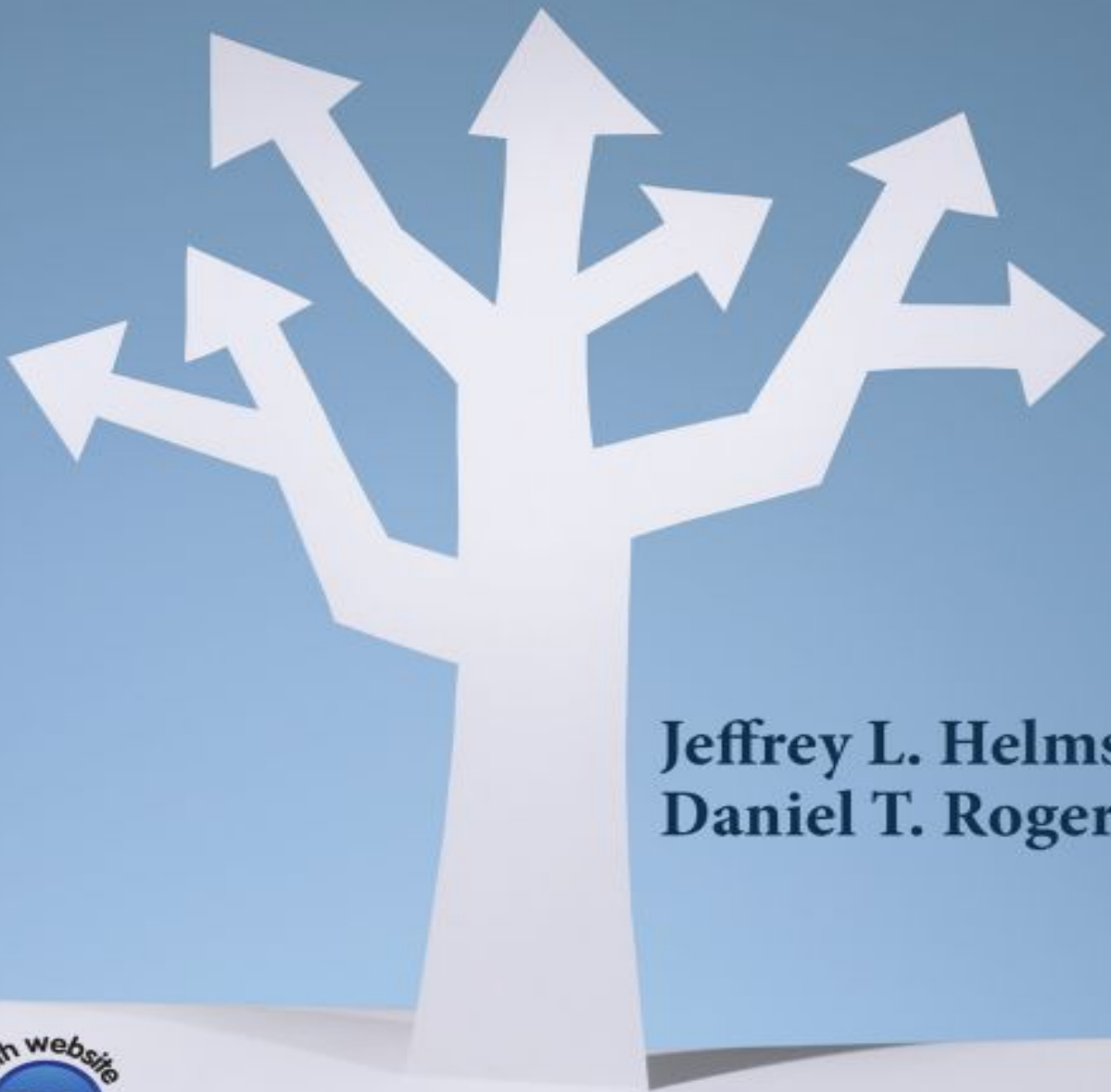


Second Edition

MAJORING
IN
Psychology

Achieving Your Educational and Career Goals



**Jeffrey L. Helms &
Daniel T. Rogers**



WILEY Blackwell

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Achieving Your Educational and Career Goals

Second Edition

*Jeffrey L. Helms
Daniel T. Rogers*

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Preface

This book grew out of our experience teaching and working with psychology students on issues related to academic and career success. Whether in the classroom of our Careers in Psychology course, which addresses these topics, or in the midst of advising a student, we have developed a deep appreciation for how simultaneously exciting and overwhelming the process of pursuing academic and career goals can be. Students are passionate about discovering the options available to them and identifying their unique goals. Instructors relish the opportunity to guide students through this process and watch them succeed. However, students and instructors alike can at times feel lost given the range of complex issues involved in academic and career development. In fact, some of the most helpful information, strategies, and resources for meeting these goals go unused simply because students or their instructors are unaware of their existence. Our appreciation for this mixed experience from both the students' and instructors' perspectives led us to write this book.

This book provides to students interested in psychology, and the instructors who work with them, information that is vital to academic and career success in the field. As such, the book is an ideal text for courses that address aspects of majoring in psychology (e.g., academic strategies, career and graduate school preparation) and/or aspects of career planning (e.g., learning about the careers of psychologists in various subfields and their education and training). Even outside of the context of a college course, students of psychology who are seeking to clarify academic and career

goals and develop knowledge and skills to support achieving these goals will find the book helpful.

There are other texts available that concentrate on one or two of the areas covered in this book, such as selecting a career, navigating your academic path, or preparing for graduate school. Many of these texts are excellent resources, and we encourage students and instructors to examine them according to interest and need. However, our goal was to bring these and other related topics together in one place. In doing so, we compile sound, research-based information and strategies on succeeding as a psychology major in college and beyond. We strive to communicate this information in an interesting and compelling way. We hope that the book answers questions about the major and its career paths while supporting the pursuit of academic and career goals.

This book is divided into two sections. Part I concentrates on student success in achieving general educational and career goals. In this section we examine such issues as the utility of a psychology degree, strategies for academic success, career decision making, and employment and graduate school preparation. In addition to content, the chapters offer suggested exercises, readings, and resources to enhance understanding of the issues at hand. Part II of the book concentrates on student success in achieving specific educational and career goals. In this section we examine the various career options within psychology and issues related to these careers. Each chapter addresses a major area within psychology and provides valuable information about the focus, training, and work of individuals with careers in these areas. The chapters also include information about relevant career options at both the graduate *and* bachelor's levels. In addition to suggested exercises, readings, and resources, each chapter offers a glimpse into the careers and perspectives of two

(inter)nationally recognized psychologists working in their respective subfield.

It is our belief that success as a psychology major cannot simply be defined as earning good grades, securing a job after graduation, or gaining acceptance into graduate school. Instead, success involves becoming a strong student who is well informed not only about the field but also about her or his relationship to it. As such, we hope that this book serves as a reliable and trustworthy guide for students curious about the field, and their place within it, and for instructors who are assisting them in their pursuits.

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About the Website

This book is accompanied by a companion website for instructors:



www.wiley.com/go/helms/majoringinpsychology

The website includes:

- multiple-choice questions and answers (~50 for each chapter);
- short answer and essay questions (~10 for each chapter); and
- PowerPoint slides for each chapter.

Please note that the resources are password protected and can only be accessed by instructors who register with the site.

Part I

Majoring in Psychology

Chapter One

Why Major in Psychology?

Introduction

Psychology is a fascinating and diverse field of study. It attracts students with varied backgrounds, interests, and abilities, all of whom are hoping that psychology will be a good fit for them. In addition to simply pursuing topics that they find compelling, these students stand to benefit from devoting themselves to the study of such a broad field. Psychology's breadth is what makes it possible for students to acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills that are applicable to a variety of careers. In other words, psychology offers many different things to many different types of individuals. Although this is a strength of the field, it also can make it difficult to determine if psychology is the *best* fit for you. Consider for a moment three students, all undergraduates who have come to think that majoring in psychology is what is best for them.

Valerie

Valerie is 19 years old and always knew she would go to college. Since middle school she had planned to become a teacher, so she first chose education as her major. After taking several introductory courses and talking with faculty members in the education department, Valerie decided that teaching was not for her. She next considered majoring in nursing, but the admission standards for local nursing programs are highly competitive. Valerie feared that the grades she earned in several courses required by nursing programs would make her acceptance unlikely. One day last semester, Valerie's roommate described an interesting

demonstration her psychology professor had presented in class. This reminded Valerie of her interest in psychology in high school, and she decided to take a course to see what psychology was like at the college level. Valerie enjoyed the course and performed well. As a result, she decided to change her major to psychology. When she recently mentioned the change to her parents, they were not especially positive. They asked probing questions about what she could do with a psychology degree and how her career options would compare to those of education or nursing majors. Valerie was unsure how to answer their questions. She had not thought much about what she can or will do with her degree. But, she figures that if so many other people major in psychology, there must be employment options out there.

Ajay

Ajay is 37 years old and has attended college at several points in the past at two different institutions. Most recently he stopped attending after his first child was born. Between working full-time and raising children, he was unsure if he would ever return to school to complete his degree. Now that Ajay's children are older and his financial status is more secure, he has decided to return to college part-time in order to get back into the academic routine. Ever since he was young, Ajay has had a desire to become a clinical psychologist. He was involved in family therapy as a child and individual therapy as an adolescent. He has fond memories of the psychologists he interacted with and the benefits of these treatments. His interests have prompted him to read psychological theory and some of the latest research in the field. Now that he is returning to school again, Ajay has committed himself to taking his education seriously and staying focused on his career goal. He knows meeting this goal will require completing a doctoral