ing Ely herself; McGinn (now exploring the impact on school performance, age of marriage, and other outcomes of teaching African girls negotiating skills); Chapman professor of business administration Boris Groysberg (author of Chasing Stars: The Myth of Talent and the Portability of Performance, which uncovered a significant gap in financial analysts’ ability to maintain their “star” status when they move to new firms—unpredictably, in women’s favor); associate professor of business administration Amy J.C. Cuddy (who is looking at gender stereotypes across cultures); assistant professor of business administration Lakshmi Ramarajan (who examines how individuals’ cultural and personal identities affect their engagement and performance in organizations); and others.

Since its unveiling in May, the initiative has already publicized several findings:

- HBS graduates are an elite cohort of above-average means. A survey of women and men who earned M.B.A. degrees reveals that they value careers and professional success equally. But as Ely, sociologist Pamela Stone of City University of New York, and Ammerman reported, although “about 50 percent to 60 percent of men across the three generations [said] they were ‘extremely satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with their experiences of meaningful work, professional accomplishments, opportunities for career growth, and compatibility of work and personal life, only 40 percent to 50 percent of women were similarly satisfied on the same dimensions.”
- A survey of 24 developed nations, led by McGinn, revealed that—far from being harmed—women whose mothers worked outside the home are themselves more likely to work, assume greater professional responsibilities, and achieve higher earnings than women whose mothers were at home full time.
- And although women’s under-representation in the most senior ranks of business leadership is often attributed to the lack of “family-friendly” workplace policies, an in-depth analysis of a consulting firm, co-conducted by Ely, pointed to a more intractable problem: a culture of being at work or on call around the clock—the new norm in lucrative professions like law, finance, and consulting, and one that firms are loath to restrain. Both men and women suffer in these cultures, but women are more likely to avail themselves of part-time options or otherwise adapt to care for family members, derailing their careers.

Interest in gender-related questions, Ely said, also “bubbles up from the faculty” at large. Thus, for instance, a faculty member who focuses on entrepreneurship is determining the antecedents to women’s interest in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

In addition to encouraging and publicizing research, the initiative convenes an annual conference to focus scholarship and learning from practice, engaging participants from within HBS and beyond.

Like the school’s other interdisciplinary initiatives, Ammerman said, this one provides a locus for faculty members to test ideas with colleagues, learn about pertinent research, and address new questions to data already collected for other purposes: a place to go when those queries “bubble up.” As Nohria hoped, the fledgling venture is becoming an intellectual home for women and men from the HBS faculty who want to understand how gender affects organizations’ operations—and individuals’ trajectories.—JOHN S. ROSENBERG

THE UNDERGRADUATE

Running Over Murphy’s Law

by OLIVIA MUNK ’16

AD ANYONE ASKED ME A year ago about my biggest pet peeves, I would have said I hated running (too many bad memories of middle-school gym) and getting wet in the rain (nothing can tame my hair in the presence of humidity). It was not entirely surprising, then, that I was feeling contemplative this past Father’s Day as I ran the Boston Athletic Association’s annual 10K race in the midst of a torrential downpour. It wasn’t the running or the rain that prompted me to evaluate my life as my sneakers squished down Commonwealth Avenue, but the way the combination of these formerly “negative” activities made me feel that Sunday morning: I was happier than I’d felt in as long as I could remember.

Many of my friends had complained about “sophomore slumps,” but junior year was my personal pitfall. On paper, I did just fine: I passed all my classes, secured a summer internship, and participated in all my extracurricular activities. Day to day, though, I sometimes felt that I had unwittingly wandered into a psych experiment on the effects of Murphy’s Law on a 20-year-old’s precarious emotional health. That fall, I felt constantly on the brink—of what, I couldn’t quite tell you, but each night’s sleep felt just a little too short, each reading assignment just five pages too long, each conversation with a friend a hair too tense.

This unrelenting apprehension, coupled with a few of those unfortunate life experiences that friends tell you just take time to mend (though they never explain how to pass the time in question), left me feeling completely apathetic by second semester. I had a hard time finding my former joy in classes and daily activities. Though I’m the first to admit that my natural state is overcommitment, over-caffeination tends to see me through. But when I began to choose Girls reruns to cope with my extended existential crisis instead of hangouts and meetings, I knew I was letting down the people around me even more than I was letting down myself.

Although being a statistic is not often a comfort, the numbers tell me that I was certainly not alone in my gloom: The Harvard Crimson’s Class of 2015 Senior Survey reported that 20 percent of this year’s graduating class sought treatment for depression, and 16 percent for anxiety. You don’t need a survey to know that a
high-pressure environment like college is the recipe for academic and social stress. Both the Harvard administration and its students come prepared: with mental-health options at University Health Services (UHS), Stressbuster massages run by students, House-run yoga classes, and relevant offerings from the Bureau of Study Council, just to name a few, the wellness opportunities on campus themselves can sometimes feel overwhelming.

After subtracting the hours spent in classes, libraries, and meetings, how does a busy student choose among the options? The difficulty is that taking care of your mental health is not the same as booking a UHS visit online to get a prescription for antibiotics. It takes time to determine what course of treatment is right for you, and more time for emotions to heal. Taking a meditation class instead of joining a club or completing a fifth course is not generally seen as productive for a student’s GPA or résumé. But taking the time to figure out which strategies can help you de-stress is a lifelong skill that will aid your productivity in any job. And more importantly, it’ll make you a happier person.

Had that Crimson survey controlled for seasonal treatment of depression and anxiety, I would not have been surprised to see a jump in patients this past winter: record-breaking amounts of snow turned Cambridge into a continuous snowbank that teetered high above my five-foot-one head, the perfect storm for seasonal affective disorder. It felt almost comical to be
in a such a funk while my environment exhibited weather more suited to Arctic explorers. On one of the rare mornings devoid of actual snowfall, I layered three thermal shirts, a sweater, two pairs of leggings and wool socks, and went for a run along the Charles. I'm not quite sure what prompted this unusual burst of activity, but there was something beautiful about the way the early-morning sun glinted off the ice floes in the river, and how I had no choice but to trudge through ankle-deep, untouched snow. The long stretches of white (and the finger-numbing cold) distracted me from my dilemmas enough to clear my mind, even if only for half an hour.

In college, we're rightly taught to constantly critique and analyze: our work, our situations, ourselves. But what I needed in those cold months was a way to shut off those thoughts, and for some reason I cannot run in a straight line, making me the bane of every speedbiker in Boston. So I suppose this essay is partly an extended apology to the dedicated exercisers frequenting the paths along the Charles, who have had to sprint around the novice jogger huffing and puffing in mismatched running gear during the past four months or so.

My initial routine was to bolt out of my room in Leverett House around 8:30 A.M., make it across Weeks Footbridge, slow down to a light jog as I ran past the boathouse, trot over Eliot Bridge, and limp back to the F Tower elevator before getting ready for my 10 A.M. class. This route was only about two miles, but left me exhausted for the rest of the day.

Which is why I surprised myself one random Sunday, when, as I crossed the footbridge, I made a snap decision to take a left along the river, rather than my usual right. Enticed by the new sights, I kept going, and going, and going. Without even realizing it, I had soon gone more than three miles along Storrow Drive, all the way to Back Bay's Esplanade, and had the same distance to return. Though my minutes per mile were embarrassingly high, and I could barely move my legs for the rest of the day, I felt delighted.

The spontaneously long run made me realize how trapped I had felt in my usual haunts on the other side of the bridge, where some of my least energetic days meant I didn't even make it above Mount Auburn Street. Using my own legs to take me to a previously undiscovered part of a city had made me feel mobile, in my motions and my mood. I was running away from my problems in a way that actually worked.

During the next few months I explored new routes, got a better pair of running shoes, and made pump-up playlists. I learned how to pace myself and stretch so that the strain of a run didn't last for an hour. Realizing it, I had soon gone more than three miles along Storrow Drive, all the way to Back Bay's Esplanade, and had the same distance to return. Though my minutes per mile were embarrassingly high, and I could barely move my legs for the rest of the day, I felt delighted.

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During the next few months I explored new routes, got a better pair of running shoes, and made pump-up playlists. I learned how to pace myself and stretch so that the strain of a run didn't last for days. Running continued to be my best form of therapy as the snow melted, my mood lifted, and Boston and I collectively remembered the sun and the color green.
I especially loved people-watching as I sped along the river. Though a few people brought books or laptops to entertain themselves on park benches, those who sat alone mostly just stared out at the river. I felt a kind of secret kinship with these people, who I liked to believe had brought themselves to the water’s edge for the same reason I had, to heal.

I, too, often sat on the edge of a dock on the Esplanade before making the three-mile return to my cinderblock dorm room. It’s hard not to feel existential, in a good way, about how small you are compared to everything else, how even the most challenging classes or relationships will eventually fade and flow away. Sometimes, it’s okay to not be okay. It took me a long time to realize that I deserved to find my “happy place”—not a theoretical white sandy beach, but a physical place I could go to when I felt overwhelmed, and a mental state in which I could be content. But when I found it (on the banks of the Charles, no less), I still felt like I was unwittingly involved in an experiment about Murphy’s Law, though this time in reverse. What happens to a 20-year-old college student when she stops noticing that everything goes wrong, and pays attention instead to the little things that go right? The answer is that she laces up her shoes for a jog.

Perhaps it was this fortuitous reversal that brought me to the 10K that rainy Sunday morning. A friend’s mother had signed up for the race but couldn’t make it, so I used her bib and ran in her stead. There was something incredible about racing in such inclement weather with thousands of people. Given the ubiquity of indoor exercise equipment, something about pounding the pavement must draw each runner for a different reason. Were some of these folks the lone river-watchers I had observed on my own journey to a clear mind? I ran the race without headphones, eager to process the sights and sounds of a real race uninterrupted. And yet, I often found my mind floating away for a mile or two at a time, and I couldn’t place where it had gone along the route. What I did know is that it made the burning in my legs and the raindrops down my face disappear. It may have taken me an hour and 20 minutes to run the 6.2 miles, but I didn’t stop to walk once. Somehow, I had found the peace and rest my body needed while continuing to move forward.

Once I’d finally dried off after the 10K, I met my parents for a mid-afternoon lunch. (They did a great job of pretending not to be very confused that their daughter had run six miles of her own volition.) Though I was aching more than I let on, when the waiter brought me a plate of eggs sunny side-up, I couldn’t help but beam right back. I had earned them.

New Fellows

The magazine’s Berta Greenwald Ledecky Undergraduate Fellows for the 2015-2016 academic year will be Jenny Gathright ’16 and Bailey Trela ’16. The fellows join the editorial staff and contribute to the magazine during the year, writing the “Undergraduate” column and reporting for both the print publication and harvardmagazine.com, among other responsibilities.

Gathright, of Bethesda, Maryland, and Lowell House, is concentrating in economics and also pursuing East Asian studies and Mandarin. An active member of Kuumba Singers and a peer advising fellow, she is also a former columnist for The Harvard Crimson and during spring semester helped to found Renegade, an online magazine for Harvard students of color (renegade-mag.com). Following prior summer experiences in Shanghai and on an organic farm in Hawaii, Gathright worked in Washington, D.C., this past summer—at the suitably named 1776, a venture seed fund and incubator of start-up enterprises.

Trela, of New Harmony, Indiana, and Currier House, is pursuing a concentration in English. He is board co-chair of Fifteen Minutes, the Crimson’s magazine, and a features-board member of The Harvard Advocate. During the summer of 2014, he interned at Dumbarton Oaks; this past summer, he was assistant technical director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club.

The fellowships are supported by Jonathan J. Ledecky ’79, M.B.A. ’83, and named in honor of his mother. For updates on past Ledecky Fellows and links to their work, see harvardmagazine.com/donate/special-gifts/ledecky.