



So...you want to  
go to grad school?

# Preface

- ▶ Much of the information on these slides aggregated from American Psychology Association (APA)  
<https://www.apa.org/education/grad/applying>
- ▶ You have various resources available to you here at MSMU as well!
  - ▶ Academic advisors and other faculty in psychology department at MSMU
  - ▶ Career Services Center

These slides were created by Dr. Dolly Rojo.  
Please email her with any questions you might have [drojo@msmu.edu](mailto:drojo@msmu.edu)

# List of Contents

- 6.** Why do you want to go to grad school?
- 12.** What does it take to get into grad school?
- 14.** What does it take to be successful in grad school?
- 16.** What's the different between these different grad programs?
  - 18.** Master's programs
  - 19.** Ph.D. programs
  - 20.** Psy. D. programs
  - 21.** How to choose which program to apply to
- 22.** Prepping for grad school
  - 23.** GRE and Application Materials
    - 25.** How to study for GRE
  - 24.** Typical Timeline
  - 26.** Letters of Recommendation

# First things first...

Dr. Rojo always advises the following:

***you do not need to forge a new path in order to pave your career: find someone who is already doing the thing that you want to do, ask them how they got there, then do that!***





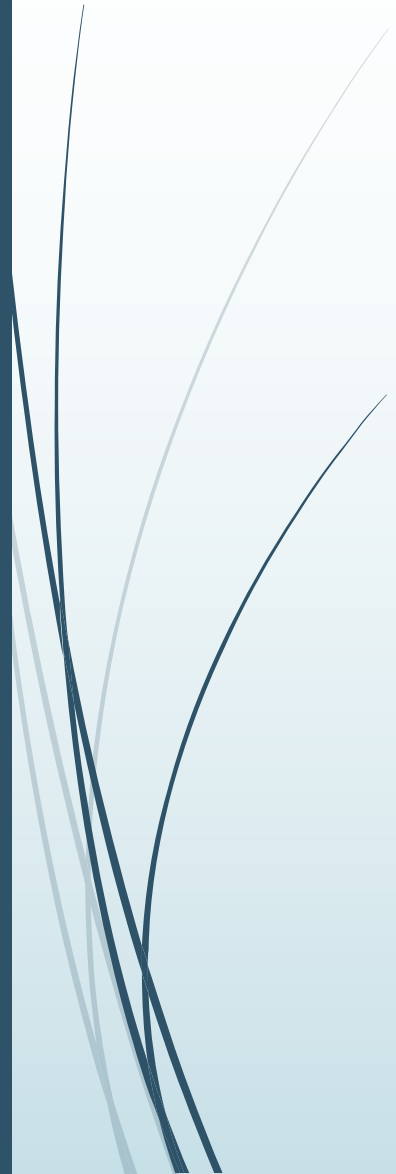
# So...you want to go to grad school?

Dolly Rojo, Ph.D.

Psychology Dept., MSMU

6

Why?



# What is your primary interest?

1. I want to establish a base of knowledge in the field of psychology
  - ▶ This is what the researchers you've been reading about in your textbooks do
2. I want to provide services in
  - ▶ Health
  - ▶ Education
  - ▶ Law
  - ▶ Business/policy
3. Both 1 and 2 above

# 1. Establishing Knowledge (a.k.a. research)

- → Most often you'll need a PhD or M.S.
- Potential career paths:
  - college professor (R1 vs small liberal arts vs R2 or R3)
  - Private sector (e.g., UX for Facebook, Google, Uber)
  - Government researcher



## 2. Service provider

- Usually MFT, PsyD, Master's in Social Work, or other service-focused Master's degree
- Potential career paths:
  - School counselor
  - Educator k-12
  - Social worker
  - Law assistant
  - Therapist
  - Many more!

## 3. Both

- ▶ Usually PhD in Clinical Psy or Counseling Psy or School Psychology or EdD
- ▶ Potential career paths
  - ▶ College professor with a private practice
  - ▶ College professor who also consults in
    - ▶ Law
    - ▶ Advertising/media/other private companies

# This might surprise you but....

YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE A MASTER'S DEGREE  
BEFORE YOU ENTER A DOCTORATE PROGRAM!



What does it take to get  
into grad school?

# What does it take to get in?

Once you've pinned down a list of universities that offer the kind of program(s) you're interested, consider...

Does this program...

- Require specific courses?
- Require tests or certifications?
  - Most common is GRE
- Require experiences (e.g., lab, work, health training)?
- Essays or personal statements?
- CV or Resume?
- Letters of Rec?
  - How many?
  - How long?
  - What should they include?

**This information can often be found on the department website (online)  
→look for “Prospective Students” information (or something similar)**

What does it take to be  
successful once in?


# What does it take to be successful once in?

Once you've pinned down a list of universities that offer the kind of program(s) you're interested, consider...

Does this program include...

- ▶ A process for finding a research advisor or mentor?
- ▶ Dissertation or thesis requirements?
- ▶ Teaching requirements?
- ▶ Internship requirements?
- ▶ If licensure goal, how successful are current students in securing an internship site?
- ▶ If research is a goal, how successful are current students in
  - ▶ Publishing paper?
  - ▶ Finding funding?

**This information can often be found on the department website (online)  
→look for “Current Students” information (or something similar)**



What's the  
difference between  
these different grad  
programs?



# Types of Grad Programs that psychology students consider

17

- Master's Degree
  - Master's in Experimental Psychology (M.S.)
  - Master's in Social Work
  - Master's in Family and Marriage Therapy (MFT)
    - *Note that patient not limited to family and/or couples*
- PsyD
  - Focused on Clinical/Counseling
- PhD
  - Choose a field of research
    - Behavioral Psy
    - Social Psy
    - Cognitive Psy
    - Developmental Psy
    - More!
  - Can be hybrid (Clinical or Counseling PhD)
  - Mostly research

# Grad school: Master's Program

- Can be
  - clinical (best suited for those with an interest in psychopathological populations and behavioral health)
  - counseling (best for those interested in vocational and career processes, human diversity, and professional training)
  - educational (provide counseling services to students, including those with a learning disability or those with behavioral or social problems)
- Masters of Social Work (MSW) degree can be in a clinical direct practice track, or a macro-practice track (i.e., focus on political advocacy, community organizing, policy analysis and/or human services management).
- Typically 2-3 years long
- We have a General Master's degree and an MFT, as well as Spanish bilingual emphasis program here at MSMU
  - MSMU Expedited Application Process
- Typically not funded

# Grad school: Ph.D.

- Research, research, research
- 5-6 years long
- Funded
- Can teach at 4 year college level with more job security
- Jobs typically include  $\wedge\wedge$  or private sector stats or other research jobs

# Grad school: Psy.D.

- ▶ best suited for those with an interest in psychopathological populations and behavioral health, and places greater emphasis on the practice of psychology and less emphasis on research.
- ▶ Therapy *and* Diagnostics
- ▶ Typically not funded
- ▶ 5-6 years long

# How to choose which program(s) to apply to

- ▶ Apply widely! Dr. Rojo recommends 4 to 15 schools
- ▶ If doctoral program, you'll apply to join a specific faculty member's lab, not the whole program itself
  - ▶ It's super important to match research interests with the faculty member who will become your supervisor/mentor
    - ▶ Choose based on research interests, not just the name of or prestige of the university
    - ▶ This will likely mean you apply all around the US, if not the world
- ▶ See handout of LA grad programs
  - ▶ But consider applying outside of LA too 😊



# Prepping for grad school

# GRE and Application materials

- ▶ Letters of Rec
- ▶ GRE
- ▶ Personal statements
- ▶ Transcripts
- ▶ CV or Resume

*Edit Edit Edit Edit Edit!*

# Typical timeline

- ▶ Most applications due between December and February
- ▶ 1 year before, start thinking about what sort of grad program
- ▶ At least 1 year before, start thinking about getting hands on experience (practicum or research lab) and try to stick to it for at least 6 to 9 months (so that this supervisor can write you a very strong letter, and so that you can gain useful skills)
- ▶ About 5 months before, start narrowing down lists of programs and identify their requirements
- ▶ About 5 months before, if you think you'll only take the GRE once or twice, schedule your GRE before application deadline
  - ▶ If think you might take GRE several times, remember you cannot take GRE more than once per month
- ▶ If doctoral program, about 3 months before, reach out to faculty at those programs, introduce yourself, compliment their work, and ask if they are seeking students in the upcoming cycle (first impression, make it sweet and simple, but strong!)
- ▶ Study for GRE for at least 3 months (it's a lot, take it seriously!)
- ▶ 2-3 months before, write your statement(s)
  - ▶ Revise, revise, revise!
  - ▶ Get 2-4 other people to read it!
- ▶ 1 to 2 months before deadline, ask for letters of rec
  - ▶ 3 weeks before, check in with letter writers....if someone doesn't seem committed, ask your backup person
- ▶ 1 to 2 months before deadline, be sure all transcripts will be sent on time, and send them!



# How to study for GRE

- ▶ Buy a review book (Princeton Review, Kaplan, etc.)
- ▶ Study at 2-6 hours per day for at least 3 months
- ▶ Learn up to 7 new vocab words per day
- ▶ PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE
  - ▶ Especially the timing!
  - ▶ Especially the are you are weakest in (for me, that's math)
  - ▶ The GRE website has 2 free tests, do them!
    - ▶ It's painful, but the timing is what gets you! So practice *feeling* the time



Letters of Rec.

# Who to ask for a letter

## ➤ SHOULD **NOT** BE

- An instructor in whose class you barely participated
- Someone you've known less than 3 months
- An instructor whose courses you didn't do well in
- Anyone who you don't feel 100% would be able to write you a **STRONG** letter!

## ➤ SHOULD BE

- A professional in the field to which you are applying (often grad programs expect writers to be full time professors)
- Okay to ask a work supervisor, but ideally is somebody in the field to which you are applying (e.g., a social worker if you are applying to counseling, social work, or grad program/job related to psychology)
- Somebody who would be able to provide *specific examples of your skills*
- Somebody you feel confident can write a **STRONG** letter (it's not enough to for it to be mediocre)
- Always have at least 1 or 2 back up writers in case first choices can't or don't get it in on time

# When to ask for letters

- ▶ Ask sooner rather than later!
  - ▶ If you think you won't see this person anymore (e.g., you were enrolled in their class but won't take a future class with them again), ask now!
    - ▶ They can always decide how to proceed (e.g., they might write the letter now while their memory of you is fresh in their mind, but not send it till later when you need it submitted)
  - ▶ If you are graduating, but won't be applying to grad programs this year, ask now!
    - ▶ They can always decide how to proceed (e.g., they might write the letter now while their memory of you is fresh in their mind, but not send it till later when you need it submitted)
- ▶ Give writers 1-2 months to write a letter

# How to ask for letters

- ▶ You could certainly ask in person, but I would still follow up with an email, or you could ask via email
- ▶ In this email, include
  - ▶ Formal greeting and reminder of how they know you
  - ▶ Phrase the request as a question (let them know they don't have to if they do not feel comfortable writing a strong letter)
  - ▶ Summarize each institution's mission and/or what they are looking for in applicants
    - ▶ If you are applying to more than 2 programs/jobs (which I strongly recommend), consider creating a table for your letter writer that includes this information. Send it to them AFTER they've said yes they'll write you a letter
      - ▶ THIS IS SUPER IMPORTANT!!! WE LETTER WRITERS TAILOR OUR LETTERS TO EACH PROGRAM! ←that's in your benefit!!!!
    - ▶ Include deadlines for all letters
    - ▶ Include brief instructions on how letter writer should submit their letter(s)
- ▶ Thank your letter writers once it's all done 😊



# RESOURCES ON CAMPUS

- Career services center
- UCLA short handbook with great info on career exploration, avoiding scammers, how to create cv/resume and cover letter, etc. :
  - [https://career.ucla.edu/Portals/123/documents/career%20guide/UCLA\\_CareerGuide\\_2019-2021.pdf](https://career.ucla.edu/Portals/123/documents/career%20guide/UCLA_CareerGuide_2019-2021.pdf)
- Psychology Faculty at MSMU 😊

# Other questions you might have

(please don't hesitate to ask your academic advisor in Psychology)

- ▶ We can talk more about
  - ▶ How to ask for letters of rec
    - ▶ WHO to ask for letters
  - ▶ GRE
    - ▶ What is it?
    - ▶ How to study for it?
    - ▶ How to register for it?
    - ▶ When to take it?
- ▶ What if my grades are not so great?
- ▶ What's the difference between Masters vs PhD vs PsyD?
- ▶ How do choose which career path
- ▶ What if I start this path but change my mind?
- ▶ Gap years (btw undergrad and grad)
- ▶ How to find internships
- ▶ Anything else you'd like (nothing is off limits 😊 )

# General Advice from Dr. Dolly Rojo

- ▶ **ONCE YOU KNOW THE CAREER PATH YOU WANT TO PURSUE...**
  1. **FIND SOMEONE WHO ALREADY HAS THIS CAREER**
  2. **FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS!**
    - ▶ No need to reinvent the wheel!
- ▶ Buy them coffee and “pick their brain” on how they got there 😊





Also, it's okay if you don't have it all figured out right now!!!!

You have the rest of your life, we promise it's okay to change your mind or take a little break from school to figure it out 😊