A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM
AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

The Birth of the Program

A preliminary study of the need for school psychologists by the Department of Psychology culminated in a training proposal for a program to be established at FSU late in 1957. This proposal was written by Dr. Walter D. Smith, with counsel provided by a school psychology advisory committee consisting of representatives from the Departments of Psychology, Educational Research and Testing, Guidance and Counseling, the Institute of Human Development, and the University School of Florida State University.

The original proposal reflected the thinking of the experts in the Thayer Conference Report, "School Psychologists at Mid-century", (1953). From this original proposal to the administration of Florida State University, a request for a training grant to the National Institute of Mental Health was submitted in 1957, and accepted. The amount of this original NIMH grant was $22,560, and launched a substantial, adequately funded program in school psychology at FSU in 1958-59.

The working philosophy behind the original training grant was based essentially upon the identification of distinctions between the image of the school psychologist and that of the clinical psychologist. Psychologists had been used extensively in public education for a number of years, but they were essentially professionals trained in the clinical psychology image, who then functioned within the unique environment of public education. The primary responsibilities of the school psychologist, heretofore, were essentially psychological diagnosis and testing within the traditional model of clinical psychology. This new training proposal
was founded upon two general assumptions:

1.) that school psychologists receive more extensive training in the school setting with substantial experience in colleges of education,

and

2.) that school psychologists receive more extensive work in child growth and development, educational psychology, parent counseling, and the treatment of children's behavior problems related to schools.

The original training proposal also reflected:

1.) the lack of consistent perception of the role and function of the school psychologist and a suggestion that much time be spent in developing this role;

2.) the levels of training in school psychology, calling attention to the fact that most school psychologists were trained at the MA level or below;

3.) the Thayer Conference Report on the need for upgrading and improving the levels of training to and including the Ph.D.;

4.) the importance of practicum and internship experiences in public schools;

5.) the widespread agreement that teaching experience is good and desirable, but it suggested that this might not necessarily be a universal requirement.

The practical limitations, however, of the certification requirements in the state of Florida of the possession of a valid teaching certificate was made a matter of record. There was a mild suggestion in the proposal that this requirement was in need of change.

The Growing Pains of the Program

The first phase of the School Psychology Training Program at Florida State University came to an end with the departure of Dr. W. D. Smith from the Department of Psychology at FSU to take a position as academic dean at Winthrop College in South Carolina. His position as training director was taken by Dr. Willard H. Nelson, who had just completed
a Ford Foundation post doctoral fellowship at the University of Illinois. Dr. Nelson brought with him an extensive background of experience in public education and college teaching, in addition to the recognized value of his post doctoral fellowship. In the meantime, NIMH training grant support had increased, and in 1959-60, the NIMH grant was $27,474, an increase of $5,000. Dr. Nelson was able to enlist more intimate involvement in the school psychology program of additional members of the Department of Psychology as well as others in supporting departments of Guidance and Counseling, Educational Research and Testing, and Special Education. There was a continuation of a very profitable and mutually agreeable relationship between school psychology and the University School. As a locus for on-the-job internship experience, the Gadsden County Florida Schools, under the direction of Mr. Max Irlalker, County Superintendent of Schools, became a valuable addition.

By this time there was also a history of graduates of the program in school psychology. The first of these received his Ph.D. in 1959, who after completing the program, became Director of Special Services of the Broward County Florida Public Schools. In 1960, the second graduate of the program became Assistant Professor of Psychology and Associate Director of the Bureau of Educational Research at Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado. In 1961, the third graduate of the program became Director of Psychology and Guidance in the Brevard County Florida Public Schools. As the training program expanded, additional graduate students were funneled into it and more of them were able to complete Ph.D.'s successfully. The second phase of the School Psychology Training Program came to an end in 1962.

The Adolescent Years of the Program

The third phase, which began in the academic year 1962-63, was marked by 1.) an increase in the NIMH financial support to $44,185, and 2.) by a diligent restudy of the aims and purposes of the program on the part of the school psychology faculty, and the school psychology
advisory committee made up of interdepartmental personnel mentioned previously. The results of this restudy suggested the need for a wider range of flexibility in the training of the school psychologist. The importance of the basic psychology core during the first year of graduate training, which did not distinguish between the experimental, the clinical, and the school programs, was again supported. However, there was a growing feeling among the school psychology faculty that the program needed dual aims after the first year: (1) to increase the students' freedom to branch out into areas more specifically applicable to public education and (2) to define the role and function of the school psychologist in an educational frame of reference. These aims, however, would have had to be supported by more offerings both courses and training experiences, not all of which were available at that time. Coincidentally with this study the obvious need for additional staff, trained and dedicated to school psychology, was noted. For this reason an additional faculty position was budgeted in the 1962-63 NIMH grant and Dr. Don F. Driggs was hired from the Austin Minnesota Public School System. Dr. Driggs' background was originally in education psychology. After five years of college teaching experience, he secured a post doctoral traineeship in clinical psychology at the University of Tennessee, including a clinical internship in a Veteran's Administration Hospital. Following this experience, he worked for four years as Coordinator of Psychological Services in a moderate sized but excellent school system in Minnesota. Dr. Driggs was to be used primarily for liaison with public school organizations and to provide the supervision and counsel of students functioning in internships and clerkships in the school systems. At this same time, Dr. Nelson's salary was shifted from the NIMH training grant to the department budget and an immediate search began for an additional faculty position in the program.

The academic year 1962-63 saw three school psychologists receive their Ph.D.'s from Florida State University. One of these is now the Associate Director of the computing center of the medical school of the
University of Tennessee in Memphis, Tennessee. Another one is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Florida, and school psychologist at the university school, and the third one is a school psychologist attached to the Los Angeles County General Hospital, Los Angeles, California.

The year 1963 saw the development of an awareness by members of the school psychology training program that there was a need for more exchange of information and communication between school administrators and the institutions which trained school psychologists. From this deliberation a proposal was submitted to NIMH to fund an invitational conference on school psychology service for school administrators throughout the Southeastern area. These educators were invited to Florida State University to meet with outstanding persons in school psychology and school-related areas for an exchange of ideas. This proposal was accepted and funded by NIMH for a conference to be held on December 7th and 8th, 1964. Superintendents of school systems and their director of instruction were invited to this conference which was an outstanding success. The proceedings of the conference were published under the title: "Contributions of Behavioral Sciences to Quality Education", (Eds., Nelson W. H., & Driggs, D. F.), and widely disseminated from funds supplied by NIMH. From this conference has developed an increase in requests for school psychology services from the whole region which sent representatives to this conference.

The academic year 1963-64 was successful in that four more students received their Ph.D.'s. One of these is a school psychologist with the University of Alabama Medical School in Birmingham, Alabama, another one is an assistant professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida, another one is assistant professor of Psychology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the fourth one divides his time between the Duke University Medical School and the Durham North Carolina Public School System; one is now an assistant professor, School of Education at Murray State College of Murray, Kentucky, and the
fourth one is now a research psychologist for the Broward County Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. There have been 16 Ph.D.'s in school psychology granted by FSU to date. Fifteen other graduate students are at varying stages in their training in the program, and most are carried by NIMH stipends. Regrettfully, 1966 was marked by the departure of Dr. Willard H. Nelson from the position of School Psychology Training Director in order to take a position as Director of Research for the Broward County School System in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. About the same time the Department of Psychology received a new chairman in that Dr. Joseph H. Grosslight came to Florida State University from Kent State University in Ohio. Drs. Grosslight and Driggs will share the directorship for the present of the School Psychology Training Program. In keeping with the desire to strengthen and broaden the clinical psychology training program; it is the aim of the department chairman to seek an equally distinguished individual to become the new program director of the School Psychology Training Program. A number of possible candidates are under study at the present time from which a final selection is to be made as soon as possible.

To summarize the growth of NIMH support for the School Psychology Program, the following table is presented:

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The Mature Years of the Program with a Projection into the Future

The entrance of the federal government with large sums of money into public education has dramatized the enormous need for qualified people to assist educators in bringing new vigor and attack to the complexities of public education. Without a doubt the Ph.D. School Psychologist will have an important role in shaping the future of public education. The extensive experience that Florida State University brings to the training of school psychologists should make it probable that this university and its staff will have an important role in new developments in this field for the immediate future.

The image of the school psychologist has not been firmly established and correctly so. Much of this is a reflection of the considerable ferment in public education itself. The present lack of a fixed image for school
psychologists in this country permits the possibility of considerable
eperimentation in order to determine the maximum possible influence
and service which psychology can bring to public education. Among the
possibilities for an established school psychology program to embark
upon is a three pronged approach to developing specialists. These include:

I. A Ph.D. specializing in child experimentation and research. There is an established
research laboratory in the new psychology research building; there is an ongoing program
of research and service cooperation in the University School; there are programs of
research in the Leon County Florida Public Schools and in the Gadsden County Florida
Public Schools.

II. Ph.D. with an image of clinical service, but one which is
well founded and well grounded in clinical research,
educational psychology, and experimentation with a primary
emphasis upon school age children.
One which as yet is not adequately established with the faculty
in being, but one which could fill a desperate need in public
education, is primarily concerned with consultation. In order
to adequately establish this kind of specialty within school
psychology, the department would need to embark on extensive
recruitment of a staff in social psychology and related areas.

Public education is also becoming even closer entwined in the problems
of the community, and therefore, the skills of the behavioral scientists
are necessary in order to avoid the stress and strain of difficulty between
the schools and their patrons, the public. The problems of desegregation
of schools is an illustration. The kind of school psychologist envisioned
by this proposal could be one of the most important specialists in the
directory of the school system. Very few school psychology training
programs at the present time provide this kind of training and background,
although they are beginning to become aware of their weaknesses in
this line of endeavor and to consider plans to strengthen themselves.
The present policy of extensive recruitment in the Department of
Psychology at FSU makes this an important opportunity for the school psychology training program to develop a nationwide reputation for the quality of its product in this subspecialty under the umbrella of school psychology. It is a strong recommendation of this writer that such a plan be seriously considered for development.

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School Psychology Training Program