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### The Study of the Soul

The job of deciphering the human mind and all of its unfathomable complexities has always piqued my inbred curiosity. However, the decision to make such a job my future career was not as intuitive. As a first generation college student, I knew I owed it to my parents and family to make something of myself and leave a mark in this world. Economic setbacks had not made it possible for my parents to accomplish their own dreams, but they provided me with all the tools necessary to accomplish what they could not. Joining the Health Institute program introduced me to health careers and job possibilities, but it would take three years to realize that the medical field was in fact my true calling. After my first day of volunteering at my local hospital during junior year, I became aware of my innate desire to help people in any way I could. Although I didn't specifically know which career to tackle on, I felt assured I was on the correct path. It didn't take long for me to decide to take on the career of a psychologist in the future. The profession of a psychologist is a fulfilling job because of the responsibilities one has such as treating, diagnosing, and ultimately bettering the mental states and lives of countless patients.

Psychology is a broad field of study that is defined as the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior. Psychology derives from the Latin word *psychologia* (Harper, 2001), meaning the "study of the soul." Apart

from evaluating patients for mental illness, psychologists also study patients' mental and emotional processing in order to trace behavioral patterns and trends. One type of psychologist, a clinical psychologist, specializes in diagnosing and treating diseases of the brain, emotional disturbance, and behavior problems. Their primary method of treatment is talk therapy or psychoanalysis, as first introduced by Sigmund Freud (Cherry, 2015). Clinical psychology is the most appealing to me as it combines practical methods of treatment with the methods that of psychiatry. Because there are various specialties of psychology, not all professionals are expected to work in the same surroundings. Psychologists' work environment varies by their specialization or focus of interest; some psychologists work independently, conducting research or working with patients. Others work as part of a healthcare team, collaborating with physicians and social workers or in school settings, working with students, teachers, and parents (Nordqvist). Specific job duties for psychologists also vary according to their specialty. For example, counseling psychologists work at schools, hospitals or individual practices. They lead group or individual counseling sessions. As a clinical psychologist, I expect to either work in a clinical setting or private practice as those are most appropriate for that type of specialty. The term psychology carries baggage as there are endless areas that psychologists can explore in their complex careers.

Holding a degree in psychology is not an easy task; not only are years of education and work experience required for the job, but so are special skills that make a psychologist fit to communicate with his or her patients. Psychologists may encounter all types of people and most importantly treat all types of patients, so being versatile in their communication methods is essential. Psychologists must be confident,

approachable, but most of all ethical in their practice. Because their job involves talking to people, fostering positive mental health is key for personal growth (McLeod). This is especially critical for psychologists employed in healthcare settings as they spend a considerable amount of time working directly with clients. The ability to communicate with clients is exceptionally crucial for clinical psychologists, while research psychologists need to be able to effectively describe observations and portray their findings well for other psychologists and the public to understand properly. When psychologists outline goals for their patients, they need to have alternative strategies available and be able to implement them quickly in case of any setbacks (Grohol). And for true progress to be made, patience is imperative. In a job where not only the patients are stressed but also are the aiding professionals, psychologists must be able to keep themselves motivated and keep their stamina high, even when results aren't immediately apparent or even credible. The practice of psychology is definitely a difficult one to fulfill, but its many branches make it possible for each potential student to find a specific area of study in psychology that best suits their abilities, interests, and goals.

The practice of psychology originates long before the study even had a name, since the fundamentals of science and philosophy have psychological principles in common. But modern psychology commenced quite recently as emerging technology has made it easier to uncover the secrets of the intricate human mind. During the mid-1800s, a German physiologist named Wilhelm Wundt was using scientific research methods to investigate reaction times. Later, in 1874, he published a book titled *Principles of Physiological Psychology* and outlined many of the major connections between the science of physiology and the study of human thought and behavior in it.

He would later open the world's first psychology lab in 1879 at the University of Leipzig (Cherry). This event is generally considered the official start of psychology as a separate and distinct scientific discipline. Edward B. Titchener, one of Wundt's most famous students, would go on to found psychology's first major school of thought. The initiation of modern American psychology is often credited to a man named William James. William James emerged as one of the major American psychologists during this period, specifically because of the publication of his classic textbook, *The Principles of Psychology*. This breakthrough text established him as the father of American psychology (Cherry). His book soon became the standard text in psychology and his ideas eventually served as the basis for a new school of thought known as functionalism. Many of the fundamentals of modern psychology were established in the 19th century with various scientists introducing basic principles of psychology.

Psychology began to be viewed in a social and analytical perspective at the turn of the century. Sigmund Freud, an Austrian physician, changed the face of psychology in an irrevocable way, proposing a theory of personality, emphasizing the importance of the unconscious mind. Freud's clinical work led him to believe that early childhood experiences and unconscious impulses played a significant part in the development of adult personality and behavior (Cherry). The roots of behaviorism began with the work of a Russian physiologist named Ivan Pavlov, whose research led to his discovery of the classical conditioning process, showing that behaviors could be learned via conditioned associations. One of the strongest advocates of this behaviorism was American psychologist John B. Watson (Cherry). While the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by psychoanalysis and behaviorism, a new school of thought

known as humanistic psychology emerged during the second half of the century. This theoretical perspective, often referred to as the "third force" in psychology, emphasized conscious experiences. One of the founders of this school of thought is often considered to be American psychologist Carl Rogers (Cherry). Psychologist Abraham Maslow also contributed to humanistic psychology with his famous hierarchy of needs theory of human motivation. Psychology has continued to evolve since 1960 and new ideas and perspectives have been introduced. Recent research in psychology analyzes many aspects of the human experience and emotion, from the biological influences on behavior to the impact of societal and cultural factors.

It took many years for the psychology professional degree to solidify within the United States. In the 1960s, an APA committee argued that the hybrid scientist-practitioner programs weren't accommodating many students who wanted a more practice-oriented degree. As a result, the committee appealed for a degree that was more specific to the practice (Murray). By 1968, the first Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) professional degree program in Clinical Psychology was established in the Department of Psychology at The University of Illinois (Heffner). In 1970, one of the first PsyD programs started at Hahnemann University's medical school. Many of the classes were composed of students in their 30's with a Master's program in a related field and years of work experience in a clinical setting (Murray). A year later, the first doctorate in Psychology (Psy.D.) was awarded from The University of Illinois. Shortly after, the APA began endorsing the Psy.D. degree for professional practice in psychology (Heffner). It would take more than fifteen years for the American Psychological Society to be established. But by 1990, the American Psychological Association was prompted by the

emergence of managed care to become more political, and lead to the idea of equity in mental health coverage (Murray). 5 years later, the first psychologists were able to prescribe medication through the U.S. military's psychopharmacology program (Heffner). As witnessed through history, the acceptance of the psychology profession can be described as a steady progression. Only until recently, the psychology professional degree has been given the recognition and credibility that it deserves, but the field will continue to expand as more opportunities open up for the degree and the professionals who practice it.

The road to becoming a psychologist is a lengthy one; many years of schooling and training are required before one can lawfully practice psychology. In the United States, the requirements for a license in obtaining a master's or doctoral degree. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in every state, psychologists need a master's or doctoral degree to become licensed or certified, which is a requirement to work as a psychologist (bls.gov). At the doctoral level, students may choose from a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) or Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) program, depending on personal interests. They may consider Ph.D. and Psy.D. programs accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA), which accredits programs and internships for clinical, counseling and school psychology. Some state-licensing committees require applicants to hold a degree from an APA-accredited program (study.com). An exception to this requirement is made for individuals performing duties as a school psychologist. To become a school psychologist in California, individuals must hold a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university and satisfy the state of California basic skills requirement. However, the chances of being hired as a school

psychologists holding only a bachelor's degree are quite slim. In addition, all candidates must complete a minimum of 60 semester hours of post baccalaureate degree study in a California commission approved program with a focus on school psychology (study.com). Graduates must also pass the national Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP). Certification and licensure is required by the state (careersinpsychology.org). A psychologist may become licensed in other areas after additional training. The field of psychology is always changing and expanding so acquiring certification in additional areas is highly suggested. Although many years of advanced schooling and certification are required, the path to becoming a psychologist comes with its own rewards and benefits.

The psychology profession rewards its practicants with a generous salary and benefits in the field they work in. Psychology is a relatively high paying career field; on average, psychologists make around \$76,000 a year (Careerprofile.info). Of course this varies by state and location as some states are known to pay much more and others pay less. While many psychologists work for medical facilities and corporations, about 35% of psychologists are self employed and operate their own private practices (Careerprofile.info). Establishing a new practice can be risky, but psychologists who operate their own practice are some of the highest paid psychology professionals. Clinical psychologists are also among the highest paid professionals in the field of psychology. In addition to monetary compensation, there are endless personal rewards in offering help to others with the goal of bettering their mental health. The American Psychological Association's mission is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

Not only does a psychologist improve individual lives, but after time, one can see the impact he or she has made in their community. After many years of experience on the job, a psychologist may see his or her salary rising, but also see the rising number of lives they have changed for the better.

The field of psychology is very competitive and is growing much more rapidly than other careers. The BLS projects 12% increase in the number of psychologists in the next ten years (bls.gov). The type of degree a job seeker holds also plays an important role in determining job outlook. Job prospects are definitely strongest for those who hold a Ph.D., Psy.D. or specialist degree in an applied area (Cherry, 2014). School psychology, counseling psychology and health psychology are cited as particularly strong areas and likely to increase the most (bls.gov). Coincidentally, these happen to be the areas in psychology where the salaries are very high. School psychology has become very popular recently due to the fact that one can become a school psychologist in California only holding a bachelor's or master's degree. However, the odds of this are not likely since applicants with more education and experience are heavily considered. A student in graduate school studying psychology should always consider obtaining a doctoral degree since the chances of acquiring a job will be much higher. In addition, the rapidly growing number of psychologists make this field of study much more competitive than it was in recent years.

My mentor experience has varied this past year and I am very grateful for the multiple mentors I was fortunate enough to meet with. I know that my mentor experience will ultimately help me decide if I want to continue pursuing a career in psychology, more specifically clinical psychology. Dr. Jay Pope was my first mentor. He



is a clinical psychologist and professor at Fresno Pacific University and provides therapy to patients on the weekends. I am extremely thankful for the limited time that I spoke with him, as he convinced me that clinical psychology is one of the most rewarding areas. He also explained to me the process of getting there and the obstacles he had to face while in graduate school. Apart from listening to his advice, Jay asked me to shadow him on campus and tune in into his lectures at Fresno Pacific University. Another one of my mentors is Dr. Constance Jones. She is a psychologist and professor at Fresno State with a primary focus in research methods and statistics. Dr. Jones was thoughtful enough to place me into an Intro to Psych, Intro to Stats, and Research Methods classes. She wanted me to experience what I would face on a weekly basis as a typical psychology major at Fresno State. I was very surprised by the type of classes I had to sit in as a psychology major and I am thankful for the opportunity to do so while still in high school. It was an open window to the type of professors and class content I would encounter in college. In addition, I am considering requesting to be mentored by a professional at the UCSF facility near Community Regional Medical Center. I think it would benefit my interests and perhaps orient my focus of study if I shadow a psychologist or psychiatrist working in a clinical area. I aim to have three mentors; one working as a college professor, another working in private practice, and a third working in a hospital or clinical area. I believe it would help me decide which environment, or rather, which career I would like to pursue as a psychologist. I know that witnessing my mentors in action and observing what their job is like on a day to day basis will help me decide the type of psychologist I will best succeed at.

From what I have researched and read about, I have always believed that being a psychologist was the correct career for me. Since I was a young girl, I knew I wanted to be a doctor or specialist in the medical field but I hadn't decide on which profession. For these past four years, I thought it was set in stone that I was going to be a psychologist in the future. I believed that my talents and attributes made me the ideal candidate for such a career. But after experiencing a few classes and several hours as a psych major, I realized that perhaps I was not molded for clinical psychology. In addition, the more I researched and read about the career and its day to day tasks, the less I wanted to do it for the rest of my life, nonetheless four years. The idea of studying research methods and statistics at a university for four years has frightened me quite a bit. I had not realized the work of a psychologist and the work of a psych major was so quantitative based. Despite my newfound lack of interest in pursuing psychology as a major, the idea of diagnosing and treating illness will always be an option for me. Furthermore, the position of a nurse or that of a physician assistant has always intrigued me. I know that I will be content working in the medical field one day. I have always harbored an innate desire to help people in any way I can and I'm sure my future career will involve that. For now, I will orient my studies into the medical field and find which career best suits my ability to help people and make a difference in their lives.

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