Psychology Background

Why people do the things they do is an age-old question. Psychology is a science focused on behavior, and it first appeared as a career option in the 1870s. Despite its youth, it is a broad discipline, essentially spanning subject matter from biology to sociology. There is such a range in the education of psychologists, but many in research or academia have doctoral degrees. They study the intersection of two critical relationships. The first relationship is between brain function and behavior. The other is between the environment and behavior. As scientists, psychologists follow scientific methods, using careful observation, experimentation and analysis. But psychologists also need to be creative in the way they approach and apply scientific findings. This link has some great information on psychology: http://apa.org/careers/resources/guides/careers.aspx

Sectors in Psychology

CLINICAL
The branch of psychology concerned with the assessment and treatment of mental illness and disability.

COGNITIVE
The study of mental processes such as “attention, language use, memory, perception, problem solving, creativity, and thinking.”

COMMUNITY
The focus on social issues, social institutions, and other settings that influence individuals, groups, and organizations.

COUNSELING
The focus on facilitating personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span.

DEVELOPMENTAL
The scientific study of how and why human beings change over the course of their life.

EDUCATIONAL
A branch of psychology that studies children in an educational setting and is concerned with teaching and learning methods, cognitive development, and aptitude assessment.

FORENSIC
The interaction of the practice or study of psychology and the law.

HEALTH
The study of psychological and behavioral processes in health, illness, and healthcare.

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY
The field as the study of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and networks of sensory nerve cells called neurons.

ORGANIZATIONAL
The scientific study of human behavior in the workplace.

QUANTITATIVE
Psychological research which performs mathematical modeling and statistical estimation for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables.

REHABILITATION
A specialty area within professional psychology which assists the individual with an injury or illness which may be chronic, traumatic and/or congenital.
Education & Next Steps

If you are looking into a career in psychology, you will need to attend graduate school for additional training.

Range: Master’s in Psychology to Ph.D. or Psy.D. Degrees

If you are looking for a non-traditional path in psychology, individuals can get away with holding a Bachelor’s Degree. For individuals looking to enter the clinical world as a counselor, you will need to obtain a Master’s. These are typically 2-year programs that focus on clinical practice.

If you are looking into positions in research or academia, you need to pursue a Ph.D. or a Psy.D. degree. These typically take between 5-7 years to complete, depending on the program. In all cases, you will need post-graduate hours of service and work. In many cases, these range from 2,000 to 3,000 hours of practice-based work.

Recommendations

If applying to practice-oriented graduate programs, you want to try and accumulate experience working with others in a supportive role (peer counselor, crisis line operator, mental health advocacy organizations, resident assistant, etc.). For academic-oriented programs, you will need to obtain research assistant positions or work on various research projects. If you can serve as the lead investigator, that will be valuable experience for graduate school applications (or beyond).

Resources in Psychology

Non-Traditional Psychology Paths

Trial Strategy Consultant
Medical Error Consultant
Chemical Senses Specialist
Foundation Executive
Aviation Policy Specialist
Human-Computer Interface Designer
Market Research Consultant
Science Advocate & Policy Advisor
Video Game User Researcher

Professional Associations

American Psychological Association
American Counseling Association
American Board of Professional Psychology
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of School Psychologists
Association for Psychological Science

Job Boards & Sites

Indeed.com
www.apa.org/careers/
psychologyjobs.com
higheredjobs.com

Stats (American Psychological Association)

188,000 Active Psychologists
Top 2 States of Practice:
- California (11,000)
- New York (8,000)

Identity Stats in Psychology
- 68.3% – Identify as Female
- 16.4% – Individuals of Color