The Story of My Search

I have liked to help and guide people since I was small. I also liked to talk to people who were sad or angry and try to make them cheerful again. So when the English teacher told us that we could do research on any topic we wanted, I immediately thought of doing research on becoming a psychiatrist. I've been having thoughts of becoming a psychiatrist for some time now, though I never really did any digging on the subject. This was partly because I didn't have any motivations, and I thought that I still had lots of time before I go to college, which is when you have to choose the subjects you want to study, which will point out the general direction jobs you might want to pursue when you grow older. What made me decide that I would use this I-Search project to do research on becoming a psychiatrist was that I learned my mom's "dream" was to become a psychiatrist, and I realized that college was really no longer that far away, either. I don't know much about becoming a psychiatrist, just that you have to spend more years in medical school after you graduate college, and that psychiatrists are doctors who help people who have depression or some other type of behavioral problem.

The main focus of my search was on becoming a psychiatrist, and deciding if it would be the right job for me. To answer this question, I had nine other more specific questions that I would answer first, like what education you need to become a psychiatrist, where psychiatrists work and for how long, what kind of patients they interact with, and whether there's a retirement age or not. There were also more questions that were kind of opinionated, like how do psychiatrists treat patients, and what characteristics do psychiatrists need to have in order to be good at their job. These questions would be the ones I write on my note cards, and also the questions that would enable me to answer my "Big Question", which was "How do you become a psychiatrist/is it the right job for me?"

To begin my search, I first searched "psychiatrist" on Google, hoping to find some general information, like the purpose of their job, or their annual salary. Of course, websites that would give me the information I wanted popped up, but something else caught my attention, it was called "Psychiatrist vs. Psychologist". What's the difference between those two titles, I asked myself, should I do a little bit of research on it? My curiosity got the better of me, so I decided to do a quick search that would only take a few minutes. After that, I would continue my search again right away; after all, how long would it take to find out the difference between these two job titles? However, when I clicked on the link "Psychiatrist vs. Psychologist", a very, very long article showed up. This is going to take way more than just a few minutes, I thought to myself, so why don't I just change the main focus of my I-Search project, or the "Big Question"? Instead of doing a quick side search, why don't I include it in my main search? I thought about it for a few minutes, and finally concluded that it would be a great idea; not only will it add information to my limited knowledge about different jobs, it would also help my mom choose what her "dream job" really is. After I decided this, I wasted no time in changing my "Big Question" to "Which job suits me better, being a psychiatrist or a psychologist?" I also added "and psychologist" to all of my other, more specific questions.

Finishing the changes to my questions, I hastily returned to my main search, afraid that I had already wasted too much time. This time, I decide to try using a reference book fist before going on the internet. One of the librarians, named Mrs. Doherty, gave me a reference book called the <u>Career Discovery Encyclopedia</u>, and I found two articles that would be helpful to me in there, called "Psychiatrists" and "Psychologists". I found some pretty useful information in these two articles, especially about

psychologists. I found out that to become a psychologist, you would usually spend 6-10 years in school after high school; that most psychologists have a doctorate, like a PhD or a Psy.D (or else job choices are very limited); that usually psychologists are required to complete one year internships after getting their doctorates, and that psychologists who want to go into private practice in the U.S. must have a state issued certificate/license. This was what I wanted to do, for both a psychiatrist and a psychologist, so I deleted the question asking where psychiatrists or psychologists work. The school life for psychiatrists, unfortunately, is a bit longer. After you go to a four-year college, you would enter a four-year program at a medical school. Then you would pass exams to become a medical doctor and earn your M.D, complete at least four more years of training for treatment of the mentally ill, train on the job at a psychiatric hospital. You would also have the pass oral and written exams given by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, and on top of all that, you still might need to complete a rotating internship. That's a lot of schooling!

Also, I realized that there are lots of different psychologists, like clinical psychologists, school psychologists, and so on. I decided to choose clinical psychologists, because I liked what they did which was helping people who have emotional and mental problems, like severe depression. They help by trying to find out why people act and think the way they do. Even in the branch of clinical psychology, there were also more different types, like health psychology, neuropsychology, and child psychology. I chose to do my research on child psychology, narrowing down the search even more, I was sure that there would be more divisions in child psychology, but I didn't think I needed to get that detailed. I wanted to check if there were child psychiatrists, because if there was, I would be able to compare the two jobs better. Luckily, they did indeed mention in the article "Psychiatrists" that there were child psychiatrists, among all the other types, like forensic psychiatrist, geriatric psychiatrists, and industrial psychiatrists.

Unlike in the article "Psychologists", I only found one bit of information that was useful to me in the article "Psychiatrists", and it was that "psychiatrists are physicians who treat and prevent mental illness" (Psychiatrists, 16). I also found out that psychiatrists mainly work with "patients who might have feelings of anger or fear, or people who are so confused that they have completely lost though with reality" (Psychiatrists, 16) However, I did find some pretty useful information when I went on "World Book Student" though. I learned that there are two main types of treatment for patients, called somatic therapy and psychotherapy. Somatic therapy is usually the use of medications, like antidepressants, which are a "group of drugs used to control abnormalities of mood." (Andreasen, pars. 7) The other type of treatment, called psychotherapy, is "any form of treatment by psychological means." (Andreason, pars. 9) Most types of this treatment are when patients have discussions with a psychiatrist. Two widely used forms of psychotherapy are behavior therapy and psychoanalysis. The fist one focuses on helping patients change their behavior rather than helping them understand why they act that way; like rewarding patients for "good" behavior and scolding them for "bad" behavior. Psychoanalysis mainly focuses on unconscious thought and feelings; this is usually when a patient meets with a psychiatrist and talks about whatever comes to mind. A technique that is usually only used by child psychiatrists is letting the patient, which would be a child, act out their problems using games and/or toys.

On the other hand, it said on guidetoonlineschools.com and Career Discovery Encyclopedia that clinical psychologists study their patients more than actually interacting with them. They still talk to the patients, of course, but they only interview them, not actually talk to them about their problems. They might ask the patient what there problem is, and then do all types of research to find out why they have this problem and how to cure it. For example, clinical psychologists might study the patient's past, do experiments, or observe the patient's individual and group behavior.

Another useful site for my research on psychiatrists was stateuniversity.com, which said that

psychiatrists should be well balanced, disciplined, and should enjoy working with different kinds of people. It was a bit different for a clinical psychologist; it said on guidetoonlineschools.com that child clinical psychologists should be kind, have excellent problem solving skills, and analytical abilities. I learned that the work hours of a psychiatrist in private practice can be irregular, because they must be available to patients whenever they need them. It's the same for clinical psychologists, because they have patients they need to tend to too.

Next, I searched a topic that was pretty important to me, the salary of both jobs. Fortunately, it turns out that more years of schooling does pay off. I found out on payscale.com that if you've been a child psychiatrist for less than a year, the range of your annual salary is $85,000-$102,000, depending on how long you work, and how many patients you have. On the other hand, child clinical psychologists usually only earn $35,000-$102,000 a year, according to duidetoonlineschools.com.

As for my last question, which was whether there was a retirement age for either psychiatrists or psychologists, I couldn't find any information on it. Every time I searched it on Google, articles about why psychiatrist/psychologists retire or some other unrelated article popped up. So I concluded that there was no retirement age for either psychiatrists or psychologists. I guess as long as you were still sharp, you could continue working.

Now that I have the information I need, I could supposedly answer my "Big Question", but there was still one question that's been bothering me all through my search, and it was "what is the main difference between a psychiatrist and psychologist?" I typed in this question on ask.com, and thankfully, a useful looking, and most importantly, short article, showed up. It explained that the main difference between the two jobs was that a psychiatrist it a doctor, meaning that they can give out medication to his/her patients, while psychologists could not; I think that's why a psychiatrist's educational career is longer compared to that of a psychologist's.

Having solved all the questions I had about becoming psychiatrists and psychologists, I was finally ready to choose which job I liked better. There are lots of pros and cons for both of the jobs, and I guess my decision would really depend on which cons were unimportant compared to the pros of the job. In the end, I would have to say I want to become a child psychiatrist more than a child clinical psychologist. The reason I chose this was because well, psychiatrists do earn more money, and they are true doctors, the kind that can prescribe medication, which, in my mind, is really important. Also, psychiatrists have more years of schooling, which can become an advantage, because this way, if you decide sometime that you don't want to be a psychiatrist anymore, it will be easier to change your career than if you were a psychologist first, because you have received more education.

I was really surprised in the way my search turned out, it went from becoming a psychiatrist to choosing if I like psychiatrists or psychologists better to if I like child psychiatrists or child clinical psychologists better. In a way, the search first got broader, and then narrowed down. I liked the experience of this I-Search project very much, because not only did I find what I was looking for, it also opened my eyes more to the "real world".