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School Psychology at the University of Utah

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Abstract: The article describes the history of the school psychology program at the University of Utah from 1978, and discusses responsibilities of a school psychologist: utilizing and disseminating the knowledge base of psychology in educational problem solving; operating from a scientist-practitioner model, wherein practices prescribed are based on research-validated procedures and a sound theoretical framework. School psychologists are generalists and specialists and function as researchers, diagnosticians, interventionists, assessors, consultants, and advocates for children. Professionally, school psychologists are identified with the overarching goals of enhancing the academic, social, and emotional well-being of students.

The School Psychology Program at the University of Utah is different from most of the programs that have been presented in this series. The excellent programs reviewed previously have been major school psychology programs with extensive histories and impressive reputations (Kratochwill, Gettinger, Reynolds, & Doll, 1988; Lambert, 1986; Nagle, 1986; Phillips, 1986; Pryzwansky, Brantley, Wasik, Schulte, & Simeonsson, 1989; Trachtman, 1987). The University of Utah program is a relatively small program by comparison to these programs and has recent origins. The program warrants a review in this series only because it may contain several features that might be useful for other small school psychology programs. Limited resources, large service demands, and serving a large geographical area have all shaped the origins of the program.

The program service demands are high because Utah has the largest birth-rate in the nation. Large families result in larger class sizes, with more handicapped children, who require more services and thus reduce general educational resources. Utah spends the least amount of money for education per child of any state (Salt Lake City Tribune, 1990). The small per capita spending is simply a function of family size. The largest proportion of Utah's state budget is spent on public education, but there is not enough money for all needs. Clearly, there is a need within Utah for more and better educationally related services. Yet, the University of Utah program is the only APA-approved PhD school psychology program in a three-state adjoining area. The service demands are accelerated by the needs of bordering western states that have no PhD school psychology programs.

Until 1979, the School Psychology Program at the University of Utah was largely a one-faculty program. Dr. Darrell H. Hart had directed and served as the sole program faculty for several years. Students were trained, but the program was a cooperative effort between other departmental and university programs. The department had an APA-approved counseling program with master's degree School Counseling and doctorate Instructional Psychology Programs. In 1978, it was evident to faculty that there was need for a functional school psychology program. The faculty debated whether the program should be master's level only or be both a master's and doctorate program. It was decided that the School Psychology Program should train both master's and doctoral students and follow in the tradition of the APA-accredited, doctorate counseling program. The faculty and administration decided to provide an all-out effort for the program and seek APA approval for a doctoral-level school psychology program. With limited university resources, this project required the conversion of existing lines of retiring faculty in other programs to school psychology positions.

Dr. Thomas Kehle was hired in 1979 from Kent State University and given the task of establishing an APA-accredited school psychology program. Kehle was a catalyst for change (Bluhm, 1990) in conceptualizing and designing the future program. Prior to arriving on campus, he submitted a proposal for restructuring the program. Central to the restructuring was the establishment of core courses for the master's and doctoral students in school psychology. In addition, the restructuring called for the hiring of a second faculty member. Dr. Maria Brassard, a recent graduate from Columbia University, was hired in 1980.

Drs. Kehle and Brassard established the School Psychology Training Clinic to "serve the community in providing independent psychological evaluations and as a resource and clearing house for practitioners" (as reviewed by Bluhm, 1990). In the same year, Kehle and Brassard established the School Psychology Seminar Series, a biweekly series of local and national speakers. The seminar series served a training function for students and provided a necessary link with

local practitioners, who could take the seminar for continuing education credit. Through the seminar series, the program cohosted the annual state conference with the Utah Association of School Psychologists.

In 1981, Dr. Jack Bardon from the University of North Carolina was asked to serve as a preevaluation consultant for APA accreditation. The APA site review was set for 1982 and was to serve as one of three joint national reviews by NASP and APA. The on-site visit occurred in December, 1982, and resulted in three basic recommendations: strengthening the practicum, improving the multi-cultural component, and hiring a third faculty member. The program received provisional accreditation with full accreditation in a follow-up site visit in 1986.

The third faculty member to be hired was Dr. William Jenson, who joined the program in 1983. Dr. Jenson, a Utah State University graduate, brought with him an emphasis on applied behavior analysis and school psychology. Dr. Jenson's major contribution was adding grant resources to the program. In five years, the program received approximately \$350,000 in personnel preparation training grants for school psychologists from the U.S. Office of Education. These grants supplied 60 students, trained in specialized intervention with autistic and behaviorally disordered students, and helped establish an intervention orientation for the program. Several student dissertations, presentations, and publications were produced as direct results of the extra resources from these grants.

A year later, Dr. Elaine Clark was hired to replace Dr. Brassard. Clark held two PhDs, one in school psychology and one in clinical psychology, and brought a neuropsychological orientation to the program. In 1989, Dr. Susan Sheridan was hired after Kehle left for the University of Connecticut. Sheridan brought a strong consultation orientation to the program and immediately established a research program through a University research grant.

The functional and philosophical bases of the program were in place by the end of 1989. Strong ties were established between the program and field practitioner in school districts and agencies. The program was viewed as serving local needs both in Utah and adjoining states. Resources were established for students through a vigorous grant-writing program. Specialization areas for students were established through faculty interests in interventions/consultation and neuropsychological assessment.

THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING MODEL

The School Psychology Program at the University of Utah prepares school psychologists to work in schools, hospitals, mental health settings, clinical practice, and universities. The future roles for students are as researchers, clinicians, and administrators with specialized skills and experiences. Each student is expected to be a generator and consumer of the research that forms the

Table 1. Present and Past Faculty of the Utah School Psychology Program

Year	Name and Institution	Teaching and Research Interests
1966-1979	Darrell H. Hart Michigan State University	Psychological Assessment
1979-1986	Thomas J. Kehle University of Kentucky	Intelligence, Self As A Model, RICH Theory
1980-1983	Maria Brassard Columbia University	Abuse, Professional School Psychology Issues
1983-present	William R. Jenson Utah State University	Applied Behavior Analysis, Behaviorally Disordered Students, Autism, Parent Training
1984-present	Elaine Clark, Director Michigan State University Brigham Young University	Neuropsychology, Self As A Model, Psychological Assessment
1989-present	Susan Sheridan University of Wisconsin-Madison	Consultation, Social Skills Training, Behavioral Assessment, Parent Involvement

base of an applied practitioner. A scientific orientation is foremost, with applied skills built upon this orientation. Within this framework, the school psychology faculty advocates a scientist-practitioner model of training that serves the needs of children and families. However, since the program is small, with limited resources, most students are expected to become specialists in a practical, clinical area. A specialized skill area is encouraged through course preparation and faculty exchanges. It is hoped that students can extend the knowledge base of their specialization area through their dissertation research and collaborative faculty research.

Scientist

The role of the scientist is considered foremost in the training model at the University of Utah. The school psychologist must be able to utilize research findings as a consumer to provide ethical, accountable, and useful services (Bardon, 1983; Lentz & Shapiro, 1987; Phillips, 1982). The scientist-practitioner model, as described in the literature (Edwards, 1987; Martens & Keller, 1987), is the model espoused by the Utah program. However, as concerned consumers of any product, students should be taught to replace part of the research they use. Regardless of the ultimate setting—universities, public schools, hospitals, agencies, administration or independent practice—these consumers should add to the research knowledge base. A practitioner never stops being a contributing scientist.

Practitioner

There are several basic steps in training scientist-practitioners in the Utah program. First, recognizing the highest standard of practice means applying only research-validated procedures, which is central to being a competent practitioner. Second, students are taught the ethical importance of coupling skill acquisition with supervised experience to practice within the limits of their competencies. Third, understanding professional dilemmas, revolutions, politics, and criticisms is critical in being an informed practitioner (Bardon, 1982; Fagan, 1986; Hyman, 1988; Jenson, Walker, Clark, & Kehle, 1991; Reschly, 1988; Trachtman, 1985). Adequately trained, informed, well-supervised, and ethical scientist-practitioners are overlapping goals of the program.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Required Coursework

The course of study in school psychology at the University of Utah leads to a Master's of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Educational Psychology. Both degrees require research-based study. Nonresearch projects or reviews are unacceptable as means to meet this requirement. The doctoral program also has the requirement that the dissertation must be submitted as both a formal written dissertation and in publishable article form.

The University of Utah operates on a quarter system. The School Psychology Program requires 103 quarter hours of study and a 1500-hour internship for the Master's of Science degree. For the Doctor of Philosophy, the requirement is 153 quarter hours with a 2000-hour internship (required by most states for licensure). Both degrees lead to the basic School Psychology Certificate in Utah. In addition, the doctoral program is designed to help prepare students to meet state requirements for licensure. A two-day preliminary examination is given to all students before their dissertation proposal meeting. This exam includes a written essay examination, an oral examination, and a 200-item multiple choice examination that is similar to the national licensing examination. The areas covered in the preliminary examination are the program core courses, articles from the past three years in leading school psychology journals, a directed reading list, and faculty publications.

The PhD degree in Educational Psychology is offered to students who meet both the general graduate school and School Psychology Program requirements. Students take a selection of required and elected courses that meet the APA accreditation standards. Students are also encouraged to take a selection of elective courses that meet most state licensing requirements. The students are provided a copy of the Utah licensing law to help them make course selections.

Students are required to complete course work in six basic areas. The Core Foundation area includes courses in scientific and professional ethics, cognitive-affective bases of behavior, social bases of behavior, individual differences, and biological bases of behavior. The Research and Design requirements include an advanced statistics and research design sequence, and students are encouraged to take single subject research methods. Educational Foundations has an emphasis on educational administration and curriculum development and assessment. The Psychoeducational Assessment area includes required courses in test and measurement theory, individual intelligence testing, and individual child evaluation with suggested courses in neuropsychological assessment. Students are also required to learn structured classroom observation techniques as a basic assessment technique. A strong emphasis is placed on Intervention Strategies with required courses in childhood behavior disorders, school interventions, consultation, applications of behavior therapy, and family therapy/parent training. Both the assessment and intervention sequences are paralleled by a 400-hour practicum. Finally, the Professional School Psychology area includes required courses in role and function, legal issues in special education, and a sequence of specialized seminars.

Special Topic Seminars

Three specialized seminars are offered to doctoral students. During their first year, students are required to take a year-long Research Seminar that meets every three weeks. This seminar is a research orientation for new students and serves as a journal reading group and introduction to faculty research. In addition, the students enrolled in this seminar are required to attend the departmental seminar series, which highlights local and national presenters. Doctoral students are also required to take one additional school psychology seminar in their second year. They have a choice between the Behavioral Assessment or Advanced Pediatric Neuropsychological Assessment Seminars. The paper requirement for either seminar is a formal grant application using the U.S. Office of Education Field-Initiated Research Program as a model. The two advanced seminars are also designed to orient students to the optional specialized tracks offered by the program.

Specialized Tracks

New additions to the program are two specialized training tracks that lead to specific skill development. The subtracks are interventions/consultation and pediatric neuropsychology. The tracks are available only to doctoral level students after they have been in the program for one year. The tracks are optional; students may choose no specialized training as they complete their doctoral work. If they do opt for a specialization track, a series of courses are outlined for their elective courses that guides specific skill development. Students in the training tracks re-

ceive practicum and internship experiences with an interventions/consultation or neuropsychological assessment focus. Students selecting the interventions/consultation subtrack select specific skill training in classroom management, social skills training, parent training, behavioral assessment, consultation, generalization/transition training, or behavior management of noncompliance. Students selecting the neuropsychological track would meet the APA Division 40 (Neuropsychology) and the International Neuropsychological Society's recommended training standards in clinical neuropsychology. A sampling of the courses offered in the subtracks is given in Table 2.

Internship Training

Central to the program training and specialization tracks are the internship placements. Students are given the Utah School Psychology Internship Handbook, which is a compendium of articles on clinical practice, ethics, APA internship criteria, and the Utah State Licensing Law. All students are required to have at least 500 hours of internship experiences in school settings. For doctoral level students who have had a school internship, alternative sites are encouraged, particularly if they are in a specialization track. Sites such as the Children's Behavior Therapy Unit provides classroom management, parent training, and social skills training with conduct disordered and autistic students. The Primary Children's Medical Center offers an APA-approved internship for students with specialized experiences with attention deficit disordered children, neuropsychological assessment, and outpatient and inpatient psychiatric services. The Children's Center internship offers therapeutic training experiences with emotionally disturbed and behaviorally disordered preschool children. Each internship site has an active research program that involves program faculty. Also, each of these internship sites has as the agency, clinic, or internship director a past graduate from the University of Utah School Psychology Program.

WHY THE MODEL WORKS

The program works because of its students. The pool of student applicants has doubled over the past three years with entering students having average GRE scores of 1,123 and grade point averages of 3.6. Since 1980, 35 PhDs have graduated with most students holding clinical and administrative positions in public schools and agencies. Program graduates accepting positions in key positions in schools, hospitals, and clinical agencies are central in developing the internship and research base for the program. Several school psychology/ instructional graduates, such as Nancy Fagely at Rutgers University and Cavin McLaughlin at Kent State University, have taken academic training positions.

Table 2. Sampling of Elective and Required Courses Offered in the Interventions/Consultation and Neuropsychological Assessment Subtracks

Interventions/Consultation Subtrack	
<i>Required Courses</i>	
	Family Therapy/Parent Training
	Interventions in the Schools
	Collaborative Educational Problem Solving
	Childhood Psychopathology
	Psychological and Educational Consultation
	Learning and Behavior
	Applications of Behavior Therapy
	Child Counseling and Psychotherapy
	Seminar in Behavioral Assessment
	Seminar in Interventions
	Single Subject Design
	Special Readings in Interventions
	Practica (Interventions/consultation)
<i>Elective Courses</i>	
	Prevention Strategies with Children
	Behavior Management Strategies for Students with Severe Handicaps
	Applied Behavior and Social Skills
	Child Behavior Change Methods
	Child Behavior Assessment Techniques
Child Neuropsychology Subtrack	
<i>Required Courses</i>	
	Neuropsychology
	Special Topics: Neuropsychological Assessment
	Special Topics: Child Neuropsychology
	Seminar: Pediatric Issues in Neuropsychology
	Neuropsychological Assessment (Child)
	Practica (Neuropsychology)
	Special Readings in Neuropsychology
<i>Elective Courses</i>	
	Neuroanatomy
	Advanced Physiological Psychology
	Neuropsychological Assessment (Adult)
	Neurobiological Information Processing
	Neurobiology of Behavior Psychobiology
	Psychobiology of Information Processing
	Special Readings in Neuropsychology

Being a small program with limited resources that focuses on selected areas of excellence has also helped make the model work. Clearly, the program at the University of Utah is not everything to every student. A student admitted to the program can take the required course work for an APA-approved program, select electives, and receive an excellent education. Other students can complete the APA course work and opt for a specialization in interventions/consultation

or neuropsychological assessment. External funding has made this specialization possible and is definitely a factor in what makes the program work. What the program lacks in faculty size is hopefully made up for with focused effort and with individual student attention.

Administrative support and faculty sacrifice have also contributed to the program. Administrative support in seeking APA approval, computerization, external grant support, and program development has been generous. The sacrifice of the faculty from other programs in educational psychology has made the program feasible. Lines of retiring faculty have been transferred to the School Psychology Program to make a three-member program possible. Without the generous support of other programs and faculty, the School Psychology Program would not be possible.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The future of the program is best predicted by the research and teaching interests of the School Psychology Program students and faculty. A strong emphasis is being developed in consultation in the schools. Field-initiated and University research grants have been submitted, and a promising research base has been developed. Similarly, research in academic interventions, social skills training, and parent training has been established. A three-year project has been established for the strategic generalization/transition of aggressive and noncompliant students from special education settings to regular classrooms. A project bridging the interests of neuropsychology and interventions is being developed with a parent training project to manage the behavior of head injured children.

Technology is in the future of the School Psychology Program and its students. The College of Education has established a Technology Center and received a large IBM grant to foster technology in education. Faculty research interests will parallel these technological developments and applications. For example, a school psychology faculty research project has involved the use of artificial intelligence applications in the assessment and prescription of research-based interventions for autistic children. Other school psychology faculty interests include interactive video instruction for assessment and the use of barcode-light scanning procedure for data collection for behavioral observation in classrooms. The Department has under development a research suite with FM communications telemetry for parent and social skills training, one-way mirrors, video equipment, and computers for data collection.

The future of the program will rest with the stability of the faculty and the recruitment of quality students. Minority students are important to the future of the program, particularly the recruitment of Native American students. The ability to attract students, retain faculty, produce quality research, and improve the program will depend on state budgets, college priorities, and external funding efforts. Fortunately, the future looks bright.

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