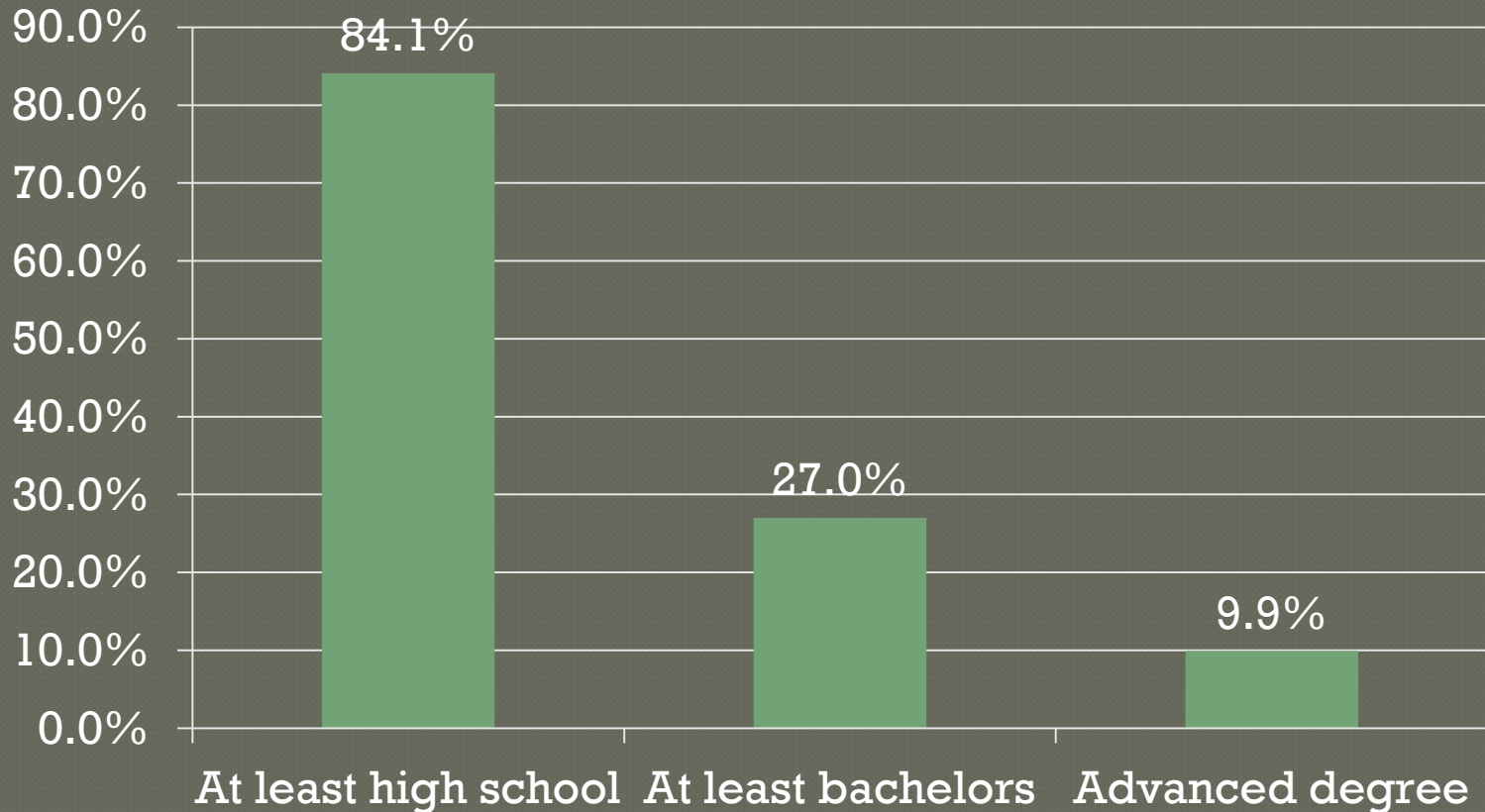


Is Graduate School Right for You?

Dr. Larry Symons
Psychology Grad School Panel
Western Washington University
November 16, 2017

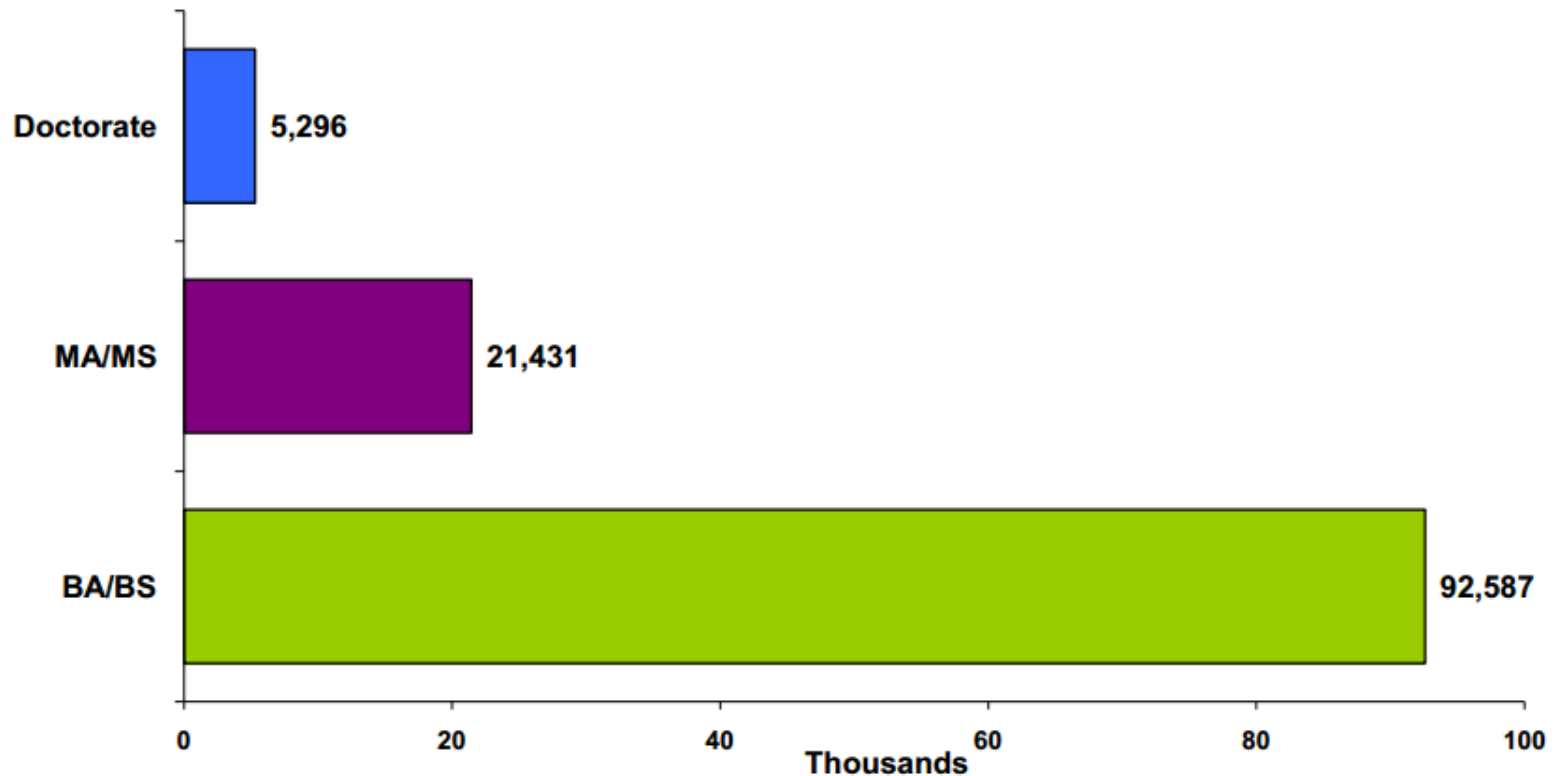
Educational Attainment in the U.S.

(based on 2006 data)



<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/education.html>

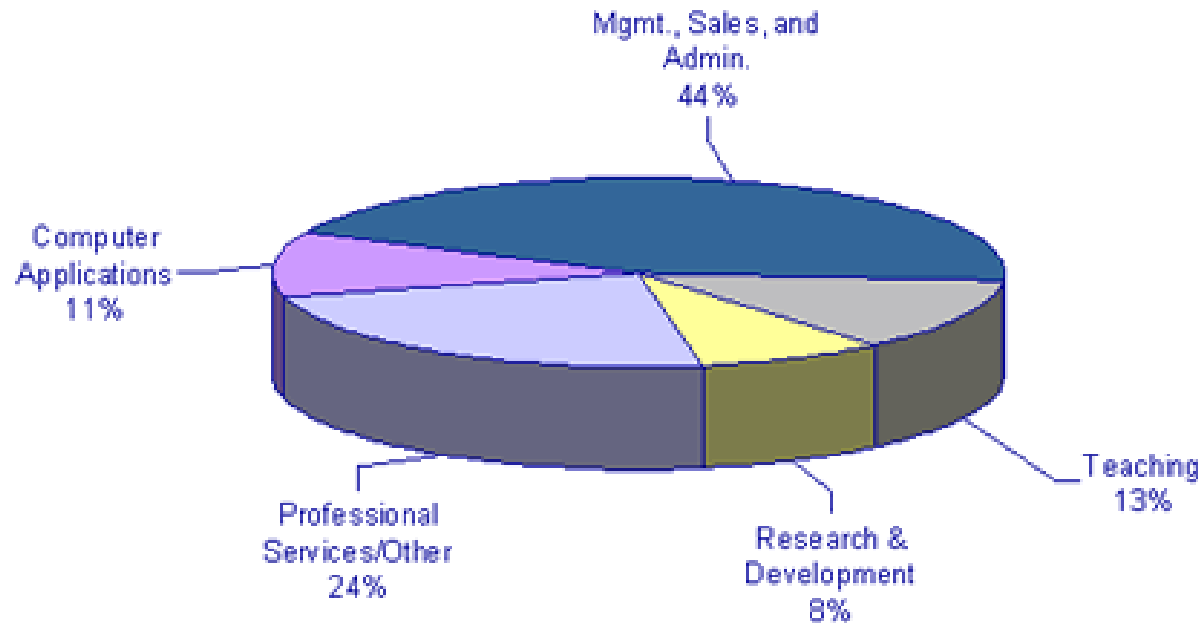
Number of Psychology Degrees Conferred by Level of Degree: 2008



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS), "Completion" Survey. Compiled by the APA Center for Workforce Studies. January 2010.

Note. Doctorate degree includes PsyDs.

Primary and Secondary Work Activities of Baccalaureate Degree Recipients in Psychology: 1999



Source: 1999 SESTAT. National Science Foundation. Compiled by APA Research Office.

Source: <http://research.apa.org/baccalaureate04.html>

Making the Choice

- ◉ Graduate training in psychology is only one of many options for students receiving a psychology BA
- ◉ How do you decide whether it's the right course of action for you?

Factors to Consider

◎ Personal characteristics

- Am I the right kind of person, or am I at the right place in my life, for grad school to be a productive and rewarding experience?

◎ Goals

- Is there a good match between what I hope to get out of grad school, and the actual benefits grad school provides?

APPLICANT CHARACTERISTICS VALUED BY GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN PSYCHOLOGY

1. P - Motivated and hard-working (154)
2. I - High intellectual/scholarly ability (106)
3. S - Research skills (69)
4. P - Emotionally stable and mature (66)
5. S - Writing skills (64)
6. S - Speaking skills (63)
7. S - Teaching skills/potential (49)
8. P - Works well with others (45)
9. I - Creative and original (41)
10. I - Strong knowledge of area of study (29)
11. P - Strong character or integrity (25)
12. S - Special skills (e.g., computer or lab) (19)
13. I - Capable of analytical thought (17)
14. I - Broad general knowledge (13)
15. P - Intellectually independent (12)
16. P - Possesses leadership ability (10)
17. P - Mentally and physically healthy (10)

Source: <http://www.apa.org/ed/howchange.html>

Intangible #1: Passion

Your Passion



Do you have a big enough fire to keep it going even in a downpour?

The Day-to-Day Grind of Grad School



Intangible #2: Mental Health / Emotional Maturity

Two types of grad school experiences



Which experience will you get?

A Way to Test Yourself

- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Who am I as a person? What are my strengths and weaknesses? Am I comfortable with who I am?

A Way to Test Yourself

- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - What is really important to me in life? When faced with competing demands on me, what are my priorities? Am I prepared to make significant sacrifices and disappoint other people in order to achieve my goals?

A Way to Test Yourself

- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Where do I see myself in 5/10 years, and how would going to grad school help me get there? What specific skills or training do I hope to get out of graduate school?

A Way to Test Yourself

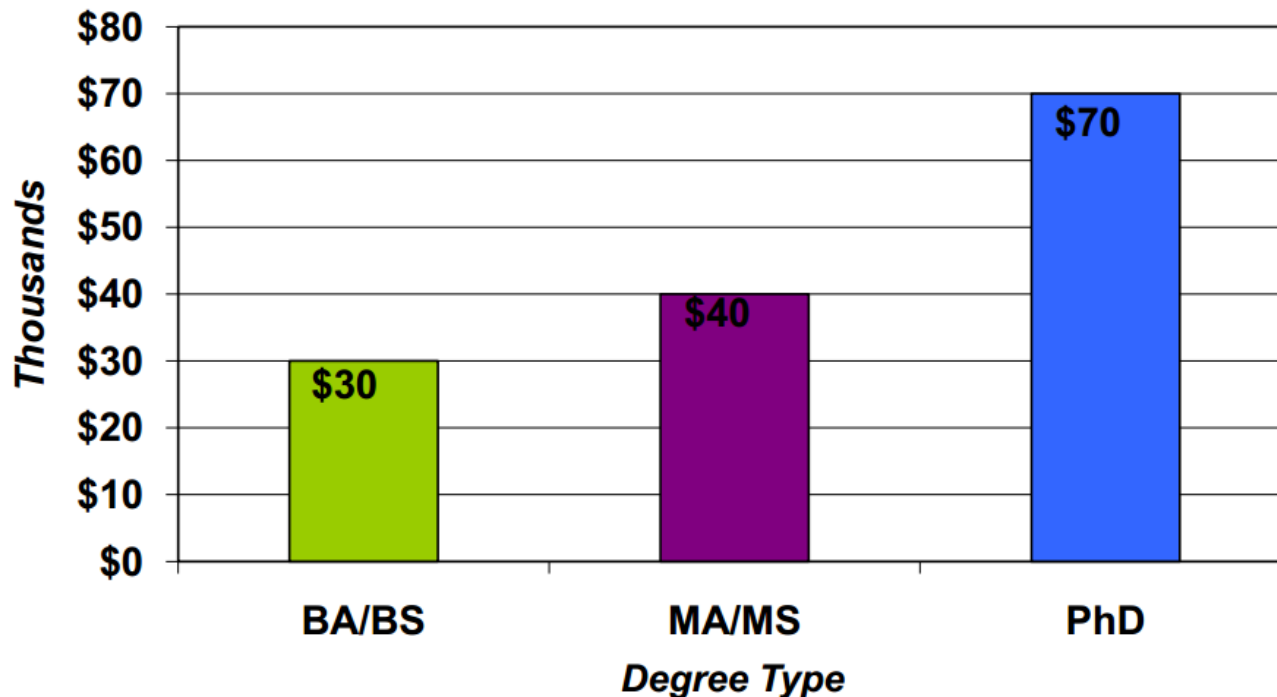
- ◉ GOOD - If you have solid, well-thought-out answers to these questions
- ◉ BETTER - If those answers have emerged out of life experience
- ◉ Don't be afraid to take some time to figure out the answers before you apply to grad school!

Grad School and Earning Potential

- Your maximum earning potential is generally greater as you complete more education
- However...
 - The variability in salaries at a given educational level is larger than the differences between educational levels
 - Taking the time to complete an advanced degree means deferring that increased potential

Salaries in Psychology

**Median Annual Full-time Salaries in Psychology
By Degree Type: 2006**



Source: Data derived from National Science Foundation/Division of Science Resources Statistics, 2006 National Survey of Recent College Graduates, and 2006 Survey of Doctorate Recipients. Compiled by the APA Center for Workforce Studies, April 2009.

Note. The use of NSF data does not imply NSF endorsement of the research, research methods, or conclusions contained in this report.

Source: <http://research.apa.org/masters13.html>

A Case Study

- At the time Dr. H started graduate school, he was working in a full-time job paying \$23,000/year
- How many years did it take for him to earn more money than if he'd stayed in that job?
- Job history prior to Western:
 - 6 years of grad school w/\$14,000 stipend per year
 - 1 year of postdoc w/\$35,000 salary
 - 3 years as non-tenure-track professor w/\$42,000 salary

A Case Study

	Stayed in Job		Grad School	
	Annual earnings	Total earnings	Annual earnings	Total earnings
Year 1	\$23,000	\$23,000	\$14,000	\$14,000
Year 2	\$23,000	\$46,000	\$14,000	\$28,000
Year 3	\$23,000	\$69,000	\$14,000	\$42,000
Year 4	\$23,000	\$92,000	\$14,000	\$56,000
Year 5	\$23,000	\$115,000	\$14,000	\$70,000
Year 6	\$23,000	\$138,000	\$14,000	\$84,000
Year 7	\$23,000	\$161,000	\$35,000	\$119,000
Year 8	\$23,000	\$184,000	\$42,000	\$161,000
Year 9	\$23,000	\$207,000	\$42,000	\$203,000
Year 10	\$23,000	\$230,000	\$42,000	\$245,000

Some “bad” reasons to go to psychology grad school

- ◉ To make a lot of money
- ◉ To enhance your social status
- ◉ Because your friends are doing it
- ◉ Because you can't think of what else you would do

Some “good” reasons to go to psychology grad school

- Greater responsibility
- Greater intellectual challenge
- Increased satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment
- Greater flexibility

Summary

- Most psych majors do not go to grad school; you should not think of grad school as the “default”
- Grad school can be a physically, mentally and emotionally challenging experience
- Before you decide to go to grad school, consider...
 - Do you have the personal characteristics that will make it a positive rather than negative experience?
 - Are you clear about exactly how grad school will help you achieve your goals, and have you seriously investigated other options that do not require grad school?