

School Psychology: Essentials of Theory and Practice

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To Brenda, Barbara, Anita, and Larie, with love and appreciation for their patience and support.

The genesis of this book occurred at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln at which each of the authors served as a professor. The conceptual model presented herein reflects the training philosophy of that program.

Preface

The field of school psychology has emerged from its childhood and now is maturing rapidly. Presently, there are more than 200 graduate training programs in school psychology, and the field continues to grow rapidly. Two growing national organizations now represent the field: the American Psychological Association, Division of School Psychology (Division 16), and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). Nearly every state now has an active school psychology organization functioning either independently or as a division of a state psychological association.

Despite the emergence and subsequent growth of school psychology, the number and variety of texts in the discipline have remained quite limited. Although several major edited works have recently become available, the only major textbook in the field that is not a collection of readings was published in 1974. Much has happened in psychology and education since that time. Clearly, there is a need for an integrated, up-to-date discussion of the art and science of school psychology.

School Psychology: Essentials of Theory and Practice was written to reflect the current status of the field and to project a direction for its future development. To attain the first goal, the volume addresses the development of the discipline and provides in-depth treatment of core areas of day-to-day school psychological practice—consultation, assessment, and intervention. Our second goal, more complex and proactive in nature, is to provide integrated theoretical frameworks

within which the practice of school psychology can best be understood and advanced. Emphasis is placed on examining service delivery models as a vehicle for conceptualizing current practice and for plotting the future course of school psychology. Bandura's (1978) model of reciprocal determinism and ecological perspectives of human behavior is proposed as a set of theoretical constructs that can, and should, shape the nature of school psychological services. A scientist-practitioner model of professional practice is espoused. By intertwining these and other related concepts throughout the text, we hope to foster a vision of school psychologists as problem solvers whose actions emanate from meaningful psychological theories and relevant empirical data.

We express our appreciation to our many colleagues who encouraged us in this venture and helped to sharpen our thinking. Special thanks go to Wayne Piersel for helping to conceptualize the project and for providing many insightful ideas and criticisms. Joseph French's detailed review of the entire manuscript was very helpful, as was Thomas Fagan's review of the historical sections. Finally, we acknowledge Alan S. Kaufman, E. Paul Torrance, Beeman Phillips, June Gallessich, James Carroll, and Lee Meyerson, who fostered in us the breadth of perspective we feel we have achieved with this volume. Several of our own graduate students read and commented on various aspects of the work in addition to doing a significant amount of the legwork at the library—to Julia Clark, Gloria Galvin, Ed Scholwinski, and Michael Stowe we also express our appreciation. Of course, without the support and patience of our families we could never have completed this project.

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CHAPTER 1

School Psychology: The Development of a Professional Psychological Specialty

It is not too much to say that the improvement of mental health and mental hygiene in the United States rests in a major way upon the work of the schools and therefore in part upon the qualifications and training of those who become school psychologists.

Cutts, 1955, p. 7

School psychology, which has its developmental roots in the late 1800s, is presently one of the most vital and active disciplines in contemporary psychology. Since its inception, school psychology's major goals have been to provide direct and indirect psychological services to children and youth to improve their mental health and educational development. The means for accomplishing such major goals have necessitated a vast amount of knowledge and a diverse array of services that cut across specialties of applied psychology (i.e., clinical, counseling, and industrial/organizational), as well as several areas within education. Hence, today school psychology is a challenging and potentially rewarding profession for skilled *scientists* and *practitioners* of psychology.

The promise of school psychology as a means of high quality psychological services for children and youth has its conceptual origins in several domains of thought: namely, preventive and community mental health, special education, human development, and clinical psychology. Common assumptions, such as the sooner a problem is identified, the easier it is to remediate, or the closer an

Table 1.1 Major Published Works in School Psychology

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>
Hildreth	<i>Psychological Services for School Problems</i>	1930
Symonds	<i>The School Psychologist</i> (entire issue of <i>The Journal of Consulting Psychology</i>)	1942
Cutts	<i>School Psychologists at Mid-Century</i>	1955
Mullen	<i>The Psychologist on the School Staff: Report of the Committee on Reconsideration of the Functions of the School Psychologist</i>	1958
White & Harris	<i>The School Psychologist</i>	1961
Eiserer	<i>The School Psychologist</i>	1963
Gottsegen & Gottsegen	<i>Professional and School Psychology</i>	1963
Gray	<i>The Psychologist in the Schools</i>	1963
Valett	<i>The Practice of School Psychology: Professional Problems</i>	1963
Reger	<i>School Psychology</i>	1965
Phillips	<i>Perspectives on School Psychology</i>	1966
Magary	<i>School Psychological Services in Theory and Practice: A Handbook</i>	1967 & 1972
Herron, Green, Guild, Smith, & Kantor	<i>Contemporary School Psychology</i>	1970
Holt & Kicklighter	<i>Psychological Services in the Schools: Readings in Preparation, Organization and Practice</i>	1971
Bardon & Bennett	<i>School Psychology</i>	1974
Fein	<i>The Changing School Scene: Challenge to Psychology</i>	1974
Meyers, Parsons, & Martin	<i>Mental Health Consultation in the Schools</i>	1979
Phye & Reschly	<i>School Psychology: Perspectives and Issues</i>	1979
Conoley	<i>Consultation in Schools: Theory, Research, Technology</i>	1980
Kratochwill	<i>Advances in School Psychology</i> (Vol. 1)	1981
	<i>Advances in School Psychology</i> (Vol. 2)	1982
Reynolds & Gutkin	<i>The Handbook of School Psychology</i>	1982
Hynd	<i>The School Psychologist: An Introduction</i>	1983

Note: This table is a modified version of one originally developed by T. R. Kratochwill, "Advances in School Psychology: A Preview of the Contents and an Overview of the Chapters." In T. R. Kratochwill (Ed.), *Advances in School Psychology*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1981.

intervention is to the problem situation, the greater the opportunity for generalization of treatment, such assumptions are illustrative of the thinking that underlies the need for psychological services in educational settings. Thus, an educational system, a system which most children and youth are involved in for a significant time during the major formative periods of their lives, provides a setting and a vehicle for the delivery of psychological services. No other social system provides such a comprehensive opportunity to interact with children and families. Yet, no other social system seems to be open to as much public criticism and pressure as does education. Psychologists in schools and other educational settings, like educators, are very visible to the public and consequently are subject to the same detailed scrutiny as educators. Hence, the use of an educational system as a setting for the delivery of psychological services has been a two-edged sword for psychology. Although such a sword allows for effective service in experienced hands, it has liabilities in inexperienced (untrained) or careless hands.

The purposes of this book are to examine the profession of school psychology and its major conceptual and functional features within a service delivery system framework, and to acquaint readers with issues that have characterized the development of the profession. After completing this book, readers may find sources such as *The Handbook of School Psychology* (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1982) or the edited series *Advances in School Psychology* (Kratochwill, 1981, 1982) suitable complements. Other major works published during the past 50 years in the field of school psychology are listed in Table 1.1.

In the first chapter, we will examine the evolution of school psychology and its professional organizations with a primary focus on significant events during the past 35 years. For additional analyses of the history of school psychology, readers are referred to works by Bardon and Bennett (1974), Cutts (1955), and Farling and Agner (1979). Another emphasis of this first chapter will be to explore the various roles and functions assumed by school psychologists. Subsequent chapters will elaborate upon these roles and functions.

EVOLUTION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

The history of psychology has been traced back to ancient Greece (Watson, 1971); however, its emergence as a distinct knowledge domain occurred during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Schultz, 1975). Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) is generally credited with playing a major role in establishing psychology as a formal discipline for he was the first to apply experimental methods of natural science to the study of mental processes. Galton's (1869) work on the hereditary basis for intellectual superiority also played an instrumental role in stimulating thought and research about the psychology of individual differences.

The emergence of psychology coincided with a period of marked social and political reform. According to Levine and Levine (1970), the period between 1890 and 1920 was characterized by the decline of social Darwinism and a rise in beliefs that environmental factors greatly influenced an individual's life. Industrialization and urbanization also were on the increase in America. Consequently, the likelihood of extended families and homogeneous communities diminished and with them valuable support systems for individuals. The climate for the development of helping professions, like that of psychology, was right. Thus, the principles and methods utilized in experimental laboratories were beginning to be applied to solving the problems of adjusting to a more urbanized world.

The first psychological practitioners were persons trained or self-educated in the experimental psychology of the late 1800s. These practitioners relied chiefly on their knowledge of mental functioning and on psychophysical measures in order to understand and treat problems of adjustment and school learning difficulties. Many pioneering psychologists typically became involved in the provision of psychological services as a part-time function complementing their laboratory research (Murphy, 1929).

The Establishment of Psychological Clinics

Lightner Witmer was perhaps the most notable of the early American psychological practitioners who combined service and science. He was a student of both James McKeen Cattell and Wilhelm Wundt, studying first with Cattell at the University of Pennsylvania and then going to Leipzig for doctoral study with Wundt. After completing his doctorate, Witmer returned to the University of Pennsylvania to succeed Cattell as director of its Laboratory of Psychology. In 1896, he began to work in the laboratory with children who were having learning difficulties. Although Galton had established a similar laboratory or clinic in London nearly ten years earlier, Witmer's laboratory is usually referred to as the first child guidance clinic in America (Levine & Levine, 1970; Roback, 1964).

Witmer's clinic was the center of his teaching, research, and service functions at Pennsylvania. From its inception, the clinic was allied with education since one of Witmer's major goals was to train psychologists to help educators solve children's learning problems. Such training was enhanced by working directly with children who were referred to the clinic. Thus, psychologists received supervised training, while children, families, and educators received needed psychological services. In 1907, Witmer founded *The Psychological Clinic*, the first journal devoted to clinical psychology. The journal communicated about clients and services commonly seen at the clinic and had a masthead which described it as "A Journal for the Study and Treatment of Mental Retardation and Deviation." Witmer edited and wrote many of the articles in *The*

Psychological Clinic until 1935, when it ceased publication. In 1937, *The Journal of Consulting Psychology* was founded to carry on Witmer's important work; today, it is an American Psychological Association (APA) journal and is titled the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

Witmer's contributions to applied psychology were significant; indeed, he is acknowledged as the founding father of both school psychology and clinical psychology. His work to develop psychological services for children may be his most noteworthy accomplishment. It was his clinic that served as a model for service delivery which other universities and school systems subsequently emulated (Cutts, 1955). Hence, psychological services to children and youth were beginning to be established for urban schools by 1910.

Witmer's contributions to school psychology were clearly seminal. Recognizing this, the Division of School Psychology (Division 16) of the American Psychological Association annually presents the "Lightner Witmer Award" to the outstanding young school psychologist in the Division.

Other Important Developmental Events in School Psychology

Other events coinciding historically with Witmer's work also influenced the development of school psychology. These include the work of Galton and Binet and his associates in individual measurement, the development of "special" classes for mentally handicapped children, and the mental health movement. Since each of these events has been written about in detail elsewhere, they will be reviewed here only briefly.

Measuring Individual Differences. The assessment of individual differences has its basis in the works of Sir Francis Galton and Alfred Binet. In the 1880s, Galton, stimulated by Darwin's work on heredity, began collecting data on human characteristics for the purpose of establishing similarities and differences among individuals. As a means of collecting information, he devised tests of vision, hearing, reaction time, and discrimination and persuaded school personnel to keep systematic records of how students performed on such tests (Anastasi, 1957). Some writers (White & Harris, 1961), in fact, point to Galton's work as the first example of school psychological services.

Although Galton devised and used tests to measure children's abilities in the 1880s, it was not until 1904 when French educators hired Alfred Binet and Theophile Simon to assess the learning potential of children that the testing movement really began. Binet and Simon designed a 30-item test based upon careful questioning of teachers to discern tasks which were sensitive to developmental differences in children. The Binet-Simon test, designed to measure mental processes and subsequently classify children, was quite successful, and after three revisions between 1905-1911, became the standard for a generation of test developers.

Lewis Terman of Stanford University became very interested in the Binet-Simon scales and was one of several psychologists (e.g., Goddard, Yerkes, Kuhlmann) who translated and adapted them for use in American schools. In 1916, the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, as Terman named it, was completed. It soon became widely used in public schools because it helped educators better understand children's learning aptitudes and achievement (Bardon & Bennett, 1974) and, though now quite dated, its influence is felt even today whenever an individual test of intelligence is administered (Kaufman & Reynolds, 1983).

The testing movement, which was originally given impetus by educators' desires for special classes for retarded children, served to promote major changes in educational practice (Murphy, 1929). Coupled with more humanitarian notions about mental retardation, the use of intelligence tests provided a means for diagnosing and classifying children and youth that had not existed previously. As a result, special education personnel eagerly elicited the assessment skills of psychologists. In fact, Arnold Gesell was hired as a school psychologist by the State of Connecticut in 1915 to travel about the state to test children for possible special class placement. Gesell is thought to be the first person to have the title of school psychologist (Cutts, 1955). The assessment role and relationship between school psychology and special education still exists today, and will be explored in detail later in this chapter.

Care and Treatment for the Disturbed. The mental health movement had its origins in the work of reformers such as Phillipe Pinel in France and Dorothea Dix in America (Reisman, 1976) and gained momentum from scholars of psychology such as Ernest Kraepelin and Sigmund Freud. The mental health movement crystallized, however, after the publication of Clifford Beers' (1908) work, *A Mind That Found Itself*. Beers was a former mental patient and was able to write effectively about the horrors of his commitment to a mental institution. He also worked to organize the National Committee for Mental Hygiene in 1909, which became an effective force in informing the public about mental health. This committee was also effective in establishing a number of child guidance clinics (Barker, 1918). Many of these early clinics focused on the prevention of juvenile delinquency (Lowry & Smith, 1933).

In the 1920s, many child guidance centers expanded their scope beyond the prevention of delinquency to serving children who evidenced many kinds of adjustment and developmental problems. A psychoanalytic orientation predominated most clinics' staffs which were composed of medical and psychological personnel. Schools began to work cooperatively with clinics; in fact, financial support for some clinics was assumed by schools. This relationship between clinics and schools, however, did not last more than a decade. Many educators became disenchanted with the therapies of the time and perceived clinic personnel as unsympathetic to the problems and constraints of schools. Clinic personnel were also disappointed for they perceived teachers as lacking knowledge or

commitment. Educators began to look for other means of acquiring psychological services (Lowry & Smith, 1933).

The Development of Psychological Specialties: Clinical and School

Based on the previous overview of the history of psychology, it seems clear that applied psychology was established in America and abroad by the 1920s. Once established, specialization amongst practitioners began to occur. The American Association of Clinical Psychologists was founded in 1916. At approximately the same time, a section on Clinical Psychology was organized within the APA (Sundberg, Tyler, & Taplin, 1973). The term *clinical*, however, was used generically to refer to all of applied or service directed psychology. Early clinical psychologists worked primarily in academic or guidance clinic settings with children evidencing learning problems or youth who had violated the law. A handful were also employed by schools.

Over the course of four decades, 1910 to 1950, the world experienced two major wars and clinical psychology underwent significant changes, ultimately emerging as an independent professional specialty. Clinical psychologists began to affiliate less often with educational systems and more frequently with medical facilities, services were broadened from assessment to include therapeutic treatments, and the emphasis in service changed from community-based for children to individual-based for adults (Sundberg et al., 1973). Consequently, by 1945 the setting, the clientele, and the nature of services with which clinical or applied psychologists had been originally identified had changed noticeably. Psychologists employed by schools, however, continued to function as community-based providers of psychological services for children. According to Cornell (1942), by 1940 only 19 of the 745 clinics listed in the *Directory of Psychiatric Clinics in the United States* were directly under the auspices of a public school system. Thus, the number of practicing psychologists in the schools was apparently rather small.

School psychology is commonly conceptualized as an offshoot of the specialty of clinical psychology. However, given the development of the clinical psychological specialty, it is hard to view school psychology as an offshoot. Rather, as Harris (1980) put it, "In many respects it seems nearer to the truth to view school psychology as the offspring of applied psychology which 'stayed at home,' while clinical psychology moved on to new neighborhoods" (p. 15). Thus, psychologists working in schools or community-based clinics serving schools continued to pursue the goals of the founders and leaders in applied psychology. Whether by default or through proactive planning, a specialty in school psychology was soon to be identified.

The events surrounding the organization of a division of school psychology within the APA are not well documented. However, it is clear that sometime

during mid-1946, Division 16 of APA became the Division of School Psychology. Harry J. Baker was elected as the division's first president for 1946–1947.

The examination of the 1946 volumes of the *American Psychologist*, the journal of the American Psychological Association, provides evidence of some of the confusion about the formalization of Division 16. For example, in the July 1946 issue (Vol. I, 7), the program for the 54th Annual Meeting of APA listed school psychology as a division. Yet, in the August 1946 issue (Vol. I, 8), Doll authored an invited article titled, "The Divisional Structure of the APA." In this article, Doll acknowledged apparent widespread dissatisfaction among APA members concerning a divisional structure recommended by the Intersociety Constitutional Convention (ICC) in 1943. School psychology was included only as a write-in under other divisions of the ICC's divisional structure. APA's Committee on Divisional Organization, which followed the ICC, suggested several modifications to the ICC plan of divisional structure. One of the recommendations was to make school psychology the 16th division in APA. Although Doll (1946, p. 339), a member of the Committee on Divisional Organization, wrote that a division of school psychology was unwarranted because of the small number of persons expressing interest in membership, it appears that the division was formalized at the annual meeting of APA in 1946. Ironically, the meeting was held at the University of Pennsylvania, the place where Witmer had begun delivering psychological services to school children nearly 30 years earlier.

Important Events in the Development of School Psychology

The creation of a division of school psychology within the American Psychological Association acknowledged both the relative importance and uniqueness of school psychological services. Initially, however, school psychology's identity was shaped by forces external to it. For example, schools and juvenile courts had demanded testing and social work, and clinical psychologists changed orientations and gained the "spotlight" by leaving the schools. Thus, although school psychology "stayed at home," it appeared to have initially lost some status in the eyes of its neighbors. Since the mid-1940s, however, numerous events and forces both internal and external have shaped the identity and functioning of school psychology. A selective review of major events over the past 35 years should provide important background for understanding the profession's development and current functioning.

The Boulder Conference. In psychology, the typical model for practitioner specialties has come to be known as the "Boulder Model." This model grew out of a conference on the training of clinical psychologists in Boulder, Colorado, in 1949 and defined the practicing psychologist as a scientist-practitioner (Raimy, 1950). A psychologist was a *scientist* in the sense that he or she should be a

competent researcher and contributor of knowledge and a *practitioner* in that he or she applies knowledge and skills to daily problems experienced by individuals.

The Boulder Conference was precipitated by the Veterans Administration's demand for more clinical psychologists to work to improve the mental health of veterans of World War II. In order to accommodate the increased demand for clinical psychologists, university trainers needed to develop educational goals and policies, find and train additional faculty, and expand their training facilities. To facilitate coordination amongst trainers of clinical psychologists, the U.S. Public Health Service supported a two-week conference for 70 persons at Boulder. This conference, although specifically focused on clinical psychologists, had important ramifications for school psychologists because it established standards for the qualifications, training, and functioning of applied psychologists. In particular, the guidelines set at the Boulder Conference became the basis for the 4-year doctoral program in school psychology that balances training in research with field-based experiences. Additionally, the Boulder Conference served as a model for school psychologists wishing to further organize training and practice and thus led directly to the Thayer Conference.

The Thayer Conference. The lack of sufficient, well-trained personnel to provide school psychological services and the paucity of training programs in 1952 caused T. Ernest Newland of the University of Illinois to initiate discussions among his fellow school psychologists about the possibility of a conference, like the Boulder Conference, whereby issues of the qualifications and training of school psychologists would be studied. Subsequently, Division 16's committee on Certification and Training proposed such a conference and gained financial support from the Public Health Service in 1953.

The conference was held at the Hotel Thayer, West Point, New York, in August 1954. The objective of the conference was stated as the production of a definite statement about the functions, qualifications, and training of school psychologists. Responsibility for fulfilling this objective was given to a conference steering committee and 48 selected individuals who were involved in the delivery of or were consumers of school psychological services.

The entire conference has been summarized by Cutts (1955) in a volume titled "School Psychologists at Mid-Century." Specific recommendations concerning the roles of school psychologists were as follows:

1. Assessing and interpreting intellectual, social, and emotional development of children.
2. Helping to identify exceptional children and collaborate with other professionals in developing individual educational programs.
3. Developing ways to facilitate the learning and adjustment of all children.