

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

A Developmental and Social
Systems Approach

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SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

To our parents:
Robert H. and Wilma R. Woody,
Oscar S. and Constance J. LaVoie,
and
Jones N. and Charlotte R. Epps

PREFACE

It is time for an enhanced “New Age” school psychology. Having long been a mainstay of education, school psychology is now experiencing even greater importance for meeting educational and social problems associated with children and youth and their families. Through federal and state legislation, school psychologists are being asked to continue psychoeducational assessments and classroom-related consultations, and also to provide services for such critical problems as behavior disorders, emotional maladjustments, substance abuse, delinquency, unwanted pregnancies, sex education, teenage suicide, and chronic illness. Many of these problems necessitate the school’s entering the family domain. Moreover, legislation mandates an ever-increasing age range. The concept of lifelong education supports the school extending its services from birth (e.g., to infants with developmental delays, health education for parents) throughout adulthood (e.g., education for senior citizens). The result is that the demand for school psychologists exceeds the number of candidates available. Stated simply, new competencies are required to meet the challenges of the abundant employment opportunities.

School Psychology: A Developmental and Social Systems Approach offers a new model for training and practice. In the past, school psychology adhered to a clinical model concerned with etiology and pathology, and more recently, a psychoeducational consultative model that facilitated growth and accomplishment through teacher intervention. Today, school psychology must accommodate the plethora of societal/school expectations, and it is clear that traditional clinical and consultative interventions will not suffice. What is needed is a model for training and practice that considers the developmental factors and conditions unique to each stage of life, and how they, in turn, interface with the social system(s) in which the child or youth lives. All school psychology services are influenced by numerous social systems, as reflected in the school’s changing role in society, the policies of the board of education, and the particular student’s familial values and characteristics. Consequently, the school and the school psychologist must reach beyond the confines of the classroom and into homes (e.g., family services) and the community (e.g., interagency coordination among health care, social, and legal services).

This book has been developed for graduate students preparing for careers in school psychology and related fields (e.g., special education, school and community counseling, and school social work). Practitioners will find the material useful for updating ideas and conduct to meet contemporary expectations and standards. The material is structured to provide authoritative academic information and practical guidelines suitable for all levels of training and experience. Each chapter covers relevant theories, analyzes conceptual issues, describes techniques, offers practical suggestions, and posits future trends in research, training, and practice.

Chapter 1, *The Evolution of School Psychology*, traces the steps of school psychology from the past to the present and reveals what may be expected in the future. The diminished dominance of professional associations in defining the discipline is

matched to the present-day demand from public policy for accountability to governmental regulatory sources and courts of law. Using the scientist-practitioner model as a cornerstone and accepting the interface and link between school and clinical psychology, a model for training and practice is described according to behavioral science, and developmental, family, and social systems dimensions.

Chapter 2, *Developmental and Social Systems*, focuses on developmental factors associated with childhood and adolescence and how these factors interact with the various familial, social, and educational systems in which the child or youth functions. Major emphasis is given to a developmental perspective of human behavior and to the determinants of system performance, using the family and school as examples of systems.

Chapter 3, *Research Methods*, describes research strategies that fit a developmental and social systems approach to school psychology. Topics include a review of state-of-the-art in school psychology research, intra- and interindividual variation, a developmental function versus an individual differences approach, designs, observational methods, hypothesis testing, appropriate statistics, and ethics when conducting research.

Chapter 4, *Learning Theories and Applications*, underscores the notion that information exchange is a critical component in a developmental and social systems approach to school psychology. Within the framework of information processing, special attention is devoted to behavior theories (since they consider the interaction of the person and the environment). Cognitive strategies and their application to classroom learning, and as an intervention procedure for learning deficits, provide the major portion of the applied dimension.

Chapter 5, *Behavior Analysis and Interventions*, highlights the application of behavior analysis to childhood behavior problems and the interaction of the systems in which the child functions. Measurement and analysis of behavior change, methods for increasing and decreasing behavior, cognitive interventions, and ethical considerations in behavior analysis are discussed.

Chapter 6, *Psychotherapeutic Interventions*, adopts a general theory orientation and organizes psychodynamic, existential-humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, and systems theories into a unified approach. Concepts and techniques are discussed for the provision of therapeutic services to children and youth and the consultation process. Developmental issues relevant to counseling children and adolescents and the developmental tasks facing families also are addressed.

Chapter 7, *School and Pediatric Consultation Theories and Techniques*, provides an overview of major theoretical models for consultation, with emphasis on a six-stage model of consultation. Based on an ecobehavioral perspective, a preventive model is presented—one that prepares consultees to use skills proactively to analyze variables that may facilitate or interfere with children's learning and pro-social behavior. An empowerment philosophy is used to frame consultation.

Chapter 8, *Psychoeducational Assessment I: Principles and Issues*, retains some aspects of the traditional medical-diagnostic assessment model, but focuses on developing an individualized education program (IEP) and an individualized family service plan (IFSP). Along with definitions of key assessment terms, consideration is given to the essential nature of reliability and validity and meeting service deliv-

ery standards set forth by law and by professional associations. Guidance is given for establishing positive relations and communications with ancillary professions (e.g., classroom teachers, psychoeducational personnel, administrators, and community health-care and social service workers) and tailoring the psychoeducational report accordingly. The chapter includes discussion of the use of computerized assessment, such as for individualized adaptive testing, and the forensic role of the school psychologist in legal proceedings involving children and youth and their families.

Chapter 9, *Psychoeducational Assessment II: Methods and Instruments*, urges the use of a battery of data-collection strategies. Based on surveys of school psychologists' preferences for assessment approaches, detailed consideration is given to record analysis, interviewing, behavior rating scales, intelligence tests, achievement tests, perceptual tests, human figure drawings, personality and social/emotional methods, neuropsychological tests, and family evaluations. Guidelines are provided for preparing a meaningful psychoeducational assessment report.

Chapter 10, *The School-Family-Community Interface*, addresses unique service delivery issues that arise from contemporary public policy—namely, school psychology practice beyond the schoolhouse with community agencies and families. Emphasis is placed on two populations of high-risk children and adolescents: infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with developmental delays; and children and adolescents with chronic illness and special health-care needs. A multifaceted role is delineated for building effective partnerships among the school, family, and community. Specialized issues in family-centered assessment and intervention, contributions of psychology to the management of chronic illness, and practice in health-care settings also are addressed.

Chapter 11, *Ethical Influences on School Psychology*, considers ethical principles and standards for service delivery. It explains the importance of a code of ethics for professionalization, the structure of ethics, the benefits intended for the consumer and society, accountability through ethics, and the concept of self-regulation. Considering that ethical complaints are increasing, informal and formal resolution of ethical problems and possible sanctions for ethical violations are discussed.

Chapter 12, *Legal Influences on School Psychology*, explains the way that the legal system (e.g., through important legislation and critical cases) presents prescriptions and proscriptions in school psychology. Explanations are given for the relationship between law and education; the nature of criminal and civil law, statutory and common (case) law, jurisdiction, and the rules of civil and criminal procedure; and the school psychologist's role in expert testimony. An analysis is given of federal and state legislative dictates for educational programming for children with disabilities, as relevant to developing an individualized education program (IEP) and an individualized family service plan (IFSP) and honoring the family's educational and privacy rights (e.g., in school records). The legal tenets of confidentiality, privileged communication, and records are discussed, and exceptions due to a duty to warn (e.g., in child abuse and violent situations) are noted. Malpractice is explained, and guidelines are given for minimizing the risk of complaints (e.g., to the school administration, professional ethics committees, or state certification/licensing boards) and allegations of malpractice.

We believe that school psychology is at a critical juncture in its evolution. The contemporary demands posed by public policy present a challenge for school psychology to forsake tradition for tradition's sake, seek more integrated theories and techniques, and carve out a more useful role and set of functions. Any professional change must, of course, be predicated on behavioral science. Notwithstanding the economic vicissitudes that commonly plague education, standards for school psychology services must be elevated, not lowered. In the immediate future, the possibility of innovation is professionally exciting, the alternatives for new and expanded services are many, and the benefits to society from enhanced "New Age" school psychology are inspirational. In our opinion, the developmental and social systems approach is the compass for future directions of school psychology, research, and applications.

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R. H. W.

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