

# Ten Critical Things You Need to Know Before Applying to Graduate School in Psychology



# Ten Things You Need to Know Before You Apply

---

- 1. Areas Within Psychology and Beyond
- 2. Level of Training: Masters vs. Doctorate
- 3. Ph.D. vs. Psy.D.: the Model Matters
- 4. Clinical vs. Counseling: Similarities and Differences
- 5. Reputational Rankings: All that glitters is not gold
- 6. Admissions criteria and acceptance rates
- 7. Funding for Graduate Studies
- 8. Attrition Rates in Graduate Programs
- 9. Employment settings and salaries for psychologists
- 10. Quality of Life

# #1 Areas of Psychology

## ■ Percentage of Doctorates by area

- 44% clinical
- 11% counseling
- 6% educational psychology
- 6% I/O
- 5% school
  - developmental (4%)
- - social (3%)
- quantitative (3%)
- -cognitive (1%)
- -personality (1%)
- -other (12%)



# Two Critical Points

---

- APA-accreditation ONLY applies to doctoral training in professional areas
- Psychology is only one of five overall behavioral healthcare professions (Psychiatry, Education, Social Work, Psychiatric Nursing)



## #2 Levels of Graduate Training: Masters or Ph.D.?

- Master's degrees require 2 years
- enables you to work in research contexts or clinical/counseling contexts
- Thesis or Non-Thesis tracks
- May or may not provide an advantage for subsequent doctoral work



# Masters or Ph.D.?

---

- Why you might **want** to do a Master's
  - want to work at the master's level (salaries comparable in many contexts)
  - not sure about commitment to doctoral study
  - want to work for a couple of years first
  - want to develop greater focus and interests before doctoral study
  - applying to counseling psychology programs that require a master's first

# Masters or Ph.D.?

- Why you might **need** to do a Master's first
  1. boost GPA
  2. remediate course deficiencies (non-majors)
  3. enhance clinical experience
  4. enhance research experience
  5. application submitted late
  6. starting in the Spring (January)
  7. weak letters of recommendation (no mentors)

# #3 Psy.D. vs. Ph.D.

- To understand the difference between these degrees requires knowing something about the history of training in professional psychology
- Boulder (Ph.D.) vs. Vail (Psy.D.) Model



# Boulder Model (1943)

---

- established Ph.D. as the terminal research degree, as in other sciences
- clearly reinforced the idea that the university setting was the context for training
- established “scientist-practitioner” model

# Vail Model (1973)

- psychological knowledge has matured sufficiently that it warrants an expressly professional training program, as in medicine, dentistry and law
- offers Psy.D.s (designed to complement the Ph.D.)
- “Scholar/Professional” model (consumers of research rather than producers of research)
- housed in different contexts- university psychology departments, associated schools of psychology, or freestanding schools of psychology (e.g. CSPP)
- Can be APA-approved
- Is License-eligible

# #4. Clinical and Counseling Psychology: Similarities

- Acceptance rates similar (about 8%, but deceptive)
- Average GPA identical 3.5  
GREs: Very similar (just over 1200 on average)
- Identical salaries
- Same license
- Similar Training and Common Curriculum
- Similar Workplaces are small
  - 40% private practice
  - 20% colleges and universities
  - 10% medical schools
  - 5% hospitals
  - 5% CMHC



# Clinical vs. Counseling Psychology: Differences

---

- **#1 SIZE**

- Approximately 200 APA-approved clinical programs
- less than 100 APA-approved counseling programs
- clinical graduates about 2,000 doctorates/yr;  
counseling graduates about 600
- Both are vibrant, growing fields
  - in terms of the number of Ph.D.s being produced, clinical has increased three-fold over 30-year period (1964-1994), and counseling has increased 10-fold
- Clinical is about 3 to 4 times the size of counseling as a specialty

# Clinical and Counseling Psychology: Differences

## ■ #2 Training Models (Ph.D. vs. Psy D.)

*Clinical has a much broader range of training models, ranging from almost exclusively clinical science programs through almost exclusively practitioner programs (Psy.D.)*

- Regarding Clinical Science, it has over 40 programs that are members of the Academy of Clinical Science
- -Regarding practice, virtually ALL Psy.D. programs are in clinical psychology, not in counseling psychology.
  - Vail model programs tend to enroll many more students than Ph.D. programs (3 to 4 times as many) and, for that reason, account for roughly 1/3 to 1/2 of the doctorates in clinical psychology
- Virtually all counseling psychology programs are “scientist-practitioner” programs (e.g. Model Training Program)

# Clinical and Counseling Psychology

---

## ■ #3 Theoretical Differences

Clinical is more oriented towards the medical model, diagnosis, disease, disorder, and dysfunction, and treatment, recovery, rehabilitation and severe psychopathology-

- Counseling is more humanistic and pluralist, and oriented towards growth, development, adjustment, function and strengths-

Neimeyer & Diamond (2001): three primary commitments: life-span development, diversity, adjustment and preventative mental health

# Clinical and Counseling Psychology

- **#4 Workplace Differences**

(Norcross et al., 1997 and Watkins et al., 1986)

- therapy 37% vs 28%
- diagnosis and assessment 15% vs 12%
- teaching 50% vs 60%
- supervision 7% vs 6%
- research 10% vs. 8%
- consultation 7% vs. 7%
- workplace differences are quite small and occur only in delimited contexts

# Differences Between Clinical and Counseling Psychology

(Cassin, et al., 2007)

## ■ **Training Model**

Scientist-Practitioner: clinical = 55%, counseling = 82%  
Practitioner-Scholar: clinical 32% . Counseling 10%

## ■ **Theoretical Orientation**

Cognitive-Behavioral (clinical 69% > counseling 58%)  
Behavioral (clinical 22% > counseling 10%)  
Biological (clinical 10% > counseling 3%)  
Interpersonal (counseling 42% > clinical 27%)  
Humanistic (counseling 42% . Clinical 27%)

## ■ **Workplace Differences**

Hospitals (clinical 89% > counseling 78%)  
Private practice (clinical 64% > counseling 57%)  
Academia (counseling 58% > clinical 48%)

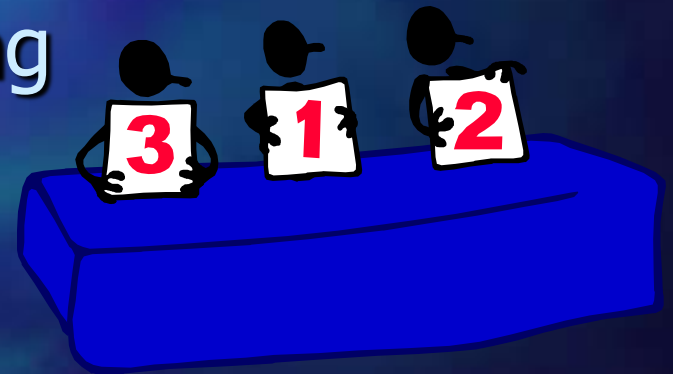
# Clinical vs. Counseling Quiz

---

- Course in existential psychology?
- Course in career counseling
- Course in life span development and adjustment
- Course in neuropsychological assessment
- Course in assessment of mental status/competence
- Training in family systems theory and therapy
- Training in psychopharmacology
- Want a job in a VAMC
- Want a job in a university counseling center
- True or False: both clinical and counseling psychologists have the same license and both can be APA approved programs

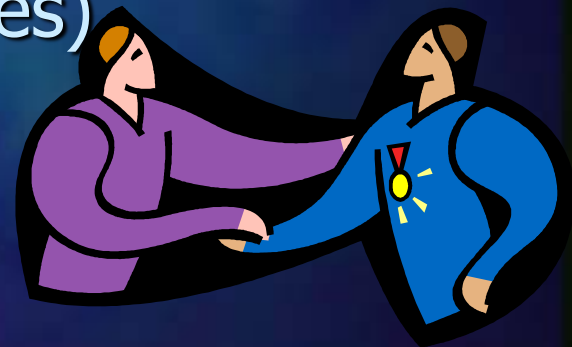
# #5. Reputational Rankings

- #1 factor applicants consider in making admission's decisions
- where to access reputational rankings
  - APA journals and website: [psychgrad.org](http://psychgrad.org)
- variable criteria for ranking
  - straight reputation
  - ABEPP
  - faculty productivity
  - national offices/journal editorships



# #6 Acceptance Criteria and Percentages

- Overall acceptance rate is roughly 10% for clinical and counseling, and 20-60% for experimental areas
- Psy.D. accepts 1/3 to 1/2 of its applicants
- Even 10% is deceptive; between 1/3 and 1/2 off all grad applicants receive one or more offer of admission in a given year
- The Yield Rate (Offers/Acceptances)
- GREs (1033 M.S.; 1206 Ph.D.)



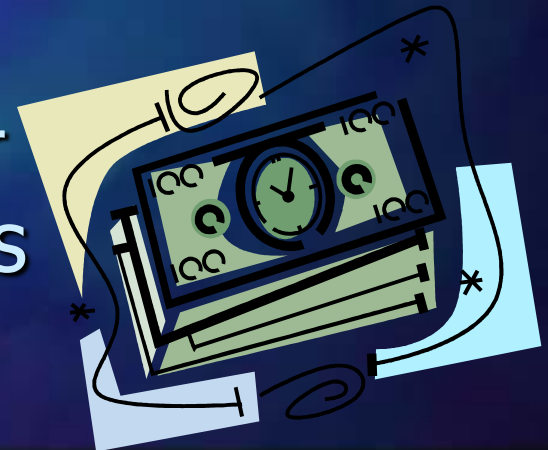
# Acceptance Criteria and Percentages

---

- GRE average = 1066 for M.S., 1206 for Ph.D.
- GPA average = 3.3 for M.S., 3.5 for Ph.D.
- all criteria show wide variability; overall profile and goodness-of-fit trump numbers
- Much more likely to increase your chances of admission by tailoring your applications than by applying to a large number of programs

# #7. Funding

- Financing Graduate School: How to Get the Money You Need for Your Graduate School Education (Patricia McWade)
- M.S. programs only provide support for about 25% of their students
- Psy.D.s support about 35%-40%
- Ph.D.s support 90% +
- Funding can be fellowship, TA or RA with/without tuition waivers
- tuition waiver is important issue



# Funding

---

- Level of “real” funding needs to take into account
  - cost of living differences
  - “hidden costs” not covered by tuition waivers
  - availability of health insurance, education expenses for children, job opportunities for spouses, etc.
- Do not make decisions based on differences in graduate stipends

# #8. Attrition Rates

- My graduate school experience
- On average, doctoral programs lose about 20% of their graduates
- Important to know because graduate education is an investment and attrition rates represent a risk
- Attrition can occur for at least three reasons- poor fit (avoidable), personal decisions (e.g. family), termination (impaired students)
- Obtain list of students in the program and contact at least *two* who have left the program



# #9 Salary: Doctoral Level (first 5 years)

- Academic: 45K, 55K, 75K for Assistant, Associate, Full 9-month salaries- widely variable by setting (e.g. lower in 4-year college and CC setting; higher in medical or business schools) and individual (merit, counteroffers)
- Human service :
  - clinical and counseling psychologists 50-60K in hospitals, 65K in individual private practice, 60K in group practice, 48K in CMHC, 46K in University Counseling Centers
  - school psychologists: school systems 54K, individual private practice 79K
  - I/O- consulting firm 1001K, business and industry 75K



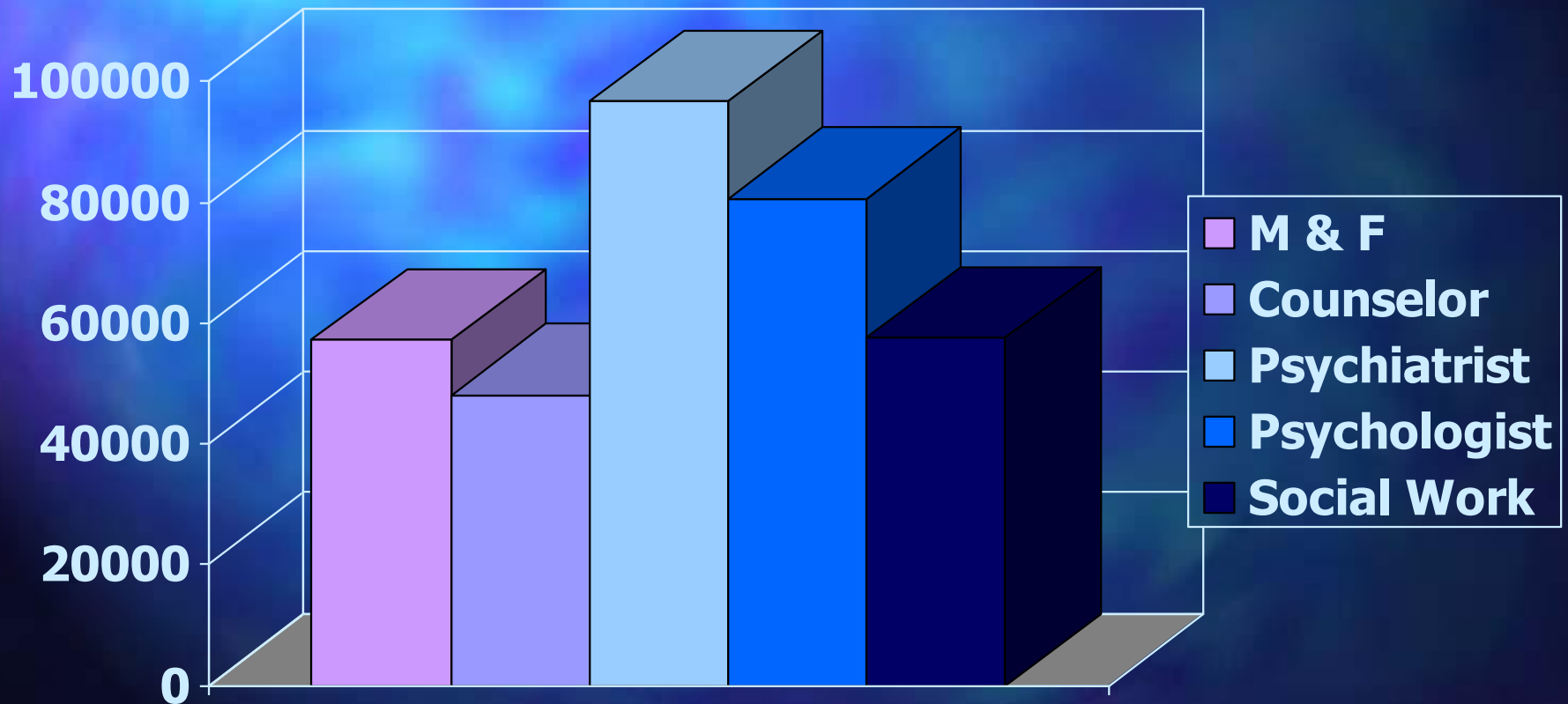
# Salary: Master's Level (first 5 years)

- Academic: 36K (compared with 45K with doctorate)
- Hospital; 50K (compared to 50-60K with doctorate)
- Individual private practice: 74K (equal to Ph.D.)
- Group private practice: 58K (slightly lower than with Ph.D.)
- CMHC: 50K (equal to Ph.D.)
- School: 41K

So, overall, can expect an early career salary in the 45-65k range, without much difference between Master's and Ph.D. salaries in the private practice sector, but better salaries and opportunities in academic settings for Ph.D.s

- *If you know you want to do primarily or exclusively professional practice, your decision to do a Ph.D. over a Masters should not be based on salary considerations alone; status, work setting, intrinsic value, portability, etc.*

# Mean Salaries of Various Mental Health Practitioners, 1997



# #10. Quality of Life

---

- Consider what you really want to be doing with your life-one life to live
- what kind of salary needs do you have?
- do you imagine having a family- if so, what kind of lifestyle does a psychologist provide for you and for them?
- consider your career “trajectory” in five years, ten years, twenty years
- The field of psychology offers an extraordinary array of satisfactions, ranging from the excitement of scientific discovery to the sense of fulfillment that comes from helping to rescue, revive, or revitalize a human life, family or relationship.

# #10. Quality of Life

- Researcher vs. Practitioner (Radke & Mahoney, 2002)

-Therapists reported significantly higher levels of emotional problems such as emotional exhaustion and depression, but also dramatically greater impact of work on personal life such as “made me a better person”, “increased my ability to enjoy life”, “resulted in changes in my own value system”, and “increased my appreciation for human relationships” and “accelerated my psychological development”

# Quality of Life

- **Researcher:** The kind of “deep satisfaction ordinarily associated with skin diver discovering some gold coins in a remote lagoon” Joseph Ellis

# Quality of Life

- **Practitioner** (Bugental, 1978)

"I am not the person who began to practice counseling or psychotherapy more than 30 years ago...And the changes in me are not solely those worked by time, education, and the life circumstances shared by most of my generation. A powerful force affecting me has been my participation in so many lives...My life as a psychotherapist has been...the source of anguish, pain, and anxiety- sometimes in the work itself, but more frequently within myself and with those important in my life...Similarly, that work and those relationships have directly and indirectly brought to me and those in my life joy, excitement, and a sense of participation in truly vital experiences."

# Resources

- Insider's Guide to Graduate Study in Clinical and Counseling Psychology (Sayette, et al.)
- Great Jobs of Psychology Majors (DeGalen and Lambert)
- Career Paths in Psychology (Sternberg)
- Getting In: a step-by-step plan for gaining admission to graduate school in psychology
- Financing Graduate School: How to Get the Money You Need for Your Graduate School Education (McWade)
- Neimeyer, G. J., and Norcross, J. C. (1997). The future of psychotherapy and counseling psychology in the USA: Delphi data and beyond. In S. Palmer and V. Varma (Eds.), The future of counselling and psychotherapy. London: Sage
- Neimeyer, G.J., Bowman, J. and Stewart A. (2001). Internship and initial job placement in counseling psychology: A 26-year retrospective. The Counseling Psychologist, 29, 763-780.
- Neimeyer, G.J. and Diamond A.K. (2001). The anticipated future of counseling psychology in the United States. Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 6, 1-17.