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## THE SOCIAL, RELATIONAL, AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT OF THE CORE CURRICULUM AND THE SAN ANTONIO CONFERENCE

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The pronouncements of training conferences are not born, fully grown, from the forehead of Zeus, but rather come from a particular group of people, with particular relationships and allegiances, meeting in a particular social and historical context (cf. Weiss, chap. 2). In my view, the minimization or sometimes even blindness to the importance of context has led psychology into many discouraging corners. Therefore, I begin with sketches of the social, relational, and intellectual context of the National Council of Schools of Professional Psychology (NCSPP), its conference on the core curriculum in professional psychology, the core curriculum in general, and, in this process, this volume itself. This book emerged during a period of 3 years from the work of a group of people associated with NCSPP who, during a time of intense activity halfway through the process, came together for 3 days. They met in a fine hotel, recycled from its days as a college, stuccoed, with balconies along the river walk in San Antonio, Texas, in January 1990.

### **The National Council of Schools of Professional Psychology**

Founded in 1974, NCSPP is an organization of professional programs in psychology whose mission is enhancement and enrichment of professional psychology training as well as mutual support. It currently consists of 27 member and 10 associate-member schools, 25 of which are accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). For the last several years, after identifying a number of critical issues in professional psy-

chology, NCSPP has designated committees to study and organize relevant information, bring together a series of working papers, and design a midwinter conference for the larger membership.

This volume is the fourth in a series that has emerged from this process and the resulting annual training conference. The first of these volumes was *Quality in Professional Psychology Training: A National Conference and Self-Study* (Callan, Peterson, & Stricker, 1986). Arising from what has come to be known as the Mission Bay conference, the second volume was *Standards and Evaluation in the Education and Training of Professional Psychologists: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills* (Bourg et al., 1987). A third volume, *Toward Ethnic Diversification in Psychology Education and Training* (Stricker et al., 1990), based on the 1989 Puerto Rico conference, was published in 1990. NCSPP has scheduled a 1991 conference on women in professional psychology and a 1992 conference on evaluation in professional psychology training.

### San Antonio Conference Participants and Structure

The participants at the San Antonio conference were representatives of the member institutions of NCSPP and their invited guests, as listed at the end of this volume. NCSPP began as an organization with one representative from each institution, usually a dean or another with a similar role. Before the 1989 Puerto Rico conference on ethnic diversification, typically one or two top administrators, the great majority being men, represented each program. After that conference and following some political developments (the details of which are unclear), a third institutional delegate could come who brought ethnic or gender diversity to the group. Authors of papers were invited to San Antonio, as were special guests from seven other organizations that are concerned with psychological training. It is interesting to note that, in contrast to some other training conferences, many of the conferees knew one another quite well and had working relationships going back a number of years. At the same time, there were people new as institutional representatives and therefore new to the organization and the group. Of the 78 participants, 72% (56) were men, 28% (22) were women, and 18% (14) brought ethnic diversity to the conference.

In a process that began 17 months earlier in Atlanta, contributors of papers were selected by an informal process that depended on the NCSPP representatives and their networks. A preconference volume was sent to each registrant in early December 1989. It contained draft versions of most of the material in this book. Given rigidly restricted and sometimes controversial page limitations, the authors were later asked to revise their work assuming a postconference perspective, which included knowledge of the conference resolutions.

The conference itself was composed of six sessions and a banquet. The first three of these sessions began with a plenary session and a framing address. Then, prearranged, intentionally diverse work groups, composed of 10 participants and led by steering committee members, met to discuss the issues and to develop resolutions. The steering committee met between sessions to compile, collate, and edit the notes of each group into a single product. Resolutions were reworked and approved during another series of plenary sessions. All the plenary sessions were held in a spacious ballroom with draped tables organized in a large rectangle; the podium and the steering committee were at one end, and the coffee was behind the seats at the other. This light and airy room was conducive both to comfort and to lofty ideas.

For the most part, participants arrived the day before the opening conference plenary session, attended NCSPP committee meetings and a reconnecting cocktail party, and then sampled San Antonio's cuisine. Reshaped to provide a sense of immediacy, to convey the intellectual context of the meeting, and at the same time to introduce this book, the next sections intentionally preserve some of the text and tone of my initial address and identify the central themes.

### Opening Plenary Session: Social and Relational Context

So here we are this morning, reasonably awake, remembering each other's names and faces, wondering what this will actually be like. You know, I have found that carrying a book of preconference papers in my briefcase for 8 working days is equivalent to reading the papers: The knowledge goes up my arm and directly into long-term memory. Too late now, though, you will actually have to read.

Recently, I came across the following wonderful dictionary definition of *core*: "the central, innermost, or most essential part of anything" (Urdang & Flexner, 1969, p. 298). In a world where sometimes it seems as if no one is talking about anything important, we get to spend 3 days discussing the central, innermost, and most essential parts of the professional psychology curriculum. In addition, we are going to have a good time together. We have the opportunity to converse with respected colleagues—in the context of developing friendships—about matters that we have all considered deeply, complained about, and struggled with. We have a structure that allows small groups to get to know one another and to work to construct resolutions that will be considered by all of us in plenary sessions. If we use vision and creativity, our work will impact positively on training in professional psychology for years to come. We will eat well, relax, leave behind some aggravations from home, even pick up a few new ones here (maybe even in this chapter).

Some of my closest colleagues and friends from Antioch are here, with whom I share day-to-day enthusiasms and discouragements, who know my virtues and vices both, perhaps in more details than they or I would wish. There are others back home I carry in my head: more than 100 students who have entrusted to us their professional training, years of their lives, and many thousands of dollars; and 20 or so talented faculty who, oddly enough, do not always agree with me about everything. Here I have made some friends in this group with whom I have learned and laughed since 1983 when I first started coming. By the end of this meeting, there will be new developments in old relationships and some new relationships as yet unknown. Through this organization and particularly through the steering committee work for this conference, I have had the opportunity to work with talented psychologists. The most senior of these, Russell Bent and George Stricker, were finishing their doctorates while I was in high school. They are people whose work I respected long before I knew anyone who even knew them, let alone whether they were purported to have a sense of humor. Although none are here today, among NCSPP members are a professor who sat on my dissertation committee, a dean who was once my undergraduate student, and a person who in 1971 interviewed a thinner me for a job I did not get. (Do you think he remembers?)

My point is not to welcome you with a narcissistic tour through my personal scrapbook. Instead, I believe that my own array of relationships are not at all unusual, but rather are typical of the experience of each of you around the room. Here is the key: As with all other training conferences, the conversations we have, the positions we develop,

the scientific and professional work we do here this week will grow out of and be a product of our relationships, the social and interpersonal context of our lives, and this meeting.

I am, of course, aware that the relational and contextual positions that I am articulating have much in common with some feminist views of psychology. The further exploration of these enormously important personal, professional, and organizational issues will be our work for the 1991 NCSPP conference on women in professional psychology.

Let me digress for a moment to say that I have become fond of the term *conversation* to characterize what goes on between people in relationships: between friends (or enemies), colleagues, and psychologists and clients. The philosopher Richard Rorty (1979) suggested that the exploration of conversation is the "ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood" (p. 389). Conversation seems more balanced, more graceful, more respectful, less jargony, and a bit more universal than exchange, debate, or dialogue. I learned it from Bill Lax (personal communication, January 13, 1990), a constructivist and systemic psychologist who cited both Rorty (1979) and Goolishian (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

Certainly, it is true that the results of meetings of historians or lawyers discussing curriculum are just as influenced by relationships and social context. However, the circumstances of professional psychology are enormously different in three ways. First, relationships are central to almost every aspect of the work of professional psychologists. Second, as I argue in my chapter on the social construction of the core curriculum (chap. 3), the systematic neglect of social and interpersonal context in scientific psychology underlies many of the problems in both the science and the profession today. Third, in a profound sense, this conference is about relationships. Let me discuss each in turn and identify some of the major themes.

## **Core Curriculum: General Considerations**

An understanding of the core curriculum is necessarily based on a series of general social, historical, scientific, and epistemological considerations. These global concerns are addressed in this introduction, in Weiss' thought-provoking historical analysis (chap. 2), in my own social constructionist perspective (chap. 3), and in a discussion of academic—scientific issues by Webbe, Farber, Edwall, and Edwards (chap. 4).

### **Centrality of Relationships in Professional Psychology**

Perhaps the most unanimous belief of the people in this room is the foundational primacy of, in Kenneth Polite's and Edward Bourge's words, "the basic ability to establish, understand, and maintain an authentic and appropriate relationship" (chap. 11, p. 83) to all the functions of the professional psychologist. On the basis of the resounding level of agreement, let me say no more and turn to more controversial areas.

### **Social and Contextual Elements of Psychological Science**

Relationships of all kinds are not in opposition to scientific psychology; rather, they

are its very foundation. Elsewhere, I have asserted that "any particular piece of psychological research or practice is embedded in a particular context: its historical time and its culture" (chap. 3, p. 24). Our science is fundamentally nonobjective, a product of the attitudes of psychologists and the relationships they have had with those whom they study. Along with Sarason (1981) and others, I see all too much of psychology—both experimental and professional—as fundamentally asocial and a product of those gifted, typically male, White, upper-middle-class professors who populate elite research institutions using disengaged and distant methods, where, for example, factors that could give a piece of research ecological validity come to be defined as error. I argue for a strengthened scientific psychology where "the development of psychological knowledge is changed from the universal to the contextual, from the distant and objective to the close and engaged, from ivory tower isolation to community embeddedness" (chap. 3, p. 25).

*Reflexivity* is a name for that process by which one can step out of the ongoing flux of living and, by a reflective glance, examine actions and behaviors in the past tense (Gergen, 1982, p. 18). Although it has long been a central element of our science and our practice (chap. 2 and chap. 18), I would like to see psychology formally differentiate itself from, say, astrophysics and geology and commit itself to identifying systematically the ramifications of this reflexivity inherent in the discipline.

I certainly do not want to give the impression that I want to eliminate university science or that I somehow think it is all bad or useless. I would like academic psychology to acknowledge forthrightly two essential points. First, as science fiction writer David Zindell (1988) said, "We don't see things as they are; we see things as we are" (p. 371). Second, every element of theory or data about human beings is understandable only in a social context, whether we are talking about the rise of behaviorism in the other-directed 1950s or Freud's insights about sexuality as a product of the intellectual ferment of turn-of-the-century Vienna that produced the visual artists Klimt and Schiele (Varnedoe, 1986).

Perhaps I can convey it metaphorically. Back in New Hampshire, I live on Spofford Lake, which I can see from my desk, located in a study high over the water surrounded by wood the color of piano keys. (Yes, I am afraid this *is* sort of a rustic, ivory tower metaphor.) In the winter the lake is frozen flat. When the sun is out, it gleams and glistens like silver, clean and orderly. Not many people are there in the winter. Oh yes, from time to time skaters, snowmobilers, or cross-country skiers come across it. I can see them now; the people are tiny dots of various sizes. The lake has a crisp, forbidding coldness about it. (This is why we northerners came to San Antonio, right?)

A universal conclusion about this scene such as "most people believe it is best to stay inside where it is most comfortable" is changed substantially by the contextual clause "in the New Hampshire winter." Nor would one wish to generalize from these observations that "arch-conservative New Hampshire citizens believe always in covering the entire body except for a small area on the face."

I count myself among those who continue to respect and admire even the most austere and wintery elements of psychological science: multiple regression, for example. I am attracted to the clarity and comfort provided by those large windows near my desk at this time of year. Still, sometimes it seems as if traditional academic psychology wants me to adopt a "scientific" perspective that seems to say I can know all of what I need to know sitting inside by myself, protected, warm, looking out on a January afternoon.

The summer, of course, is a different story. The lake is filled with life, families of all shapes and sizes, swimming, boating, having fun. People are actually in the water, with-

out their overcoats on. During the weekends, there is a buzz of excitement, an interesting complexity, although admittedly a certain human messiness.

I am not against winter, as long as it does not stay year-round and is not put forward as the critical nature of all reality. I want to include in professional psychology the view with friends and family, of men, women, and kids from different parts of the world down by that summer beach. Furthermore, I would like us all to actually be able to go in the water and even go out on boats. We may get wet, and there are bugs in the summer, but it is worth it.

Of course, professional psychology is not and cannot be antisience. Our students must know that psychology is not something we or others just make up as we go along to fit the moment. We must, respectfully, test our thoughts, our observations, and our visions in the context of relationships with the human participants in research, according to systematic changeable rules derived during academic conversations. The conversation needs to focus on the nature of that science, its breadth, the sorts of science that are practiced by professional psychologists, and the sort of training that best prepares them. There must be a way to both do and appreciate this science on a summer day by the shore.

In this context, then, a theme of this conference is the development of a broad and inclusive vision of scientific psychology. Beyond the simple rote learning of quasiexperimental design and analysis of variance, a sense of tolerance should emerge from carefully cultivated, discipline-based training in critical thinking that eradicates attitudes characterized by "who knows?" or "anything goes." The scientific disciplinary core courses should be taught in such a way that the science and the profession are brought together. Generations of students have had the totally unnecessary experience in which material purporting to be foundational to clinical practice was taught in an alienating abstruse manner. If these courses are taught by academic faculty with only a minimal appreciation of the clinical enterprise or by clinical faculty with only a modest knowledge of the science, then these faculty will continue to model and create the very split that continues to plague our discipline.

As reflected in its label, the research and evaluation competency, of course, belongs in both the academic—scientific knowledge base (cf. Webbe, Farber, Edwall, & Edwards, chap. 4) and the professional core competencies. The integrative vision developed by Trierweiler and Stricker (chap. 14) brilliantly put psychological research in the context of real people in the relationships constituting professional psychology. Their commentary and vision of local science deserve careful scrutiny for both what they propose and the further thinking they stimulate. Science provides particularly important and illuminating kinds of conversations. In my view, these scientific conversations must include more diverse people who speak according to more flexible rules and must occur at the local level according to local needs. Furthermore, professional psychologists must converse about other things as well.

### **Pedagogy**

All of us who have been taught, who teach, and who hire faculty know that pedagogy is critical to what students actually experience. I am talking about the sorts of teaching relationships that should be shared by faculty and students. It is embarrassing that a profession that says learning is a central focus has had so little involvement with quality education. I would like us to assert that quality teaching is the *sine qua non* of professional

education, long before research credentials and scholarly productivity. If close relationships with faculty are central, if being mentored is a core experience, if students are to be treated with respect, if modeling is pivotal as Lubin and Stricker (chap. 5) suggest, let us say so. If, as Rudestam suggests (chap. 8), national networks of personal computers are critical to the education of tomorrow, let us begin to put them in place today.

### **Empirical Work**

Empirical studies of curricular issues are rare. Morrison and O'Connor (chap. 6) surveyed NCSPP programs with regard to program elements that make up the six competency areas. Seeing their centrality to professional education, Borden and Mitchell (chap. 7) surveyed the views of NCSPP faculty (rather than administrators) regarding the competency areas. Both studies found that the consultation and education and the management and supervision competencies are not well promulgated, and, in my view, they deserve expanded attention. These studies contribute to the literature about what is currently being done and about what faculty think, but, as Weiss (chap. 2) repeatedly and convincingly argues, no studies have shown whether particular curriculum elements explicitly lead to identifiable competencies in newly trained professional psychologists.

### **Curricular Change**

Curricular change is not an easy process, as Cannon and McHolland (chap. 9) show us. This topic directs attention to the relationships between program leaders and faculty and students at home institutions. How many times have David Singer and I come back home from national training meetings all jazzed up with some clearly brilliant new possibility only to be treated as if we had had a strange acid trip or been kidnapped by religious fanatics? In faculty meetings, I have heard a conservative faculty member confidently propose a purported "innovation" that would take us into a time warp back to the 1950s. In spite of inherently conservative faculties, we must find ways to weave considerations of diversity, gender, and sexual orientation into the fabric of the curriculum. Working both ends, we can inspire our faculties to train the psychologists of the future while generating systematic contingencies for development and innovation.

### **Training Conferences and Relationships**

Training conferences, including the San Antonio conference, are about relationships, not simply about our academic discipline. In the academic world, the term *discipline* is used "to refer to the knowledge and information base of a broad field of study and instruction" (Fowler, 1990, p. 2). In a broad sense, then, deeply embedded in the discipline, the core curriculum must prepare students for the professional relationships in which they will spend their lives. Even in a very narrow sense, curriculum can be seen as the content of the very special conversation that occurs in the relationships that compose doctoral training in professional psychology.

At the conference, our initial work focused on the attitudes and values underlying the core curriculum and gave rise to the general preamble in the resolutions (chap. 21).

All too often, comments on the core curriculum have focused narrowly on the content of courses. Afterward, indeed almost as an afterthought, have come statements about values and ethics. "Learn this stuff, be a scientist, take a practicum, oh yes, and be ethical and for diversity too," someone might have said. Admittedly, our own Mission Bay conference had a bit of this character as well. If certain attitudes and values are indeed the bedrock of the profession, they must be given an overarching priority in curricular conversations.

Our conversation about core attitudes and values is about the sorts of relationships we should have with our clients, our communities, and one another. It should speak to how we are to treat the others with whom we are in professional relationships: colleagues, students, and clients alike. We need, I believe, most of all an increased level of respectfulness. One of the most discouraging things about the academic rugged individualism Sarason (1981) described is that it makes some of our professional organizations and affairs—like some elements of the accreditation process, some purported actions of Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology (COGDOP) (in the not too distant past), and an unquotable critique of the American Psychological Association by a member of the American Psychological Society—seem as if they were written by the author of "How the West Was Won." Now I admit to enjoying a spirited debate as well as the next person. (Here I probably *should say* "next man.") However, I imagine these "competitions" might be more like friendly games of tennis than gladiatorial combat to the death. I further admit to having enjoyed, from time to time, a full and embarrassingly satisfying dinner at the table of professional disdain. (I was not there alone; there was a crowd.)

Singer, Magidson, and I (chap. 18) discuss related issues in the context of specifying the importance of the self-in-role and in relation to others as core. The development of a sense of self-in-relationship that guarantees a sense of collaborative collegiality is absolutely critical to professional psychology and is no easy business. I want to advocate for a professional psychology of engaged clinicians who bring their real selves to conversations with clients in authentic relationships. People who want to use their verbal skills to win can go to law school; there is room in medicine for those who wish to treat people's parts rather than their whole.

## Professional Core Competency Areas

After the Mission Bay conference, I think we have a consensus on the areas of the professional core. There are six "competency areas that specify the generic core [that require basic proficiency]: relationship, assessment, intervention, research and evaluation, consultation and teaching, and management and supervision (including ethics) (Bourg, Bent, McHolland, & Stricker, 1989, p. 70). Training is to include relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes. We should keep in mind that particular skills and attitudes within these competency areas define the sorts of relationships in which professional psychologists participate.

Along with the relevant resolutions, each of six chapters in Part II provides a particular conceptualization and basic background material for each competency area. Polite and Bourg on the relationship competency (chap. 11), Gold and De Piano on assessment (chap. 12), and Bent and Cox on intervention (chap. 13) are anchoring points for professional psychology, for the core curriculum, and for this book. Trierweiler and Stricker on research and evaluation (chap. 14) delineate their striking new vision of the

"local clinical scientist" for professional psychology. The consultation and education competency, according to Illback, Maher, and Kopplin (chap. 15), and the management and supervision competency, in the eyes of Bent, Schindler, and Dobbins (chap. 16) are underdeveloped in training programs. Curriculum in these areas must be expanded to better prepare tomorrow's psychologists, ironically, for what today's psychologists are actually doing in their own local contexts.

### **Broadening the Core Curriculum**

On one level, a theme of the conference and of the book is broadening the core curriculum beyond traditional content "to include material relevant to the self of the professional psychologist, to experience, to women, and to ethnic diversity. . . . [We need] a broadened conceptualization of the core curriculum, beyond definitions by content, beyond traditional university science, and beyond the frame provided by the competencies" (Edwall, chap. 17, p. 129).

After Edwall's moving introduction, Singer, Magidson, and I (chap. 18) put forward that there should be "systematic attention to the nature of the relationship between the self of the student and the work of professional psychology" (p. 133). As mentioned earlier, we suggest that reflexivity, the ability to reflect on actions and behaviors in the past (Gergen, 1982, p. 18; Smedslund, 1985), must be in the center of training in professional psychology. Perhaps this is the area that is most obviously and directly about relationships. In a notion that is at the same time common and radical, it seems to me that the core curriculum should include the authentic self of each student in a way that necessitates particular, intense sorts of relationships to his or her colleagues and faculty. It is time for us to bring this sort of personal reflexivity into the core curriculum.

Edwall and Newton (chap. 19) make the case for a broadened psychological epistemology based on the contributions of feminist scholarship and examine the core structure of professional training curricula, experiences, and processes from the perspective of women. Then, Davis-Russell, Forbes, Bascuas, and Duran (chap. 20) discuss the necessity of understanding current psychological paradigms and of adopting a new one to effectively evaluate and generate knowledge pertaining to ethnic diversity. In asking where women and ethnic diversity fit into the core curriculum, we are asking how we are to relate across genders and to those we see as different from ourselves, those who are "the other." This process demands systematic curricular attention in ways only partly understood, particular knowledge, and a respectful willingness to explore the basis for conversations with others whose experiences may be quite different from our own. We need to commit ourselves to developing a nonalienating science to help us construct ways in which this can be done. We should be proud that NCSPP's midwinter conferences on diversity in 1989 and on women in 1991—as well as this one—should help to bring psychology along.

### **Conference Resolutions**

The conference produced a remarkable and striking array of detailed resolutions beginning with the explicit identification of four curricular values: a broadened view of the educational domain of professional psychology, which includes humanities and personal and professional experience; the affirmation of multiple ways of knowing, both

objective and subjective; the demonstrated mastery of professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and the preparation for lifelong learning. The conferees also affirmed the value of "diversity and inclusiveness as fundamental elements of human experience" (chap. 21, p. 159); the necessity of education of the personal and professional self of the student; the importance of preparation for multiple professional roles; a broadly defined vision of curriculum; the centrality of relationships to the clinical enterprise; and "the [absolute] importance of the responsible use of power and authority" (chap. 21, p. 155).

## Conclusion

As is clear by now, this book was the product of many other sorts of effort beyond the putting of words on a page and moving them around. I want to recognize by name the particular people who served on the steering committee, thereby creating the conference and this volume, although I will resist the temptation to characterize each of their particular contributions in a sentence or a phrase. They are (in alphabetical order) Russell Bent, Elizabeth Davis-Russell, Glenace Edwall, James McHolland, Ethel Magidson, Kenneth Polite, David Singer, and George Stricker. I am proud of these talented people, proud of the quality of conferees present, proud of having taken the high road, proud of our friendships, our respectfulness, and our caring, and proud of the work we have done together.

I want to close by returning to the question of relationships, particularly who we at NCSPP want to be to one another. I suppose, because we occupy similar roles, we have been mirrors for each other, often sharing with impassioned empathy. As the professional psychology movement has been and continues to be embattled, we have been a foxhole family. Struggling along this sometimes rugged road, I have believed that the Thomas Jeffersons and the Samuel Adams of the professional psychology movement are up there in front. Ground has been gained, but there still are redcoats just on the other side of the hill. I have worried at moments that Valley Forge was ahead of us, not behind us.

Sometimes the metaphor of revolution in professional psychology training seems apt. Regardless of rhetoric, that revolution is one that has more in common with religion than with science. Religious wars that have dominated the greater part of this first century of psychology are fomented by programs teaching their students the one and only true faith. I am for conversations with strong opinions, persuasively expressed, but such opinions should not be put forward as canon, to use Glenace Edwall's phrase (personal communication, August 8, 1989).

In our curricular conversations, we need to continue to keep two simple things in mind. First, as every student of learning knows, behavior responds to contingencies, and one learns best what one practices most. Contingencies designed to produce the best of practitioners are more likely to produce them than contingencies designed to produce university science researchers. Second, we have seen that there are people in need of us, less than they could be, imprisoned by their pasts, abused, frightened; people trapped by the intolerant and derogatory ideas of others; people run down by poverty and the economic system; and people ensnared by their own habits and thoughts. The ultimate task of our educational programs is to prepare professional psychologists who are willing to share their pain and to reach out a hand.