Perceived bias against persons of lower socioeconomic status was mentioned in responses.	APPIC has created a payment system that deters students from applying to a large number of sites. However, in a system where students feel they have little control, increasing the number of applications feels like one of the few things they can do to increase the chances of getting an internship. So the overwhelmed and desperate party with limited financial resources is the one who is fined for doing what they can to meet a program requirement (P313). The financial burden from applications, registration and travel make the process much more difficult for the non-privileged, the working poor, the minority status individuals (P656) [also coded as Financial cost of applying]	11
Discrimination/ bias - Non - APA	Participants mentioned they perceived sites to be unfairly biased against them due to their sites not being accredited by APA.	APA has done an immense service to the field of psychology but if any facet of APA feels that they have a duty, right, or privilege to pressure internship sites to not accept a trainee due to unaccredited status, they have made a serious ethical misstep (P27) (also coded as Responsibility-APA and Unethical)	4
<i>Responsibilities</i>			
Too many applicants	Participants opined that there are too many applicants to internship. Commonly, the onus was placed on doctoral programs for admitting too many students.	The current glut of applicants seems to be overwhelming to sites, and promotes an atmosphere of trying to use labels to quickly eliminate candidates (P18) I've thought a little bit about why I think this is an issue, and I think part of it is that graduate programs may be admitting too many people (P72)	385
Too many applicants - PsyDs/ professional schools	Within the "Too many applicants" category, a subcategory emerged about specific onus for the imbalance on PsyD and professional schools of psychology. This subcategory was tagged only if participants specifically mentioned "PsyD" or "professional schools" in conjunction with having a response coded for "Too many applicants."	This imbalance is completely unfair to the students and it is clearly driven by profits - for-profit Psy.D. programs entering absurd numbers of applicants into the match pool each year (P101) Professional PsyD schools need to be regulated more tightly - they are letting in tons of students, getting poor training and then making the internship process harder for everyone (P428)	86
Too few internships	Participants mentioned that there are too few internships for the number of applicants applying.	I also think that APA needs to work harder to provide more sites that are available for training and consider ways of working with programs to provide in-house internships (P53) [Also coded as Responsibility-APA] I believe it is completely unfair that there are not enough positions available to train all current graduate students (P593)	285
Too few internships - Accredited	Within the "too few internships" category, participants described a specific lack of APA-accredited internships. Participants mentioned issues such as hardships in matching to APA-accredited internships when it was required by their programs, and potential future challenges.	The biggest complaint from a lot of people are the number of APA accredited sites available. Many of my peers don't want to 'settle' on a non-accredited site and have to prove themselves for the rest of their careers. I am interested in working with the VA and have only chosen APA accredited sites for this purpose, which limited my options during clearinghouse last year (P55). I don't think that training programs (such as mine) can continue to require students to apply only to accredited internships as there are clearly not enough to go around (P736)	59

APPIC - mention	Participants mentioned APPIC in a number of contexts. Participants attributed responsibility for the imbalance to APPIC, reported that APPIC was responsible for finding a solution to the imbalance, advocated that APPIC limit doctoral program enrollment or limit the number of applicants allowed to enter the match, facilitate sites becoming APPIC members, or create more sites.	APPIC failed me (P109) APPIC bears a responsibility to facilitate an application process that is as fair and transparent as possible (P790) Perhaps APPIC could threaten to limit the number of students allowed to apply from a given program? (P796) APPIC should fully shoulder their responsibility to inform all students who may not be aware of the imbalance (P868)	140
Responsibility - other	Responsibility for the imbalance was assigned to a range of sources aside from the APA. These sources included large programs, individual programs, the training community, or other allusions to powerful others.	I would want someone to take a hard look at those programs that have 50+ students and are flooding the applicant pool (P2) Schools have to take more responsibility for placing their students (P43) How does the education and training community ethically continue to accept high rates of students when they are unable to provide adequate training opportunities in a timely manner that they have demanded? (P841)	114
Responsibility - APA	Participants assigned responsibility to the APA for accrediting too many, or too large, programs. Participants also viewed it as APA's responsibility to intervene, stated that they perceived APA to be doing little about the internship crisis, or stated specific actions the APA should take (most often in accrediting more internships or forcing doctoral programs to reduce their size).	Shame on the APA for continuing to accredit programs that admit more than 100 students each year (P7) APA should take a stand on this issue before any long term solution can be reached (P24) To date, APA has taken practically no responsibility for the imbalance (P323) I feel like the problem needs to start with APA and their willingness to accredit huge PsyD programs which spew out way too many candidates (P940)	106
Imperative	Participants described the need for immediate and substantial action regarding the imbalance.	We are all obligated to work toward a resolution (P47) This is the number one problem facing training of psychologists. As it seems more of a systemic concern, it will not be instantly corrected. At every formal gathering of psychological professionals, this topic must be addressed, and a time table designated for its resolution must be created (P385)	93
Problem - Accreditation	Participants described problems with accreditation. Internships being unaccredited was viewed as related to the time and expense of the accreditation process, and not sites' disinclination to be APA accredited. Responsibility for accreditation problems was also placed on the APA.	I'd also make it less expensive and laborious for sites to become APA-accredited (P2) The barriers to the creation of new internship programs are unacceptably high (cost, paperwork, 2 year waiting period to even apply for APA accreditation) (P67) I wish there was a way for APA to speed up the accreditation process in order to create more slots at other sites (P802)	68

Lack of action	Participants reported feeling as though the internship crisis was not being addressed in the profession.	APA ignor[es] the match imbalance and placing virtually all responsibility on the applicants (P323) Stop talking about change, and DO something about it (P432) It also feels as though APA, APPIC and the field of psychology are doing little to help the situation with this year's disparity being the largest ever (P651) No entity wants to take responsibility for the imbalance (P807)	51
<i>Reactions</i>			
Unfair	Participants described the match as unfair, for reasons including lack of positions or abundance of applicants.	It seems unfair to have a lack of positions, considering we are required to complete an internship to finish our degree (P31) It was during this difficult process that I realized how unfair it is for training programs to continue 'mass producing' psychologists, especially programs that are not even accredited (P712) (Also coded as Responsibility-other)	85
Unacceptable	Participants described the match as being unacceptable.	To have this process prolonged due to no fault of my own is unacceptable (P738) [The internship crisis is] absurd (P425), insane (P378), preposterous (P40), crazy (P822), asinine (P918), a travesty (P805), wrong (P739), inappropriate (P684), deplorable (P409).	70
Unethical	Participants perceived the internship process, or organizations involved with it, as being unethical. As one participant reported. Participants perceived training programs to be unethical due to the number of students admitted.	It is irresponsible, unethical, and should be illegal for an organization to REQUIRE that well qualified students complete an internship that the organization is unable to provide (P211) I believe that it is unethical to train people for internships and jobs that don't exist (P361)	49
Ridiculous for one year of training	Participants reported that the costs of applying to internship were not commensurate with the rewards, and that the disparity between investment and returns—even if one matches—was untenable.	It makes little sense to make applicants go through such a taxing process for a one-year appointment (P61) The level of stress, expense, and time that I devoted to this application process is untenable and unreasonable given that the reward at the end is just one year of underpaid, exploitative 'training' (P226).	11
<i>System problems</i>			
Site funding	Participants reported an understanding that funding was a challenge for internships. The current economic climate was reported as directly impacting the lack of internship site funding, and participants reported this relationship as the reason why sites continue to shut down or suffer loss of funding. Participants offered suggestions to improve site funding.	Funding for internships is not unlimited (P56) Reduce barriers to agencies to provide APPIC internships - reduce paperwork, fees, and definitely give agencies the flexibility to offer stipends that fit their budgets. Keeping sites open is paramount during this economic downturn (P270) Establishing new training sites is especially difficult when the economy is down or recovering (P1055)	74

Damage to the field	Participants described perceiving the internship crisis as damaging the field of psychology and contributing to a sense that psychology is not a well-regarded profession.	I'm afraid the imbalance goes way beyond the internship year. How can our field remain well respected and balanced if we're churning out 4000+ psychologists a year? (P24) With the current sloppy standards we have set out, it is no wonder a large number of consumers and health care providers view our field with doubt, if not enmity (P78)	66
System is broken	Participants made macro-level observations, naming the imbalance in terms of failures and flaws of a larger system of stakeholders.	Unfortunately, I don't believe it is only the imbalance which is problematic - the entire system truly needs to be re-evaluated (P180) No matter what I did to get more experience/improve my CV, in the end I really believe that this system is so broken that it comes down to a crashout (P555)	33
<i>Solutions</i>			
Other professions do it better	Participants generally made this reference in regard to medicine. Participants reflected on the higher residency match rate as evidence that the field of medicine conducts their match better and other professions that were viewed as holding potential solutions for resolving the internship imbalance.	The imbalance, which does not exist in the medical community, directly impacts our daily work with patients and with other professionals (P11) [Also coded as Affects academic training] I do not see a reason we can't follow more of a medical model and make the internship year a requirement for licensure, but not for obtaining the degree (P180)	50
Informed consent	Participants stated that they had no knowledge of internship or match rates, prior to graduate schools. Participants suggested this information be placed in context.	[Match rates should be] clearly contrasted with normative/average match rates, and widely publicized to potential incoming graduate students (P249) As an undergrad applying for graduate schools, I do not think I even understood what internship was! (P610) Had I been fully apprised of the match imbalance, and the match rates of my program, I never would have enrolled (P868)	49
Don't know	Participants reported an inability to offer solutions for the match imbalance.	I'm not well educated enough [...] to make a concrete suggestion (P26) If someone were to ask me 'how can we improve this problem?' I would have no answer. I have no idea (P516)	46
Solution 1:1	Participants stated that if internships were required for graduation, they should be provided to everyone who needed one.	I think there should be an even number of students as there are sites (P339) Supply should match demand (P877)	43
Abolish internship	Participants suggested removing the internship year as a requirement for graduation from the program.	If there are not enough internships, it should not be a requirement of graduating and/or getting licensed (P69) It is entirely foolish and idiotic to require an internship (P652)	27
Feedback	Participants expressed frustration at the lack of feedback provided to applicants from internship sites. Feedback was seen as an opportunity for constructive criticism and as a way of offsetting distress.	It leaves those applicants with more questions about their abilities, and having a way that sites could give constructive feedback I think would be helpful for them (P140) I contacted sites where I interviewed to see if I could get feedback to improve for next year, however I received no feedback (P478)	11

Fig. 1. Timeline and systems models

Fig. 2. Reciprocal theory of internship-related stress