**Some thoughts on a graduate student “career”**

Joel Meyer, April 2020

**Intent in writing this document**: This is intended to be a starting point and list of resources and ideas to stimulate thought and discussion on how to get the most out of being a graduate student in my laboratory. Along with my “Thoughts on running a lab” (link on my lab website), it doubles as a mentoring philosophy statement. There is no one answer to how to best do a PhD—everyone is different. I do think that there are some general bits of advice that are pretty widely helpful, though, and so have written down some of those that occur to me. I am also compiling a list of related resources (at the end of this document). Finally, of course, this will be different for different mentors, PhD programs, universities, etc; I tried to highlight the parts that are specific to me.

Please read my thoughts on running a lab, the PhD student self- and advisor annual evaluation forms, the one-on-one meeting report format, and the lab website. All of this will help you understand how I think about interactions with PhD students, and my job in general.

Suggestions are welcome!

**General advice:**

Enjoy! There are plenty of hard things in getting a PhD, but remember that you are getting paid (although not a lot in actual stipend dollars) to get a PhD, to think about exciting science, and to make a difference in the world. You are surrounded by incredible resources and smart, interesting people. Take a moment every now and then to remember how lucky we are to have jobs like this (something I am intentional about as well!).

Get the job done! In some ways, getting a PhD is like a regular job—you are a skilled professional in the process of becoming more skilled and professional, and you have a job to do. You have the luxury of a great deal of schedule flexibility (limited to some degree by class and other schedules, and to some degree by the biology of your experimental systems). At the same time, you have a lot of work to do. You can experiment with many different work styles (early bird? Night owl? Write at home? Write in the library? etc.), but you have a lot of work to do. As you explore, keep working.

Communicate clearly with me and those around you. Clear communication is part of good professional behavior. I appreciate feedback, don’t know everything, and try very hard to be fair and supportive even when feedback is unpleasant.

Pay attention to your mental health: graduate school can end up being hard on mental health – demoralizing when progress is slow, isolating when you don’t have close connections, etc… This is sadly both common and normal. Duke has many resources available (see the ITEHP and NSOE and graduate school websites). If you are comfortable doing so, I’d prefer that you also communicate with me if/when these issues arise. If you feel the need for an occasional ‘mental health day,’ send me a quick no-questions-asked note to say that you are taking one.

Take advantage of the enormous range of academic and nonacademic resources offered you by various parts of Duke!

**My responsibilities are:**

Meet regularly (typically, every two weeks) with you and provide feedback (see one-on-one data reports document) on your progress and plans. This may at times be more frequent, depending on your stage of career.

Work to adapt my management style and preferences to yours (see lab management document).

Be responsive by email to questions, meeting requests, etc. (typically within a day or two).

Provide careful and reasonably prompt feedback on documents such as manuscript drafts, research proposals (e.g., thesis proposals, grant proposals), etc. Typically, a few days to a couple of weeks at the most, depending on the length of the document, how busy I am, and whether you let me know to plan for a time-sensitive request.

Provide feedback and suggestions on professional development (writing, presenting, etc.).

Encourage your development as an independent researcher. To me, earning a degree called Doctor of Philosophy implies not just technical knowledge and skills but independent thinking at a high level.

Assist you with networking and learning the “soft skills” of the academic world.

Support attendance at minimally one international meeting per year, at the least after you have data to show. Support your attendance at at least 1-2 local meetings (GEMS, NCSOT, CSETAC, etc.) per year, even before you have data.

Advocate for you in your career development, including prompt letters of recommendation.

**My suggestions to you:**

Work time.

This is very difficult to specify. Minimally, expect to work 40 hours per week doing science (reading, experiments, meetings, thinking, planning, etc.; time spent on non-work items while physically at work does not count). Keep in mind that everyone in the lab helps at some level with maintenance jobs. Also keep in mind that you are likely to sometimes need to be flexible with your time; biological experiments rarely fit neatly into a 9-5 M-F schedule, so some evening/weekend work is likely to be necessary if you get to the point of doing experiments. And there will be “time crunch” periods (just before your prelim, grant submission times, etc.). But on the flip side, that flexibility might mean taking long weekend breaks, taking off work in the middle of the afternoon, etc. (and I do not normally ask that you “request” such time off ahead of time; I trust you to make these choices responsibly, unless I tell you otherwise). And overall, productivity and progress are more important than hours worked per se; I will provide feedback on this in our biweekly and annual meetings (I am considering adding a “goals/progress” timeline and checklist to the biweekly reports). This includes failed experiments, time spent reading science and thinking, etc. Recording this kind of time (which doesn’t show up easily as a graph or a paper) and making it explicit is one reason I think that lab meeting presentations, lab notebooks, and one-on-one reports are important.

Work on finding a good work balance between staying productive by accomplishing to-do list items (classwork, experiments, paper publishing, etc.) and setting aside time for thinking creatively, broadly, and deeply. Relatedly, it is very important to balance urgent, but less important items (study for that test you have tomorrow) vs non-urgent, but very important items (keep up on the literature in your field). Think about how to structure your work habits to best accomplish this. Do you need to practice “eating your frog?” Do you want to find a way to be sure that I or others check in to keep you moving, or does that make you feel disrespected? The structure of your biweekly reports to me, along with annual evaluations, is meant to encourage this, but feel free to suggest something different that you think might work better for you.

And of course: getting a PhD is demanding, and if you are pursuing an academic career, the bar is pretty high for productivity. I fear that 40 hours a week is very unlikely to be enough for academic success unless you are exceptionally gifted or lucky. But please note that I do NOT think that an academic career is what all PhD students should strive for, and ~40 hours/week should be enough to get a PhD in 5 years if you are efficient with that time. And there is definitely such a thing as too many work hours; you won’t be productive, successful, or happy over the long term if you don’t find out the right work-life balance. This is different for different people, and figuring this out for yourself is part of what the PhD process will let you do. One way to think about this time is an opportunity to find out for yourself if you like it enough to work more than that. I do not want you to make yourself miserable!

Be a good lab citizen*.*

This has several parts. Be careful about experimentation, data gathering and storage, and interpretation (see Data SOP document). Document your work carefully, and update lab protocols as appropriate. Remember that we are in the business of testing things, not proving them! I would much prefer to have a pet hypothesis disproven, or have a “lower-impact,” less exciting paper come out of the lab, than publish a high-impact, wrong one. Be careful with lab resources—especially shared ones--e.g., if you use something up or get close, make sure it is replaced! (but keep in mind that your time is valuable; don’t waste resources, but don’t save a few bucks at the cost of hours or days of your own time). Help others out, as you would have them help you out.

Respect others’ time. Keep in mind that others (labmates, professors, etc.) are busy, and make best use of time that they give you. For example, important specific behaviors are:

--Take careful notes when someone is teaching you a method.

--Respond to emails, even when it is just to confirm receipt/agreement, normally within a couple of days.

--Come prepared to meetings. Be ready to succinctly and clearly explain what you have done, what you are planning to do, and the background for any questions you may have.

--Ask for help, feedback, really anything, with as much lead time as possible (and you \*should\* be asking for help! And yes, I repeated that on purpose). Of course, emergencies do occur and you should not feel bad about them; but emergencies should rarely result from poor planning.

Take ownership of your work.

--Be sure you understand what you are doing, and why--well enough to explain your methods, what you expect to test with the experiment, what the limitations are, etc.

--Work towards a good balance between seeking assistance and being independent. Ask others how you are doing!

--Strive to be independent thinker while maintaining positivity about what you are doing.

--Learn how to hold yourself responsible for progress. I have structured lab presentations and one-on-one reports to try to facilitate this, but most PhD program milestones are both few and far between and of very high consequence (eg, the prelim) compared to most undergraduate milestones. It is part of your professional development to figure out how to hold yourself accountable, but again, it is also fine to ask for changes in my “typical” approach if you want to try something different. Note that broad timelines for the ENV program (eg, prelim timing) are posted online: <https://nicholas.duke.edu/academics/doctoral-programs/environment-env>.

--Attend and participate fully in lab meetings, journal clubs, etc. Take initiative to find and attend local and international meetings, seminar series, etc.).

Take responsibility for communication. Yes, I am intentionally revisiting this topic. I can’t possibly cover all situations here; many (e.g. “productivity”) are impossible to really define usefully and quantitatively. Therefore, it is really critical to establish and maintain regular, clear communication about expectations and evaluations. If you are unsure of something, ask me! Communicating clearly and honestly is a process that continues for all of us as part of our professional development.

Trust, and assume trust, unless you have reason not to. As discussed in the lab management document, I operate on trust unless given reason not to. I assume that you will do the same, and think that this is under most circumstances the best choice for a productive work environment. Certainly, I hope that this is true of me and my lab (I acknowledge that this may be a bad choice in the context of people will take advantage of others; my goal is to create an environment in which that is not a concern). If you think this is not the case for your relationship with someone else in the lab, then please talk to me about it; if this is not the case for me, then please talk to someone above me about it!

Publish. Publishing your research in a peer-reviewed venue is important for many reasons. First, the experience of writing, receiving critiques, and revising is an important part of PhD training. Second, it is important to get external (the peer reviewers) assessment of your work. Third, in most cases, your work is supported by taxpayer dollars, and it is our responsibility to return a “product.” Fourth, in most cases, publication will be important for obtaining your next job. A related question students often ask is how many publications are expected. There is not an easy answer to this. Minimally certainly you should have one first-author research paper. In most cases, I recommend aiming for more, unless that one is an exceptionally good paper. There are philosophical and practical differences about whether to aim for one big paper or multiple smaller ones; we can discuss these (I don’t think there is one “right answer). Your goals may also vary based on your career aspirations (for example, academic career success has a high bar for publication). But remember that ultimately, graduation depends on convincing your committee that you have earned a PhD; frustratingly, this can’t be boiled down to a simple “number of publications” metric.

Professional development. In addition to typical academic activities (going to conferences, publishing, etc.), think about what kind of professional development activities you think want to pursue. Past graduate students in the lab have served as president of GPSC, taught courses local colleges and carried out teaching training, worked at Duke’s Environmental Law Clinic, etc. I will be supportive of these as long as you are making good progress on your research!

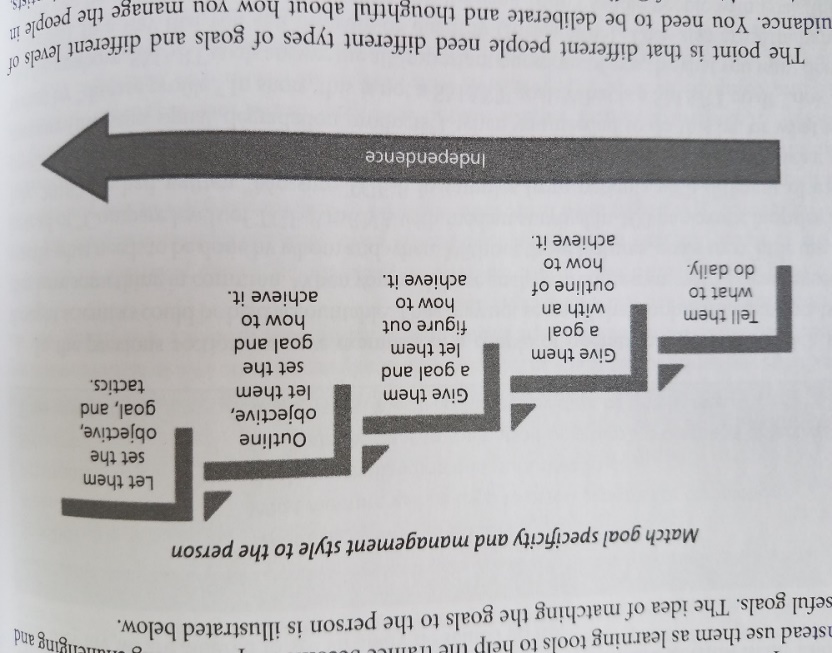
Finally, keep in mind that at some point, I will be writing you a letter of recommendation (or many), addressing scientific creativity and accomplishment, productivity, ability to work with others, responsibility, independence, maturity, and more. What do you want me to be able to say about you? Our annual evaluation process is a formal opportunity for you to assess yourself and remind me of all of your accomplishments; it is also an opportunity for me to provide feedback on strengths and areas for growth that I have noted.

**Resources, blogs etc. from others**:

There is a lot more that could be said—learning leadership skills, mentoring, networking, etc. Luckily, there are a lot of other good resources out there addressing these and other topics, including:

At the Bench: a useful guide to laboratory science essentials. <https://www.cshlpress.com/default.tpl?cart=1565019820240232548&fromlink=T&linkaction=full&linksortby=oop_title&--eqSKUdatarq=470>

A number of other books are available in my office “Lab Library”: Eat your frog, Lab Dynamics, etc.

A useful schematic on independence, reflecting the fact that the job will change somewhat as you progress through your PhD; in particular, you will become more and more independent as time goes on. Here’s a conceptual illustration of that idea, from the book Lab Dynamics:

A page full of resources, including a different predoc-mentor contract and authorship guidelines: <https://www.sciencema.com/resources>

additional links:

<http://blogs.nature.com/soapboxscience/2012/08/01/beginnings-top-10-tips-to-succeed-in-your-phd>

<http://marcua.net/writing/gradschool-guide/>

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hZTMUGA6e2BFMbezRoASUL_giQjjhESqcGXjfD9Ow8A/mobilebasic?fbclid=IwAR1P12qRzlEVioHlAUdJsmQhQZArH0znz91Z7uOa3YsjRh55In1MDmVMxM0>

<http://www.idemployee.id.tue.nl/g.w.m.rauterberg/jobs/PhD-student-advice.pdf>

<https://www.benchfly.com/blog/what-makes-a-great-graduate-student/>

(Also, note that I am not attempting to replicate the logistics- and resources-related information on the ITEHP or ENV or Duke Graduate School websites, which are all also very useful in other ways).

What we wish was made explicit to us early on in grad school

February 2018

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\*\*\*A Note on Authorship:  Larisa Reznik compiled the first 12, in conversation with Denis Hirschfeldt and Jay Stull.  Others have been adding their wisdom (with names added to reflect their contributions) and hopefully the list will continue to grow.  Please feel free to get in touch with suggestions of things to add.

1) Learn to work with other students, whether it's exam prep, writing groups, etc. Although all our work in the humanities is deeply collaborative, it's not always as visible and obvious as in the physical sciences, where people actually write joint papers, etc.

2) For some of us, schooling educates us out of some homes and, if we are lucky, into new ones. Many people won't get it, especially if you come from a background where you were supposed to be the "smart kid" who "made it," meaning you cashed in your intelligence for financial stability your family, friends, and community never had. So, find a community and a support system early on. That may be your cohort or, if your cohort is really competitive and you don't feel you can be vulnerable with them, seek out people elsewhere. But find your people early on and be clear that finding your support system IS part of doing your job as a grad student, not some extra thing only those who can't tough it out do!

3) Apply to lots of things, all the time—summer programs, language stipends, conference travel, etc., and take rejection as a sign that you're actively engaged in the process of applying. If you're not getting rejections, you're probably not applying to enough stuff. Places have little and big pots of money, so seek them out. Ask advisors for help with this.

It is their job!

3A) Repeat the previous sentence often. You are not imposing on people. It is their job to advocate for you, help you pursue various opportunities, and help you succeed. They cannot help you if they don't know what you need! Even if you think it’s so obvious that you need help with X, it may not be obvious to them.  Some of them need to be nudged a few times because there’s a lot going on.

4) Be prepared to suck at stuff. You probably have had a lot of positive feedback about your intellectual abilities and coming into grad school, you may find that the thing that made you *you*, the thing that, elsewhere, gave you positive reinforcement suddenly becomes the thing that makes you want to cry. But, it's important to realize that everyone sucks at some aspect of grad school, even if you don't see it. And there are certain things that you actually can't learn to do without first sucking. Teaching, for example, is one of those where you have to show up every day and suck and know that you suck and eventually you suck less and less and maybe one day you even get to be an awesome teacher. But you can't side-step sucking. So, think of sucking as giving you diagnostic information, not subjection to a ritual of humiliation. You are actually in grad school to learn stuff you don't know, not confirm that you already know stuff and are good at stuff.

5) [Related to 4] Learning is a developmental process. This sounds so, so obvious but it's one thing to say it; it is quite a different thing to believe it. So, many people understand that you can't just put on a pair of sneakers and run a marathon. They also understand that if you want to write, say, a computer program, you need a complex technical vocabulary. But those same people think they are complete idiots because they can't understand a word of Derrida in their intro class.

 6) Do not feel that you have to take responsibility for every piece of feedback everyone ever gives you. Listen to critical feedback carefully but ultimately you make decisions about where you have to “do you” and where you need to make some serious revisions. Not metabolizing any feedback leads to bad work. Metabolizing ALL the feedback means you end up having no voice and saying nothing.

7) You are not a good judge of your own work and abilities at certain points for various reasons, most importantly because you have no idea going in what kind of a thinker you will have turned out to be, how good your thesis will be, or how you'll learn to bring things together. Keeping that in mind, make sure you know how to step out of an evaluative paradigm. The kinds of things you think are markers of success in grad school usually just aren't, in the big picture. So, that really smart kid in your class who seems to know all the Derrida, you have no idea whether he'll actually turn out to have something to say to the profession and neither does he or his advisors at this point. So, stop comparing yourself with others, stop trying to assess your fitness for this work in these bizarre places (like who said what in a seminar). There's just not enough information there to give you a sense of whether this work is the right fit and whether you will, one day, be good at this.

8) Find friends who are not academics and spend time with other people not only because if you don't your social skills will completely atrophy and when you have to go on the job market you have no idea how to talk to actual, live humans but also because it's important to balance the narcissism of grad school with constant reminders that you have obligations to other people, who love you and need you and have all sorts of difficult things going on in their lives (aging parents, sick children, difficult relationships, etc.) that has *nothing* to do with “planet-you” and the little university and book fortress you've built around yourself. There are lots of people who just don't care that you need to finish this conference paper because something else is, in fact, more important. For some people this is built in by virtue of having kids while in grad school.  But even if you don’t have children (in grad school or ever), you still have families of one sort or another (extended, queer, non-bio, etc.).  Figuring out early on that you still have real responsibilities to others and you have to show up helps create better time management skills because you realize early on that part of your time is, in fact, already committed to other people, you HAVE TO get this done in the next 45 minutes or NEVER.

9) Make acquaintance with a few happy, well-adjusted, American white dudes (shouldn't be that difficult at a university) and use whatever anthropological skills you have to study them. They ask for things. They ask for help, like a lot! They often don't find their own work embarrassing and cringe-worthy. They don't tend to find themselves unqualified or under-qualified for, like, most things. They always make time for physical activity and hobbies. They outsource a lot of labor to others! Don't be them but do notice the things that come with ease to them and learn from it. [The assumption here is that if you are reading this, you are not, in fact, a well-adjusted, American white dude.  Plenty of white, American men in academia struggle with all of these issues and they too can learn from the genre of personhood designated by the descriptor “well-adjusted, American white dude.”]

10) DO NOT under any circumstances define good, valuable work as work that you, by definition, cannot do. Do and value the work that you *can* do!

11) Logistics, bureaucracy, and learning how academic systems work--Some of us learned the ins and outs of so-called “best practices” in the academy before coming to grad school and others did not.  For example, a lot of people don’t realize why when you apply to things that require a letter of recommendation the application system generates a request for waiving your right to see the letter.  You need to check that box because your recommender needs to know that you won’t see the letter and those reading the letter need to know that they can trust the recommender to give a fair and balanced assessment of you as a candidate, something that may not happen if everyone knows you’re also reading the letter.  Or, replying to certain emails with a confirmation that you’ve received them and the matter is settled is not that obvious but something important that is often done in the academy to conclude a particular communication process and make sure everyone is on the same page.  Or, if you need, say, color chalk to teach a class, you need to ask what resources are available to you rather than going out and buying your own chalk on the assumption that you’re not entitled to any.  These seem like small things but these small things are precisely the kind of things that some people come in knowing and others not so much.  Again, observe how others communicate via email, know your rights and what you are entitled to, and if you don’t understand some bit of paperwork, don’t ignore it.  Ask your advisor or a fellow student.  Don’t be shy [See 3A].  You need to figure out not just how things are done but the reasoning behind it because that’s what makes universities run and understanding how and why these structures work (and often don’t work) will give you the ability to navigate them more effectively and the opportunity to try to change things that you see as unfair or ineffective.

12) Communication and hierarchy--somewhere between addressing your professors as “Yo, Jane” and “Herr Professor Doktor X von Z, III” there exists a bottomless pit of ambiguity and figuring out how to balance giving people the respect they deserve with resisting the perpetuation of structural inequality built into casual communication in the academy is something many of us are trying to figure out every day.  What some people find practical and convenient, others find insulting and hurtful. With that in mind, we all need to pick our battles and figure out when a demand for a certain level of formality is a sign of respect and when it is a sign of aggression.

A) Generational differences. People have very different communication styles and norms.  This is particularly visible where generational divides and text-messaging communication converge.  If you have faculty members who write you emails in complete, perfectly-punctuated sentences and sign off with “Prof. Robert X,” DO NOT under any circumstances reply with “K.  C U tmrw, Bob.”  In your heart of hearts, you may believe that language purism is bullshit and that professors who insist that you call them by their title are part of the very hierarchical, patriarchal, racist, classist, homophobic problem you came to grad school to work against.  Some of those professors undoubtedly ARE that.  But for some of them, crafting an email to you with complete sentences says “I respect you and took time to express myself in a clear and professional demeanor”; and receiving back an email that says “K Thnx” feels like a slap in the face, like you are SO busy and important you can’t even bother to spell out “Okay.”  Again, these are generational and cultural differences about what feels and look like respectful behavior.

With that said, in the academy, like everywhere else, there are a lot of people who are racist, sexist, and awful in all sorts of obvious and not so obvious ways.  So, sometimes, it’s not a generational thing but a racist thing or a sexist thing, which is given a moral alibi by “generational difference” talk.  If you suspect the latter is going on, then you have every right to get help, support, and redress.  These things aren’t always that clear because often racist and sexist attitudes are deployed in diffuse ways and you just know them by their effects.  If you’re not sure, ask a trusted faculty member or a mentor for advice.

B) Race and gender.  DO NOT, under any circumstances, address female faculty and faculty of color in any way other than the way they wish to be addressed.  Obviously, some people really don’t care how you address them.  But for others, when you address them as “Hey, Jane,” what you are saying is “Those deserving to be called ‘Professor’ are old, white dudes and you don’t count as one, so I won’t address you that way.”

C) This goes for communication with a variety of people—administrative staff, your TAs, etc. A lot of institutions are especially terrible at showing staff the respect they deserve.  Whether you are interacting with someone in facilities, events planning, the department coordinator, or the subject area bibliographer in the library, remember that these people are working *with* faculty and students, NOT *for* them.  Many faculty members (and grad students) forget this and often exhibit thoughtless and disrespectful behavior towards staff.  Or, they just don’t acknowledge or appreciate just how much various members of the university staff do to make every aspect of their professional life possible.  Don’t be that person!

13) Cultivate relationships with early-career scholars, mid-career scholars, and senior scholars at other universities, in your field and in related fields. It is of course important to have good, supportive relationships with your supervisor, committee, etc., but the academy is really a set of intersecting nerd terraria. You want to have allies in as many nerd terraria as you can, for a whole bunch of reasons, from the practical (job searches in fields you didn't train in) to the intellectual (keeping abreast of stuff that other people are thinking). (h/t Stephanie Frank)

14) The conversation and hierarchy within your sub field is not as all-important as it seems to be. The people hiring you will most likely \_not\_ be experts in your field: if they already have someone who does your thing, they won't be hiring you. So learn to talk to people in related fields, because they will decide your fate. Also, it's less stressful, and will make you a better writer. (h/t Dustin Atlas)

15) Buy an electric toothbrush (because dental is effing expensive) and save a few months of stipend money, if possible, for future rent/summers/moving/etc! (h/t Anthony Petro)

16) Never underestimate local knowledge of the department by fellow grad students. Grad students watch faculty all the time because their careers depend on understanding their whims. Pay attention when they tell you a professor is toxic or sabotages students or writes negative letters of recommendation without warning students or has a reputation for never reading a female student's work. Particularly pay attention when multiple students have had bad experiences. (h/t Liane Carlson)

17) Ask your older friends to see their application materials. There's a formula to this stuff and the best way to figure out out is reading a lot of successful models.(h/t Liane Carlson)

18) Try to publish in journals besides the main one in your sub-field, and read a lot of what are considered second and third tier journals.  In [some fields], the first-tier journals are mostly the reserve of white guys, and lots of really interesting stuff, much of it by women and non-white people, ends up in what are considered (by the white guys) less prestigious journals. But what I've learned is: so what! Well, sure I object to the racist patriarchy that casts prestige in this way, but as for how to spend my days, I want to talk with those other people, so I should be going to their lectures at conferences and reading those journals. (h/t Joy Brennan)

19) Attend business meetings at conferences. Especially of smaller sub-groups in which you have an interest. Speak up. Suggest possible future topics. If you're nervous about this, make your suggestions tentative--just asking if there is interest in x or y. Small groups are always looking for new blood. At least some of the people there will talk to you afterwards, and you will have new contacts which you can follow up with a nice-to-meet-you email. Eventually, after two or three years of attendance, they will talk to each other about you, and consider making you chair of a panel, or giving you a role on the board. That's a CV entry, and will lead to more contacts. (h/t Oona Eisenstadt)

20)  If you're a straight white able-bodied cisdude your life may still be difficult in graduate school, and it can be taxing for sure and you also need to develop practices of self-preservation, and that's real. BUT there are indeed numerous invisible-to-you structures that support and enable you, and privileges that you definitely have that your Black grad colleagues, colleagues of color, LGBTQI+ colleagues, cisfemale colleagues, folks with disabilities, etc. etc. simply do not - and often (i.e. almost always) the result is that their experiences in academic spaces are marked by various forms of violence, gatekeeping, disciplining, mansplaining, microaggressions, second-guessing, and generally inhospitable conditions, etc. that you have probably never had to think about or face in your life. Listen to them, and do what you can (use your immense privileges as a tool, fool) to support them, stand behind them, stick up for them when appropriate, send them resources, invite them to panels because they do good work (don't tokenize), speak up for them if/when welcomed, cite their work, give them credit, take on committee/grad work that supports diversity initiatives so they don't have to, give them space/stop taking up space, advocate for them, etc. etc. and do it without expectations for back-patting, overt forms of recognition, or people telling you how great of an "ally" you are. \*But also\* know that this work will never be complete and requires a lot of hard looks in the mirror, getting things wrong, and self-reflection. Be an accomplice and do it because (a) you can; not because anyone is asking, and because (b) everybody wins when more people are able to thrive in a community. You might just make the best friends of your life too and shed some of that weight of white guilt/shame/resentment. And when you think you've "done enough," check yourself - wash, rinse, and repeat. (h/t Matthew Houdek)

21) When your department hosts events (a lecture by a scholar from out of town, for example), go to those events. Professors put a lot of time into planning those events for the benefit of graduate students. Also, if your university is doing a search for a new faculty member, attend the finalists' job talks. You are allowed to! More than that, encouraged to. And attend dissertation defenses too, if those are open to the whole department. You'll get a good observation of what various professors' interpersonal manner in that situation.(h/t Clancy Ratliff)