CAPELLA UNIVERSITY

Programs of Research

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Capella University

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PHD PROGRAMS

List of Programs

Program Guidelines

Within the Department of Psychology are five PhD specializations. Each specialization has programs of research, or research topic areas, that are appropriate and relevant to their fields and are represented within that specialization by faculty who have an interest and expertise in those topics. The following document details the programs of research for each of the following specializations:

- Educational Psychology
- Industrial/Organizational Psychology
- General Psychology
- Addiction Psychology
- Developmental Psychology

Definition of Research

Consistent with the educational philosophy to prepare learners to have an immediate impact in the workplace and community, Capella University provides a doctoral educational experience that supports learner development within the scholar-practitioner model. As scholar-practitioners, Capella doctoral learners conduct authentic research. Authentic research is actionable research to advance and/or apply theory to solve social problems.

More specifically,

- Capella describes doctoral-level investigation in the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs through the utilization of research which **extends** theory and uses **new** knowledge to solve a real-world problem.
- Capella describes doctoral-level investigation in the Professional Doctorate programs through the utilization of research which applies **existing** theory and knowledge to solve a real-world problem.

Educational Psychology

Guidelines

A dissertation in Educational Psychology should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Educational Psychology or closely related disciplines, such as cognitive science. A dissertation in Educational Psychology should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Discouraged are dissertations that are replications, problem oriented, focused on practice, local program evaluations, or classroom educational action research; they generally will not be acceptable.

Theoretical Perspectives

A variety of theories and perspectives is appropriate with Educational Psychology. Essentially all dissertations in Educational Psychology that are based in the hypothetico-deductive approach will require a well-articulated theory of learning with broad scope, as well as a theory of development. When the inductive approach is used, a general, well-articulated theory of learning may be stated as part of an existing set of widely accepted assumptions that the researcher may treat in various ways. Popular theories include, but are not limited to:

- social learning theory
- social development theory
- social cognition
- genetic epistemology
- classical conditioning
- positive behavioral support
- operant conditioning
- discovery learning
- psychodynamic theory
- cognitive load theory
- separation-individuation theory

No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied in the above list.

Educational Psychology Topic Areas

- classroom evaluation
- cognitive development
- cognitive domain (Bloom's taxonomy)
- conation/volition
- community involvement
- cooperative learning
- educational research
- effective teaching practices
- family/home environment
- information processing
- learning styles
- measurement and evaluation
- metacognition
- motivation
- online learning
- online teaching
- parent involvement
- problem solving/decision making
- self-efficacy
- self-regulated learning

Educational Psychology Unapproved Topic Areas

- Any topics that relate to a specific education or classroom practice or curriculum without taking into account teaching and learning are unapproved. A sample of students or teachers is not sufficient to satisfy the requirement for the topic to refer to learning or teaching. While students and teachers are often involved in activities related to learning or teaching, they can be involved in activities that are not related to learning or teaching. To fulfill the requirement, variables related to learning or teaching will work best.
- Topics related to school psychology or school counseling

- Topics related to education without a psychological aspect

Scholarly Journals

A list of top rated journals can be found in the Capella Library Topic Exploration Quickstart Guide for Educational Psychology.

Example Instruments

Student Self-Concept Scale

http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mmt&AN=test.1590&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Index of Teaching Stress

http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mmt&AN=test.2857&site=ehost-live&scope=sit

Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Guidelines

The specialization of Industrial/Organizational Psychology (I/O Psychology) includes topic areas that consider the application of psychological theory and research to the world of work and the workplace.

APA Division 14: Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP; http://www.siop.org/) advocates the scientist-practitioner model in the application of psychology to all types of organizational and workplace settings, such as manufacturing, commercial enterprises, labor unions, and public agencies. Members work in several fields within I-O Psychology, such as testing/assessment, leadership development, staffing, management, teams, compensation, workplace safety, diversity, and work-life balance.

Theoretical Perspectives

- career development theories
- equilibrium theory
- systems theory
- motivational theories
- equity theory
- goal setting theory
- learning theories
- Vroom's VIE theory
- demand-control model
- person-environment fit model
- theories of workplace violence (frustration-aggression hypothesis; the justice hypothesis)
- leadership theories
- classic organizational theory
- human relations theory
- contingency theory
- social psychology theories
- positive psychology theories
- self-efficacy theories

Industrial/Organizational Psychology Topic Areas

- leadership
- employee performance
- employee satisfaction
- employee health
- occupational health
- occupational stress
- burnout
- employee motivation
- organizational change
- organizational development
- career development
- team building
- executive coaching
- coaching
- employee selection

- employee assessment
- organizational assessment
- job analysis
- performance measurement
- cross cultural issues in I/O
- performance appraisal
- employee attitudes
- work-life balance
- training and development
- occupational fairness
- organizational culture

Industrial/Organizational Psychology Unapproved Topic Areas

- topics related to business without a psychological component
- marketing research
- financial strategies
- organization profit and loss
- student or learner performance or behavior
- clinically oriented topics
- topics related to education without a link to the workplace
- topics related to the treatment of psychological disorders or mental health issues of any type
- A topic that deals with leadership in an educational organization would be fine but a topic related to educational strategies that improve student performance would not.
- A topic could focus on EAPs if the focus of the study were how the EAP impacts the organization or employee performance but not if the focus were the actual treatment provided.

Scholarly Journals

A list of top-rated journals can be found in the Capella Library Topic Exploration Quickstart Literature Guide: I/O Psychology.

Example Instruments

Allen, N., & Meyer, J. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 63,* 1–18.

Balzer W. K., Kihm J. A., Smith P. C., Irwin J. L., Bachiochi P. D., & Robie C. (1997). *User's manual for the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; 1997 Revision) and the Job in General (JIG) Scales.* Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (1996). Maslach Burnout Inventory—General survey. *The Maslach Burnout Inventory Test Manual*, 1, 19–26.

Here's a handy website that lists many scales for I/O Psychology use (scroll to the page containing the construct of interest):

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- 2017 Research Methods Division Award (http://rmdiv.org/)
- Psychological Instrument Resources
  (http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~pspector/scalepage.html)

General Psychology

Guidelines

A dissertation in General Psychology at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology, it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. General Psychology stresses the integration of multiple perspectives from a variety of subdisciplines in psychology. Acceptable topics in General Psychology can vary greatly but should be grounded in a psychological theory not specifically related to any other PhD specialization offered at Capella.

The APA Division 1 Society for General Psychology (www.apadivisions.org/division-1/) is concerned with creating coherence among psychology's diverse specialties by encouraging members to incorporate multiple perspectives from psychology's subdisciplines into their research, theory, and practice. Division 1 welcomes membership from academic scientists, professional practitioners, and psychologists whose main concern is the public interest. Division membership includes a subscription to its quarterly journal, *Review of General Psychology*.

Theoretical Perspectives

Following are examples of theories that can support a dissertation in General Psychology, but it should not be considered an exhaustive list:

- social learning theory (Bandura)
- social development theory (Vygotsky)
- attribution theory (Heider)
- cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger)
- psychosocial stages of development (Erikson)
- theory of cognitive development (Piaget)
- processing fluency theory of aesthetic pleasure
- privacy regulation theory (Irwin Altman)
- moral foundations theory (Jonathan Haidt, Kohlberg)

General Psychology Topic Areas

- abnormal psychology
- cognitive psychology
- developmental psychology
- evolutionary psychology
- family psychology
- forensic psychology
- health psychology
- media psychology
- personality psychology
- social psychology
- sports psychology
- positive psychology

General Psychology Unapproved Topic Areas

- Treatment outcome studies involving patients with psychiatric/psychological diagnoses are not appropriate.

- Studies of topics and/or populations that require doctoral-level professional credentials in such fields as clinical psychology, counseling, or medicine are not allowed.
- Dissertation topics closely tied to Educational Psychology, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Addiction Psychology, or Clinical and Counseling Psychology are not appropriate for General Psychology.

Scholarly Journals

A list of top-rated journals can be found in the Capella Library Topic Exploration Quickstart Literature Guide: General Psychology.

Example Instruments

Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. In F. Pajares & T. C. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp. 307–337). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 24*, 386–396.

Goldberg, L. R., Johnson, J. A., Eber, H. W., Hogan, R., Ashton, M. C., Cloninger, C. R., & Gough, H. C. (2006). The International Personality Item Pool and the future of public-domain personality measures. *Journal of Research in Personality, 40,* 84–96.

International Personality Item Pool: A scientific collaboratory for the development of advanced measures of personality traits and other individual differences. Available at http://ipip.ori.org/

Other helpful scales can be located through this link: http://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers

Addiction Psychology

Guidelines

Research in the area of Addiction Psychology is theoretically precise and well developed. As such, learners engaging in this area of research need to do a thorough review of the literature in their area before proposing a research question. If work is proposed as exploring any "gaps" in research, theory, and so forth, the gaps need to be clearly described and not left to vague interpretation. Precision in this area of work should proceed with attention to the most relevant branches and subbranches when discussing gaps. Note that although many opportunities exist in the field to help demonstrate the generalizability of existing theory and applications, studies simply replicating what is already known in a new group or context is not sufficient without a thoughtful rationale based on psychological theory. Additionally, learners doing quantitative studies should plan their research in such a way that it allows for exploration of the hypotheses of interest, while also ruling out alternative explanations.

Theoretical Perspectives

Learners working in Addiction Psychology should focus on theories that are nonclinical in nature. They should avoid theories related to any specific approach to treatment or treatment in general. Virtually any psychological theory that is not solely clinical and that has not been recognized as discredited may be explored.

Addiction Psychology Topic Areas

Examples of appropriate topics for learners in the PhD program in Addiction Psychology include research focused on the acquisition, nature, appearance, theory, prevention, or meaning of addictive behaviors, substance use, or related problems (such as gambling, eating, sexual behavior, spending). Learners may include study of the normal population and other nonclinically affected individuals relevant to these types of problems. Learners also may examine topics related to implementation science and involving evaluation of nonclinical applied psychology efforts.

Addiction Psychology Unapproved Topic Areas

Inappropriate topics include, but are not limited to, those requiring the delivery or supervision of any clinical treatment or evaluation, experimental treatments or trainings, or coaching-oriented efforts related to addictive behavior and its treatment or clinical assessment. Additionally, any topics requiring doctoral-level clinical, medical, or counseling knowledge, theory, assessment, ethics, or other skills related to the clinically oriented treatment of or research into addictive behavior are not appropriate. Learners are encouraged to avoid topics that are purely epidemiological, anthropological, sociological, medical, or public health-oriented in nature.

Scholarly Journals

A list of top-rated journals can be found in the Capella Library Topic Exploration Quickstart Literature Guide: Addictive Psychology.

Developmental Psychology

Guidelines

A dissertation in Developmental Psychology should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Developmental Psychology or closely related disciplines, such as cognitive science. A dissertation in Developmental Psychology should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations that are solely replications, problem oriented, focused on practice, or local program evaluations are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Developmental psychologists study changes in human development across the life span, including physical, cognitive, social, perceptual, personality, and emotional growth. (See Pursuing a Career in Developmental Psychology.)

Doctoral learners in the Developmental Psychology specialization acquire a broad base of knowledge associated with life span development, policy, and advocacy. Core coursework provides a foundation of the science of psychology, and specialization coursework provides in-depth study within the discipline of Developmental Psychology and policy. The curriculum provides learners the opportunity to pursue emphasis areas of child and adolescent development, adulthood and aging, and life span. Successful graduates of this specialization are prepared to pursue careers in teaching and instruction; higher education; child, adolescent, and adult development; policy and advocacy; and research. These specialization requirements are not intended to prepare graduates for licensure as professional counselors or licensed psychologists.

Theoretical Perspectives

- social learning theory (Bandura)
- attachment theory (Bowlby)
- ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner)
- theory of adolescent egocentrism (Elkind)
- psychosocial development (Erikson)
- psychosexual development (Freud)
- theories of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg)
- theories of cognitive development (e.g., Piaget)
- cultural-historical theories (e.g., Vygotsky)
- information processing theories (Miller)
- identity status theory (Marcia)
- classical conditioning (Pavlov)
- operant conditioning (Skinner)
- personality (e.g., Costa and McCrae))

Developmental Psychology Topic Areas

Appropriate areas involve areas of development from infancy to old age, across the life span.

- Individual changes in human development across the life span (may include significant life domains such as physical, cognitive, social, perceptual, emotional, and personality development related to individuals and groups)

Developmental Psychology Unapproved Topic Areas

- Any program evaluation or action research. It is important to distinguish Developmental Psychology from Educational Psychology.
- No educational topics that fail to take into account human developmental psychological aspects. For example, no classroom methods, such as testing instructional or assessment methods, measurement and evaluation, teaching practices, learning contexts, or learning strategies or methods.
- Clinically based topics involving specific treatment outcomes are also not appropriate.

Scholarly Journals

A list of top-rated journals can be found in the Capella Library Topic Exploration Quickstart Literature Guide: Developmental Psychology.

Example Instruments

Armsden, G. C., & Greenberg, M. T. (1987). The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment: Individual differences and their relationship to psychological well-being in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *16*, 427–454.

Bennion, L. D., & Adams, G. R. (1986). A revision of the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status: An identity instrument for use with late adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 1*, 183–198.

Hesse, E. (1999). The Adult Attachment Interview: Historical and current perspectives. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Phillip (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 395–433). New York, NY: Guilford.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 3*, 551–558.

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (2003). *Personality in adulthood: A five-factor theory perspective* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.

PAR. (2012). NEO Personality Inventory – revised. Retrieved from http://www4.parinc.com/Products/Product.aspx?ProductID=NEO-PI-R

Behavior Analysis

Guidelines

A behavior-analytic dissertation should be conceptually systematic with the science of behavior. Therefore, the topics being investigated should be measurable, based on the basic principles of reinforcement or extinction, technological (repeatable), and generalizable. A dissertation in behavior analysis can focus on operant or respondent behavior. The dissertation should contribute to the field by supporting previous behavior-analytic studies and extending the utility of interventions through systematic replications or original contributions. The dissertation must be quantitative and fall under the BACB's definition of experimental as outlined below:

According to the BACB as of 2017, in order to apply for the BACB-D credential under Option B the dissertation must be behavior-analytic as defined by: "The independent variable must be explicitly operant or respondent in nature, the dependent variable sufficiently operationalized, and the problem framed using an operant/respondent conceptualization. The experimental criterion may be met with either single-subject or group-design methods." (https://www.bacb.com/bcba-d/doctoral-designation-dissertation/)

Appropriate Participants

Those engaged in a behavior-analytic dissertation working with vulnerable participants must be actively credentialed as Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) when they are gathering data for their dissertation. Examples of types of vulnerability include but are not limited to: physical, mental, cognitive, economic, social, communicative, or legal vulnerability, or vulnerable to undue influence to participate. If a learner is not actively credentialed as a BCBA at the time of topic approval, they must propose a topic that does not involve vulnerable populations. Additionally, they must document on-the-ground BCBA supervision of their dissertation research.

Additionally, prisoners cannot be used as participants in a behavior analytic study. Children can only participate in minimal risk studies. Please note that the risk level is determined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and not the researcher. Animals cannot be used as subjects in any study.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives

Operant or respondent conditioning theories should be underlying any dissertation in the ABA specialization.

Examples of Appropriate Topics

Any topic that is conceptually based in behavior analytic theories (e.g., reinforcement, extinction) can be considered appropriate. Below is a list of possible topics that may be

examined during a behavior-analytic dissertation:

- Functional Analyses
    - Please note that problem behaviors must not be harmful to self or others
- Response Interruption and Redirection
- Functional Communication Training
- Functional Behavior Assessments
- Preference Assessments
- Self-Management
- Contingency Contracts
- Differential Reinforcement Procedures
    - DRO, DRI, DRA, NCR, DRL, DRH
- Verbal Operant Training
- Mand Training
- Intraverbal Training
- Tact Training
- Shaping
- Three-Step Guided Compliance
- Prompting Methods
- Discrimination Training
- Transfer of Stimulus Control Procedures
- Video Feedback
- Graphic Feedback
- Stimulus Equivalence
- High-p, Low-p
- Matching Law
- Escape Extinction
- Behavioral Skills Training
- Data Collection Systems
- Procedural Integrity Checklists
- Behavior-Based Safety
- Systems Analysis
- Demand Fading
- Parent Training
- Teacher Training
- Token Economies

- Level Systems

- Shape, Letter, or Color Identification

- Communication Skills

- Self-Care Skills

- Cooking Skills

- Job Productivity

- Sports Performance

- Following Directions

- Reading Skills

- Writing Skills

- Social Skills

Inappropriate Topics

Any topics that are not consistent with operant or respondent conditioning theories. Topics related to characteristics of specific diagnoses or diagnostic tools for clinical diagnoses are outside of the framework of behavior analytic theories and are not appropriate.

Appropriate Dependent Variables

Due to the nature of behavior analysis, the dependent variables in these experimental studies will be behaviors. The behaviors can be exhibited by any human population. However, the behaviors cannot be harmful to self or others, dangerous, illicit, or sexual in nature. Therefore, dependent variables that are not appropriate include things such as self-injurious behavior, aggressive behaviors, pica, rumination, public masturbation, drug use, etc. Examples of appropriate dependent variables may include following: directions, manding, tacting, intraverbals, recycling, energy use, correct counting, general social skills, echoics, life skills, play skills, swearing, general disruptive behaviors, etc.

Important ABA Journals

Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis

Behavior Analysis in Practice

The Analysis of Verbal Behavior

Journal of Organizational Behavior Management

The Behavior Analyst

The Psychological Record

The Experimental Analysis of Behavior

ABA Professional Organizations

Behavior Analyst Certification Board

Applied Behavior Analysis International

Association of Professional Behavior Analysts

American Psychological Association (Division 25: Behavior Analysis)

B.F. Skinner Foundation

Association for Positive Behavior Support

Aubrey Daniels Institute

Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior

Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International