

# Transition as a New Investigator: Strategizing For Your Career as an Investigator After Graduate Training

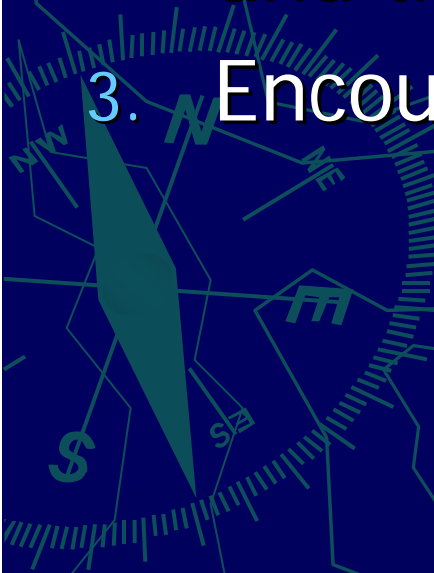
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# Goals of the talk

1. Discussing strategies in graduate school to set you up for an academic position
2. Transitioning into an academic position and the challenges I faced
3. Encourage questions and discussion



# A little background – my professional path to date

Milked cows

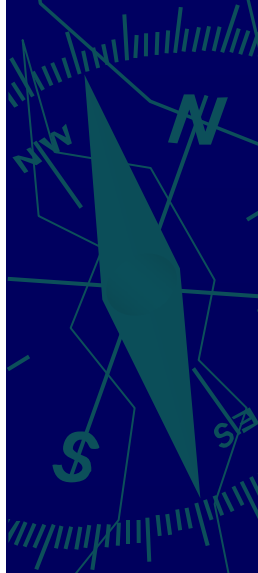
Health Psychology  
Research Firm

York  
University to  
study  
moms and  
babies

York  
University to  
study moms  
and babies  
(in pain)

Clinician-to-  
be at UBC ;  
Internship  
at LHSC

Hybrid Post-  
doctoral/Faculty year  
at York/Sick Kids



# Who are you?

- ▶ Bench vs. Bedside
- ▶ MA
- ▶ PhD
- ▶ Post-Doctoral



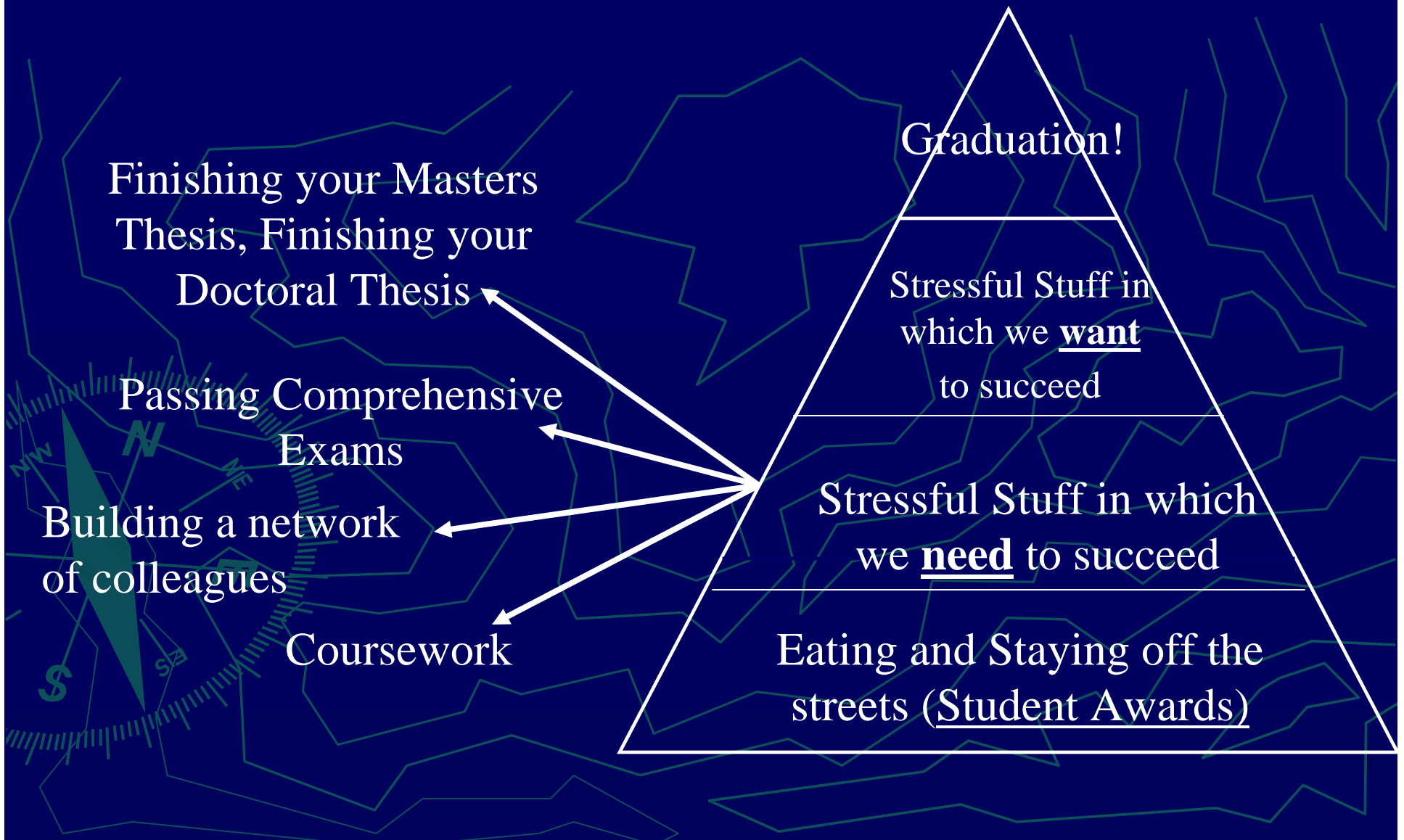
# Defining Success

- ▶ Oxford Reference Dictionary
  - A favourable outcome, the accomplishment of what was aimed at
- ▶ Define your own aims and work backwards to create a timeline!
- ▶ The pitfalls of comparison
- ▶ Perfectionism: Psychopathology versus Path to success
- ▶ We all fail
  - don't derail
  - initiate improvement
  - remember randomness in the process

# Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970)



# Maslowvian application to graduate school



# Level 1 NEEDS

## Eating and Shelter

### STUDENT FUNDING/AWARDS

#### ▶ Beware the Sirens of Moolah

*" You must drive on past, but melt down sweet wax of honey and with it stop your ears" (The Odyssey of Homer)*

#### ▶ Publish your Thesis, Dissertation, Minor Area Papers, Class Papers

- Strongest predictors of those who finish a PhD? - research competence and number of publications (Lord, 2004)
- Posters and Papers

#### ▶ Think of reference letters in advance (both research and/or clinical)

#### ▶ Keep your vitae updated as you go along

#### ▶ APPLY, APPLY, APPLY: It gets easier

# Level 2 NEEDS

## BUILDING A NETWORK OF COLLEAGUES

(Hess & Sauser, 2001; Chambers, 2002; Penner, Dovidio & Schroeder, 2004)

- ▶ **“Family of mentors” (inside and outside of the department; different levels; different skills)**
- ▶ **Avoid bitter senior students**
- ▶ **Attend conferences and network**
- ▶ **Be a “good citizen” of your department and profession**
- ▶ **Be a good colleague (accept criticism, mentor others, seek out collaborations, be prompt)**

# Level 2 NEEDS

## Coursework

- ▶ “Just right” Effort: Be the baby bear
- ▶ Grades are not a significant predictor of getting a PhD (Lord, 2004)
- ▶ Synergize: Think about papers for courses strategically - Can you publish it? Can you explore a helpful new area?
- ▶ Keep your syllabi and keep your notes!

# Level 2 NEEDS

## Passing

### Comprehensive Exams

- ▶ What do you have to do and think of the steps: exams versus minor/major papers?
- ▶ Know thyself and plan accordingly
  - ▶ Writing style, love (strongly like) your topic and publish it
  - ▶ Exam taking style, limited mastery and using your fellow students wisely



# Level 2 NEEDS

## Masters and Dissertation Theses

- ▶ Piggy-back Masters Theses
- ▶ Pick your sample wisely
- ▶ Keep on top of your data collection
- ▶ Have a stats consultant
- ▶ Try to have the Dissertation in a rough draft stage at least 12 months before you plan to start your post-graduation position

# Level 3 WANTS

(only when your needs are met)

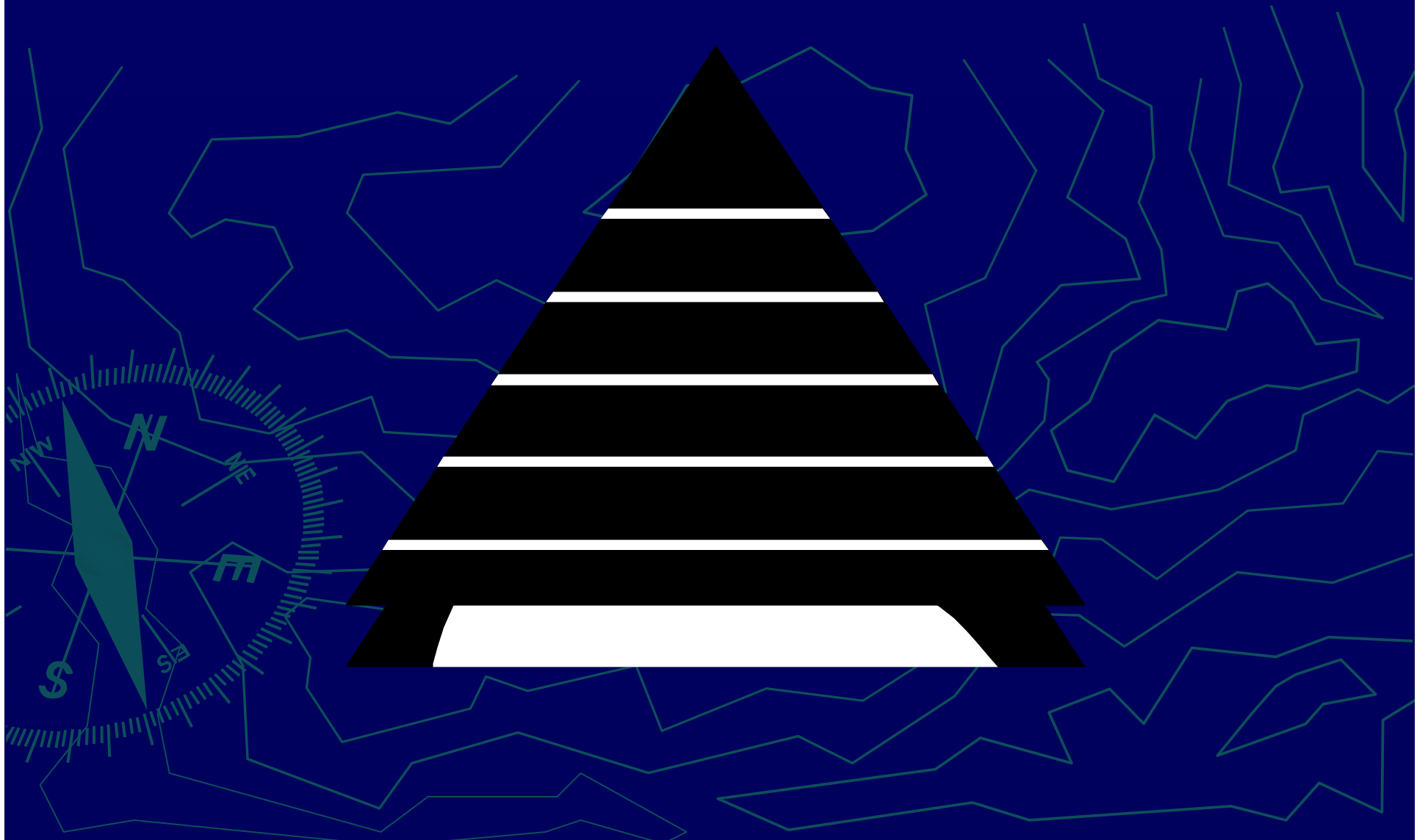
- ▶ Extra research projects
- ▶ Hiring committee - many need student reps
- ▶ Mentoring Honours and MA level students
- ▶ Looking for additional training opportunities
- ▶ Teaching Opportunities
  - Not a huge factor in research positions (Guinee 2006)

# Level 4: Graduation!

## Transitioning into being a New Investigator

- ▶ How much do you love research?
  - Would you be willing to work for \$35 000 for 4 years before getting a faculty position?
  - Can you handle the 6 years of Publish or Perish?
  - Do you work well in an unstructured environment?
  - Are you bursting with ideas for a program of research?
  - Do you love to present? Do you love to write?

# Truth



# Steps to Transitioning- BEFORE YOU GRADUATE

1. Think about what you want more postdoctoral fellowship or tenure stream faculty position or hospital-based scientist? Then pursue both – The need for Plan B, C, D...
2. Applications for post-doctoral funding opportunities and faculty positions are generally due 1 year before you would start (Lots of health specific opportunities)
3. Start looking for opportunities at that 1 year mark
  - Ads come out generally in the late summer/early fall (sometimes early jan/feb)
  - Professional Associations
  - Academic websites: [www.academicwork.ca](http://www.academicwork.ca); [www.sciencecareers.org](http://www.sciencecareers.org)
  - Listserves
  - Conferences
  - Bookmark universities in your preferred cities
  - Bookmark hospitals in your preferred cities

# Applying for the Job

1. CV, Cover letter, Teaching Statement, Research Statement, Reference letters, Reprints
  - ▶ Get samples
  - ▶ Get mentors experienced in academic hiring process to review your application
  - ▶ Ask referees to comment on research, teaching and collegial dimensions
2. Interview/Job Talk
  - Take notes during and/or after
  - Give your talk to a group of colleagues OUTSIDE your research area – communicate a clear, novel research program that steps away from your supervisor
  - Re-read the job ad!
  - Confident humility
  - Are you someone they want to work with for the next 20 or 30 years??
  - Sleep well the night before – first and every impression counts

# 3. Negotiating - SALARY

## 2003-2004 MEAN SALARIES

### AT ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES BY RANK (all ages)

STATISTICS CANADA - September 24, 2004

<u>Assistant Professor</u>		<u>Associate Professor</u>		<u>Full Professor</u>	
U of T	\$83,159	U of T	\$100,158	U of T	\$127,204
Western	\$77,356	York	\$96,901	Trent	\$116,955
York	\$76,959	Western	\$95,016	Waterloo	\$112,650
Queen's	\$76,847	Waterloo	\$92,906	York	\$112,107
Ryerson	\$71,454	Brock	\$92,726	Western	\$111,587
Waterloo	\$70,764	Trent	\$92,544	W. Laurier	\$110,315
McMaster	\$69,206	Carleton	\$91,248	McMaster	\$109,872
Guelph	\$69,074	Guelph	\$90,918	Brock	\$109,209
Nipissing	\$68,333	W. Laurier	\$90,154	Queen's	\$108,777
Brock	\$67,835	Queen's	\$89,661	Ottawa	\$106,979
Carleton	\$67,436	McMaster	\$89,435	Carleton	\$106,011
Laurentian	\$66,149	Nipissing	\$87,235	Guelph	\$105,350
Ottawa	\$65,687	Ottawa	\$86,968	Laurentian	\$104,990
Trent	\$65,471	Ryerson	\$85,991	Lakehead	\$102,198
Lakehead	\$64,423	Laurentian	\$84,130	Ryerson	\$101,118
W. Laurier	\$62,082	Lakehead	\$82,481	Nipissing	n/a

# 3. Negotiating cont'd

## Negotiating

- ▶ Know the market both nationally and locally
- ▶ Union rep at your university?
- ▶ Talk to friends from grad school who have just successfully obtained jobs
- ▶ Set your bottom lines before going in – get things in writing
  - ▶ salary
  - ▶ raises
  - ▶ start-up funds; who pays for phone and internet set-up and maintenance?; prepare a budget
  - ▶ lab space and renovations (!)
  - ▶ furniture
  - ▶ teaching release
  - ▶ moving expenses

# My Experience

## Myths, Misconceptions & Mistakes

1. I can't get a faculty job
2. I will hit the road running
3. I will have sooo much more time for research
4. I can give talks, therefore I can teach
5. I can set up a lab in no time
6. The more honours/grad students the better
7. The challenge of having 2 affiliations

# Helpful References

- ▶ Succeeding in Graduate School (ed. Walfish & Hess, 2001)
  - ▶ Great for the undergrad contemplating grad school and major steps within a clinical graduate program
- ▶ One Student's Take on Award Applications. (Pillai, R.R., 2002).  
*Psynopsis*, 24(4), p. 13.
  - ▶ Tips to obtaining funding in Canada
  - ▶ downloadable
- ▶ The Portable Mentor (ed. Prinstein & Patterson, 2003)
  - ▶ For the advanced clinical graduate student (including useful chapters on steps beyond grad school)
- ▶ The Compleat Academic (ed. Darley, Zanna & Roediger, 2004)
  - ▶ Advice for within Academia