

As is true of other professions, the extent of education and training is a major factor in determining how much responsibility a graduate in the field of psychology will have and what opportunities will be open. There are many routes to becoming a psychologist, and exactly what you will have to do will depend on the type of psychologist you want to become. Below are the first steps you should consider.

## **High School Students**

Your first decision as a high school graduate will be to pick a college. Finding one that offers an undergraduate major in psychology will not be difficult. At the undergraduate level, psychology is currently the most popular of all areas granting bachelor degrees. About 50,000 bachelor degrees a year are currently being awarded to psychology majors. As you will see in the descriptions of psychologists at work, there are many colleges or universities that offer a wide range of programs in psychology at the undergraduate level. The programs are as diverse as the schools and faculties that offer them. Our best advice to you is to shop around. Consult your teachers, guidance counselors, parents and friends. The Psychology Department here at Valparaiso University invites you to discuss your interests in psychology with one of its faculty members. We can provide information and guidance that will assist you in deciding whether our psychology program is right for your needs and interests.

Many high school students now have the opportunity to take an introductory course in psychology for college credit. While this is not necessary if you want to study psychology at the University, it gives you an opportunity to find out more about the subject and allows you to begin your college work with more advanced courses.

## **College Students**

Once you are in college, you will want to explore the field of psychology by taking courses in a variety of areas related to clinical, experimental and applied psychology. As you begin to define an area of interest, you will want to investigate the professional opportunities that exist within those areas. Furthermore, you will need to decide, in consultation with your academic advisor, whether graduate study is a necessary and realistic step for meeting your professional objectives. Although decisions about pursuing graduate work are frequently not made until the student's junior year of college, an earlier decision may help you be better prepared when the time comes to submit applications to graduate school.

Bachelor-level programs in psychology are designed to give the student a broad basis of knowledge, as well as some opportunities to explore specific interests. Quality programs attempt to promote learning in multiple settings such as classroom, computer, laboratory and field experiences. Students study a core of knowledge related to psychological method and theory, and then supplement this with specific learning related to their occupational objectives. This learning involves collaboration between faculty and students as we seek to study the fascinating topic of human behavior.

The flexibility inherent in psychology programs allows students to pursue a variety of employment opportunities with a bachelors degree, or to pursue a masters or doctoral degree. There are advantages to either seeking a job after graduation or continuing your education.

## **Post-Bachelors Employment Opportunities.**

Psychology majors enjoy a slight employment advantage over other liberal arts and science majors. A bachelors degree in psychology not only qualifies you for any job requiring a college degree, it is also sufficient for obtaining some types of employment in mental health fields, personnel, and positions which involve work with the public. When combined with background in business, computer science, natural science, or professional fields, psychology majors are competitive for a wide range of activities in industry and public service.

Potential Hiring Institutions for psychology (B.A. level) majors are correctional institutions; mental health clinics; social service agencies such as Planned Parenthood, educational institutions, welfare agencies, drug abuse clinics, hotline/crisis centers, and employment agencies; personnel and marketing departments in industry; vocational guidance agencies; management and personnel consultant firms; universities and colleges; behavioral and clinical institutes; and the military

## **Thinking About Graduate School.**

Graduate study in psychology. If you are considering graduate work in psychology, consult the books "Graduate Study in Psychology" and "Preparing for Graduate Study in Psychology: NOT for Seniors Only!" These publications of the American Psychological Association (APA) will tell you about graduate programs around the country, opportunities for graduate study in psychology, and possible sources for financial support. The Department of Psychology at Valparaiso University has copies of these resources available for your use.

If you are interested in pursuing graduate study in clinical, counseling, school or industrial/organization psychology, or are planning a career that will involve service to the public, two other things you should know about are (a) accreditation and (b) licensing or certification.

Accreditation is a process by which professional organizations evaluate the quality of training programs and indicate their approval. The American Psychological Association (APA) evaluates doctoral-level programs in the clinical, counseling, and school psychology areas. Its purpose is to ensure that psychologists who perform public service functions in those fields will be adequately trained. Those doctoral programs that apply and meet or exceed a set of standards are "accredited." An up-to-date list of colleges and universities with accredited programs is published three times a year in the American Psychologist, an APA journal. If you pursue doctoral-level work, it is important to attend an accredited program.

Currently the APA does not offer accreditation for bachelors or masters level psychology programs, although they do offer suggestions about the types of courses and experiences that students should have at the undergraduate level;

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the Valparaiso University psychology programs closely follows these APA recommendations for student involvement, faculty quality and curriculum.

More than 60,000 practicing psychologists are members of APA. Beyond providing guidance to graduate programs through the process of accreditation, the APA provides support and guidance to individual members and to aspiring psychologists (student affiliates). Through the publication of Ethical Principles of Psychologist and Code of Conduct (APA, 1992), for example, member psychologists call one another to . a lifelong effort to act ethically.. The ethical principles affect the way psychologists interact with clients, the way researchers handle both human and animal subjects, and the way that your psychology professors interact with you. Your . personal commitment. to act ethically can begin during your study of psychology. Information about becoming a student affiliate and about the ethical principles can be obtained through the World Wide Web (<http://www.apa.org>) or through your advisor.

Licensing or certification is a means used by state governments and professional organizations to protect the public. This process ensures that individual psychologists have met or exceeded state-set standards of education, knowledge and experience. Licensing is done by state government agencies, while certification can be done either by a governmental body or by a professional organization. The use of the title "psychologist" by those who offer their services to the public for a fee is generally restricted to persons who have met the standards defined by law, and who have been appropriately licensed or certified. Standards set by the profession itself (and by most state laws) define a qualified professional psychologist as one with a doctoral degree in psychology and at least one, and preferably two years, of supervised experience in an internship. Some state and federal regulations also permit a person with a masters degree to function in professional positions with titles such as "psychological associate. or . mental health counselor.

Completion of an accredited graduate program does not ensure state licensing or certification of the individual graduate; moreover, graduation from a non-accredited program does not necessarily prevent certification of licensing. However, in most states it will be easier for you to obtain licensure or certification if you have attended an accredited program. Thus, obtaining quality education and training are very important to success in the field of psychology.

Graduate study in other fields. An undergraduate degree in psychology is not only the best preparation for graduate school in psychology and mental health, but when combined with another major or minor, it affords a solid foundation for graduate or professional work in a number of other fields. These fields include programs in:

Analysis, Criminal Justice, Design and Environment, Education (Counseling and Guidance), Expressive Therapies (art therapy, music therapy), Human Development, Law, Management, Sociology, Special Education, Speech Pathology and Audiology

Many of the graduate programs listed previously encourage majors in any field to apply for admission; for other programs, a psychology or social science background increases the chances for admission into a program. For instance, it has been the practice of many prestigious graduate business schools to admit half or more of their students with undergraduate degrees in psychology or other social sciences rather than bachelors-level training in business.

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So remember, a B.A. in psychology enhances the likelihood for acceptance into many types of programs, and it is quite unlikely that it will prevent your admission into other areas of graduate study (technical areas such as engineering are the exception.)

## **Masters Level Programs**

Master-level psychological workers normally have spent from one to two years in graduate school after the bachelors degree, and have completed additional requirements such as practical experience in an applied setting or a masters thesis based on a research project. Psychological workers with a masters degree are found in a variety of settings; for example, teaching in two-year colleges, or doing research in fields such as human factors, engineering psychology, industrial psychology, and human performance technology. In the area of counseling and human service, a masters degree will make you competitive for many jobs in a broad variety of public and private treatment facilities, including mental health centers, hospitals and social service agencies. Masters-level counselors and psychologists are also found in school settings and do most of the work helping devise educational plans for students with learning disabilities and other cognitive or emotional handicaps.

## **Doctoral Level Programs**

Doctoral-level psychologists typically have been exposed to the largest variety of knowledge and techniques in psychology over the longest period of time, giving them the broadest range of employment opportunities. The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) ordinarily requires four to five years of education beyond the bachelors degree. Earning the doctors degree demands a high level of academic achievement. Doctoral students in many professional specialties complete an internship (on-the-job training that is closely supervised) either before or immediately after the award of the doctors degree; such internships normally add at least one year to the total training time. In some fields, after earning the Ph.D., certain students may continue in postdoctoral research or clinical service positions for one or two years. Psychologists holding the doctors degree tend to have the widest range of work choices. For example, a clinical or counseling psychologist with a doctorate degree could work in a university, in a rehabilitation setting, or even in an industrial setting, and be qualified to give therapy to people ranging from preschool-level children to business executives with personal adjustment problems.

The Ph.D. is a research degree; to earn it, a person usually has to make an original research contribution to the field of psychology (i.e., write a dissertation) as a part of the training. In recent years, many psychologists have questioned whether the Ph.D. program is an appropriate training experience for clinical psychologists who want to be therapists rather than scientists. As a result, an alternative program has been developed called the Doctor of Psychology (PsyD). The primary difference between the two degrees is that PsyD training involves more time spent gaining practical experience instead of the training time that is normally spent in research activities for the Ph.D.. In addition, the PsyD typically does not require completion of a research project. This degree has become quite popular and is a very viable

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alternative to the Ph.D. for those who are primarily interested in becoming licensed as a psychologist and doing clinical work.

The Doctor of Education (EdD) is another type of doctoral degree that can be held by psychologists. Whereas the Ph.D. is a research degree, the Ed.D. is typically a professional degree awarded following successful completion of a program of courses focused on education as a vocation and profession.

## **Employment After Graduate School**

Psychology majors with a Masters or Doctoral degree may qualify for employment in facilities such as:

- Mental health centers
- Psychiatric hospitals
- Child guidance clinics
- University counseling clinics,
- College and University treatment and research programs
- College and University psychology departments
- Prisons and correctional facilities
- Consultant to judicial courts
- Aphasia and dyslexia clinics
- Clinical private practice
- National, state or county departments of mental health
- Science writer or editor
- Alcohol/drug abuse treatment and prevention programs
- Community agencies for the mentally and physically handicapped
- Elementary, middle and high school and special education programs
- Government agencies, such as the FBI, CIA, State department, NASA, etc.
- Military hospitals and facilities
- Business and industry consulting firms
- Mass media
- Market research and opinion survey firms
- Research departments of business and industry
- Human resource and personnel departments of corporations

As we have mentioned, the specific job you want and the type of training you need are related. Here are some examples of subfields and career paths in psychology, along with the training that is necessary for entry into these fields. Nearly all of these subfields require some undergraduate training in psychology and many require advanced training as well.

1. Clinical/counseling psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis.
2. Educational and school psychologist.
3. Experimental psychologist
4. Applied psychologist