National Conference on Levels and Patterns of Professional Training in Psychology

The Major Themes

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Since the Chicago Conference eight years ago, American psychology has felt the effects of severe professional and social crosswinds, bringing with them serious, seemingly intractable problems. These expanding concerns and the mounting criticisms of substantial numbers of psychologists eventuated in a call for a National Conference on Levels and Patterns of Professional Training in Psychology. Supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the Conference took place in Vail, Colorado, July 25–30, 1973. The developments since 1965 included the following.

1. Many professional psychologists continued, even after the Chicago Conference, to express strong dissatisfaction with the apparent lack of appropriateness of training provided by many doctoral programs, their low responsivity to social issues, and their uncritical allegiance to the traditional scientist-professional model. Some of this dissatisfaction led to the formation of the National Council on Graduate Education in Psychology and found expression in new training ventures such as the Doctor of Psychology Program at the University of Illinois and the founding of the California School of Professional Psychology.

2. Early in 1969, an Ad hoc Committee on Professional Training was created under the joint aegis of the Education and Training Board and the Board of Professional Affairs of the APA. As the Committee launched into its work under the chairmanship of John Darley, it was soon charged with additional tasks, as newly articulated problems reached the APA governance.

3. Toward the end of 1969, the Black Student Psychological Association presented the APA Council of Representatives with a number of basic demands and a plan for action. This eventuated in a program which included guidelines for the following:

(*a*) The recruitment of black students and black faculty members into psychology;

(*b*) The gathering and dissemination of information concerning the availability of various sources of financial aid for black students;

(*c*) The design of programs offering meaningful community experience for black students in the field of psychology;

(*d*) The development of terminal programs at all degree levels that would equip black students with the tools necessary to function within the black community.

4. In October 1970, the Council of Representatives began deliberations designed to insure that women would be accepted as fully enfranchised members of the profession. A Task Force on the Status of Women in Psychology was appointed for the purpose of addressing itself to three major objectives:

(*a*) The collection of information to document the status of women in psychology;

(*b*) The development of recommendations and guidelines;

[1] This summary of the deliberations of the Vail Conference was written on behalf of the Conference's Follow-Up Commission which includes the following among its members: D. W. Bray, L. D. Cohen, J. G. Darley, W. A. Hayes, T. Hilliard, E. L. Hoch, M. G. Keiffer, J. G. Kelly, M. Korman, R. B. Kurz, P. M. Lewinsohn, B. G. Little, D. P. Mejia, A. G. Ossorio, W. D. Pierce, K. E. Pottharst, A. O. Ross, G. O. Seymour, W. S. Verplanck, S. Vineberg, and J. L. White. Although the editorial wisdom of a number of the aforementioned is gratefully acknowledged, they share no blame for any inaccuracies or distortions that may be present in the report. A fuller account of the Conference's work and of the issues it confronted will appear in the Conference proceedings.

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(*c*) The establishment of communications with other agencies and institutions regarding the status of women.

In its 1972 report, this Task Force made extensive proposals concerning curricula and the advising of undergraduate and graduate students; graduate training and the recruitment of women faculty members; discrimination and barriers to women in the federal government, schools, industry, and clinical practice.

5. Concern with the desirability and the implementation of less than doctoral professional training has a long (albeit undistinguished) history in organized psychology. In the last few years, additional developments revived this issue once again:

(*a*) Two regional conferences on the technical and professional preparation of psychologists at the master's level issued final reports strongly endorsing the MA as a professional degree based on broad psychological training and involving a potentially important role as an active agent in the community.

(*b*) The Education and Training Board's Task Force on Master's Level Education likewise issued a strongly worded statement proposing full APA membership status for the non-doctorally-trained psychologist and outlining an explicit program for supporting and regularizing professional master's programs.

(*c*) Although the Council of Representatives endorsed the Task Force's report in 1971, it reversed itself the following year, calling for a straw vote of the membership at large on some of the issues placed before it. A small segment of the APA membership voted; strong reservations were voiced regarding full APA membership for master's-level psychologists.

Such were the major concerns of organized psychology in 1971 when the Ad hoc Committee on Professional Training applied to NIMH for the necessary funds to launch a national conference on training. Shortly thereafter, a more broadly representative steering committee was convened to begin the preliminary work that led to the Conference itself.

The Vail Conference

Selection of participants lies at the heart of any conference. In this regard, Vail represented a clear departure from earlier, similar events. The steering committee sampled from a large number of prospective participants along such traditional dimensions as specialty, role, and area of responsibility; the committee also used criteria that resulted in the selection of 14 trainees, 40 women (including 7 from minority groups), and 29 male minority group members out of 116 invited participants.

Prior to the Conference itself, participants were assigned to 1 of 10 task groups which were provided with a specific charge summarizing the most salient, critical issues. At Vail, participants were also encouraged to form interest groups which might develop their own agendas. All conferees met in frequent plenary sessions to discuss and vote on resolutions presented by these working groups.

The end product of the Conference's five days at Vail was approximately 150 resolutions. Although some of these resolutions addressed different levels of concerns, others were too general or too specific, and still others conveyed a lack of precision with regard to priorities, it is clear that some of the same major themes are reiterated throughout the record of the Conference. These are summarized in the pages that follow.

A Professional Training Model

The Conference explicitly endorsed professional training programs as one type of heuristic model to guide those programs defining themselves by a basic service orientation. It did so *without* abandoning comprehensive psychological science as the substantive and methodological root of any educational or training enterprise in the field of psychology and *without* depreciating the value of scientist or scientist-professional training programs for certain specific objectives. It is important to view the Conference's entire work in the light of a continuing ideological commitment to the tradition of empiricism and as a clear affirmation of the fundamental importance of the scientific endeavor.

Psychology, however, is coming of age and has matured sufficiently to justify the existence of unambiguously professional programs in addition to the more traditional varieties. The choice of training model, as far as a particular program (and prospective student) is concerned, is determined by the kinds of skills its graduates will need in order to function effectively in the particular roles being chosen by and for them.

Professional programs have begun to develop in a variety of new organizational settings: medical schools; departments, schools, and colleges of educa-

tion; free-standing schools of professional psychology; autonomous professional schools in academic settings—in addition to departments of psychology in universities. Although the shaping influence of the administrative and organizational setting on program quality and effectiveness must be recognized, the Conference preferred to examine the criteria that *any* setting must meet in order to conduct high-quality professional training in psychology.

The issue of the highest professional degree label (Doctor of Philosophy versus Doctor of Psychology) was given close examination. Where primary emphasis in training is on the direct delivery of professional services and evaluation and improvement of those services, the PsyD degree is appropriate. Where primary emphasis is on the development of new knowledge in psychology, the PhD degree is appropriate. Although it is desirable to move toward uniformity of degree labels, current local administrative and political constraints must, of course, be taken into account.

Multilevel Training

In the development of professional training programs, priority must be given those that either address multiple levels of training (from the associate of arts, AA, degree to the doctorate) or at least demonstrate clear articulation with degree programs at other levels. Examples would include the development of multiple levels of training within one institutional setting or the coordination of local or regional programs at differing levels. It is clear that much waste of time and effort has resulted from poorly coordinated entrance requirements and overlapping curricula. Since the term *professional* is often narrowly reserved for the products of doctoral training, some conferees argued for a reconceptualization in terms of a *psychological service orientation*. Different services with different objectives and involving different skills can be offered to various target groups by workers at quite different levels, all of them trained in psychological skills. In our society only some of these may typically be called professionals; all of them, however, share a service orientation.

A comprehensive task analysis is urgently needed that would match the competencies for which workers are trained at each step on a service ladder with the roles, functions, and related responsibilities implied in a series of psychological tasks (e.g., advocate, community planner, behavior changer, evaluator, etc.).

The need for "portability" of credit for completed work was stressed, not only as it applies to movement from one level to another, but also for persons desiring to resume their education in a different location at a later point in their lives. It was recommended that heretofore indivisible courses and programs be replaced by smaller sized modules (particularly at subdoctoral levels) that would permit interchangeability and more flexible curriculum building. Credit for certain modules could be obtained on the basis of life or work experience.

The idea of a *career ladder* should be replaced by the more inclusive concept of a *career lattice*—an open-ended occupational structure which encourages broader skill acquisition at any given level in addition to upward professional movement; this would encourage continued training and development, leading to functional differentiation of skills at every performance level.

The Conference participants were concerned lest their endorsement of multilevel training systems be viewed as relegating typically disenfranchised groups such as ethnic minorities and women to "lower level" programs. It is incumbent on the "upper level" programs to set a very high priority on the recruitment of students from such groups; in addition, individuals at the lower levels of professional training should have the opportunity to receive the additional training necessary to upgrade their status.

The careful coordination of educational practices at different points on the training continuum and the encouragement of additional skill acquisition by workers at any given level were considered to be of major importance by the Conference. In fact, it was felt that the accreditation process must give very serious consideration to the degree and quality of appropriate interrelatedness among level-defined programs.

Desirable Characteristics of Professional Training

Because participants labored to a large extent in small groups, many of the resolutions adopted by the Conference as a whole dealt specifically with one or another of the three main levels of training (doctoral, master's, bachelor's and below) or with special group concerns (e.g., minority groups, women, trainees). A review of the work of the

Conference quickly established some pervasive themes, all the more remarkable because they emerged independently from the work of separate groups. Some of these conclusions are discussed below, organized around components that must be considered in a systematic evaluation of a service-oriented training program at any level.

ASSESSMENT OF CONSUMER NEEDS

In their program development (or retrenchment), trainers of psychologists must be concerned with the current job market, as well as with the long-range needs of society. It is important that current information about existing and expanding demands for psychologists in particular applied areas designed to meet societal needs lead promptly to appropriate curricular changes.

APA needs to assume a more aggressive stance in exploring and developing potential career markets for services employing individuals trained in psychology. Obvious examples abound: for example, prison psychology; psychological problems in transportation and in urban life, in population trends, and in meeting the human service needs of several underserved populations.

It was observed that more extensive and frequent interchanges of university training personnel and field psychologists would lead to a sounder perspective on new career options and potential social contributions. Arranging for fieldwork experiences in nontraditional settings will likewise sensitize students to emerging service possibilities. The potential arena of endeavor, it was felt, was nothing less than the total area of human services. Community control and consumer rights are affirmed as key service approaches; hence, consumer help in both assessing community need and in shaping program objectives is critical. Periodic monitoring with reference to the adequacy with which social needs are being met by a particular program is a necessary feature of the evaluation process. The voice of consumers of psychological services must be heard in the process of accrediting such programs.

ADMISSIONS STRATEGY

Disproportionate reliance on traditional selection criteria for professional training (e.g., grades and graduate record examination scores) has proved inadequate in providing society with a pool of socially responsive, culturally diverse, and professionally sensitive psychologists. More attention must be paid to the applicant's socially relevant experiences and goals, his or her interpersonal skills, and a variety of attitudinal and motivational factors. It is important that training programs maximize the degree of cultural diversity characterizing their students. Facilitating the admission, retention, and graduation of students from underrepresented groups will not only correct an obvious injustice, but will simultaneously add multicultural dimensions to the training context, a clearly more efficient way of preparing professionals to function in a pluralistic society.

The Conference endorsed the "truth in packaging" concept with regard to program description as necessary for intelligent decision making on the part of the student and as representing an important ethical stance on the part of the trainers. What is required is not only a clear statement of the orientation of the program and the emphasis it places on various program components and "hurdles," but also detailed information regarding specific requirements, and faculty interests and commitments. A detailed breakdown of past and present student characteristics and job placement is likewise recommended.

Programs must be prepared to accept students on a less than full-time basis; to do otherwise frequently discriminates against the older, more mature student (often the more socially committed and personally motivated trainee). Alternative life-styles and unpopular political beliefs are likewise no bar to professional training: A strong program seeks heterogeneity along many dimensions.

TRAINING STRATEGY

The Conference sought to reexamine the functional relationship between training content and the roles and activities for which it is preparing future professionals, and to do so in the light of existing social needs and ethical responsibilities. Periodic self-study is recommended to assure that nonfunctional requirements are modified or deleted.

A specific commitment to a particular training ideology or design was avoided by the Conference. It was felt that each program should capitalize on the resources available to it, seeking to become the finest possible example of the specific training and service philosophy it espoused. Nonetheless, a few guiding notions were offered:

1. Heavy emphasis was placed on field training in multiple contexts and on a concerted effort at integrating these experiences with the skills and knowledge learned in the classroom. Field experience should be consonant with the objectives of the particular program and with the unique needs and opportunities of the community.

2. The totality of settings in which professional training is provided must be congruent with the needs of a significant range of clients in a community, including persons of culturally diverse backgrounds. Psychologists have an obligation to provide services on a genuinely broad and nondiscriminatory basis. Inadequate preparation for this goal, the conferees felt, represents a shirking of an ethical obligation and does not relieve either trainer or trainee of this obligation.

3. Wherever possible, faculty and students should increase their involvement with underserved populations by providing needed services as a part of training programs. Such efforts merit funding priority from granting agencies.

4. Professional work frequently has social and political ramifications. Much that the psychologist does (or does not do) affects other individuals, his community, and society. It is important that these implications be examined and evaluated dispassionately, and training programs should provide such opportunities.

FACULTY AND TRAINEES

Faculty must provide a convincing professional role model and present a clear commitment to and expertise in the work of the applied psychologist. It is of considerable importance, therefore, that the director and senior trainers themselves be currently engaged in some form of professional work. It is in fact desirable that the training faculty maintain close and meaningful involvement with institutional or community service agencies; concomitantly, field supervisors from applied settings can strengthen the university's training base through appropriate academic appointments and through opportunities for genuine contributions to policy and decision making. The Conference further suggested periodic exchanges of faculty and field supervisors for the purpose of providing continuing professional development for both groups.

Comparable weight must be given to outstanding performance in professional training and service as is earned by distinguished empirical and theoretical endeavors. These values should have the endorsement of administrators responsible for the operation and financial support of the program.

If the training faculty needs appropriate opportunities, encouragement, and rewards, so do the students. Any program that admits a student assumes a particular responsibility to maximize his or her chances of graduating. This calls for the continued availability of basic student resources: financial support, availability of counseling, nondiscriminatory and noncapricious treatment, provisions for redress of grievances. Additional support systems such as adequate access to appropriate role models, relevance of curriculum, and opportunities for skill development must also be provided. It is expected that students will participate in frequent periods of self-study undertaken by the departments as a whole. They should also have a voice in shaping their own curriculum, possibly through specific academic contract.

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION

Considering the financial cost and human effort represented by professional education, there has been a curious lack of concern over product and program evaluation. This seems to be true of most of the major professions, but its absence is the more remarkable in a discipline that prides itself on its expertise in evaluation research.

Accreditation as currently practiced is not equal to the task of adequately evaluating the efficacy of training, the quality of graduates, and the value of the services to the ultimate recipient or the nature and significance of its impact on society. Substantially more is needed.

The Conference accepted the suggestion that a demonstration project be undertaken with the ultimate aim of revising present accreditation philosophy and procedures by focusing on the competencies of multilevel graduates and their eventual impact on society.

Samples of current graduates would undergo an intensive evaluation of their professional skills and of factors related to a readiness for ethical and productive psychological practice. Comparable data would be obtained from journeyman field psychologists at various levels of training. Finally, a broad survey would be undertaken of the careers of graduates from a wide sample of institutions in terms of the graduates' career choices and their psychological contribution to society. It is hoped that these data will contribute to a reexamination of the implicit values, beliefs, and assumptions un-

derlying training philosophies, and that this will in turn be reflected in accreditation criteria.

Additional suggestions for a revamping of the accreditation process included: (*a*) reiterated demands for the development and implementation of unambiguous, workable affirmative action goals, as well as timetables for increased participation of minority groups and women in the roles of students and faculty; (*b*) the inclusion of representatives from state psychological associations, student groups, and consumer on-site visiting teams; (*c*) a major restructuring and strengthening of the Education and Training Board, with special consideration being given to the possible creation of an independent accrediting body in order to fully meet these demands.

Doctoral Training

The Conference called (in the professional model) for an extensive and thoroughgoing preparation in the skills necessary for effective practice. At the same time, it concluded:

> Many of the psychological services currently performed by Ph.D., Ed.D. or Psy.D. degree holders could be performed equally well by personnel trained at the master's or lower levels. The real cost of such services to the public could be appreciably lowered by training such personnel to provide them directly.

What then are the appropriate functions of the doctoral psychologist? One might conclude that while "journeyman" skills appropriately belong at the master's level (or even below), "master" professional competence should emerge with doctoral training. The Conference, however, felt that much more should be demanded of the higher level practitioner. The training of these professionals should also prepare them for the following kinds of activities: (*a*) evaluation of service programs and new procedures, (*b*) design of new service delivery systems, (*c*) development of new conceptual models, (*d*) integration of practice and theory, (*e*) program development and administration, (*f*) supervision and training.

A special contribution (or hurdle, depending on one's point of view) of the PhD student is the dissertation. The PsyD degree, on the other hand, permits appropriate substitution for the traditional dissertation. Since many institutions will, however, not be able (or willing) to shift their programs to the PsyD model, some additional suggestions were advanced by the Conference.

Flexible criteria for defining the appropriateness of dissertation proposals are recommended in order to insure that the student's project is relevant to the professional role for which he or she is preparing. Serious consideration should also be given to the inclusion on dissertation committees of psychologists or other competent persons from field agencies and/or other campuses who may be especially qualified for such appointment. Faculty members presently excluded due to existing policies (such as those regarding tenure) should be designated as chairpersons when they represent a logical and appropriate choice.

Master's-Level Training

The position taken by the Conference on the issue of the master's degree reflected a deep concern with the legitimatization of persons trained at the master's level as psychologists and as professionals. It called for the development of strong professional master's programs (of which there are few currently), differentiated by specialization title (e.g., master's in industrial psychology), with explicitly stated objectives and with carefully integrated didactic and field training. It should be noted that this process of legitimatization rests on the restructuring of master's programs into strong, well-rounded professional training sequences.

Departments already engaged in master's training are called on to organize themselves into a Council of Professional Master's Programs and to begin the processes of disseminating curricular information and setting up standards through intensive self-review.

It was the concensus of the Conference that the properly trained master's individual has every right to be called a psychologist and should be admitted to full APA membership. In taking this position, the conferees were not unmindful of other (and potentially contradictory) concerns shared by a substantial number of professional psychologists. With the country moving toward a national health insurance system, our claim for the status of *independent* practitioner is bolstered by a definition of the psychologist as a doctoral-level professional exclusively. The conflict is a difficult one to resolve; convincing arguments can be made by both camps.

One side emphasizes the need for professional autonomy—a goal sought by every profession worthy of the name. Because of a traditional interest in preventive and developmental approaches and in

experimentation with a broad panoply of service strategies, psychology seems capable of a very unique contribution to the total health effort. Thus society, not only psychology, shall be the loser if a narrowly subservient role is assigned to it.

The other side sees dangers ahead: (*a*) a continuation of the inequities engendered by a fee-for-service, middle-class-oriented health system; (*b*) a disregard for cost control, accessibility, and availability of services, particularly where underserved target populations are concerned; and (*c*) a perpetuation, well into the third decade, of a serious injustice carried out at the expense of the master's-level psychologist.

The Conference could not, in good conscience, turn its back on this problem once more; it called for the inclusion of master's psychologists among its professional ranks. It did, however, reject a recommendation for their licensing or certification; such statutory implementation was left to future developments. This compromise, many participants felt, would maximize psychology's chances of becoming a clearly recognized independent profession while initiating a series of extensive, positive alterations internal to the profession with regard to master's-level professional personnel.

Training at Bachelor's Level and Below

It has become increasingly clear that many persons with less than master's-level training render a psychological service, frequently of professional caliber. Since 1966, for example, some 150 AA degree mental health programs have sprung up, typically training generalists who render a large number of services through their knowledge of specific techniques and skill in forming and maintaining human relationships. Little work has been done on carefully examining and analyzing the parameters of the sub-master's-training competencies and parallel service functions. In addition, the extent of professional psychology's responsibility toward such programs and their trainees is a generally ignored issue.

The Conference recognized two types of sub-master's programs, those that primarily emphasize academic psychology and those that include specific training in applied skills. With regard to the latter type of program, the following points were made:

1. These efforts include AA and bachelor's degree programs, as well as nondegree continuing education and skill training for various groups. Although focused primarily on mental health, other specialties (particularly in new human services areas) represent likely possibilities for program expansion. A number of these programs produce workers with a distinctly *psychological* service orientation.

2. The Conference recognized the lack of clear information concerning manpower needs, training settings, and outcome evaluation in this area. Nonetheless, it made a number of preliminary suggestions in this context: (*a*) The selection process must include the evaluation of interpersonal and related skills; (*b*) sound field training must be a central part of all such programs; (*c*) some mechanism must be developed; (*d*) consideration must be given to affording both horizontal and lateral mobility to such trainees.

3. Are such persons psychologists? The Conference did not have a definitive answer to this question. At the very least, it was felt that the psychological establishment has some responsibility for establishing a vehicle that might provide a means for affiliation under the overall APA umbrella. It seems difficult to think of a responsible answer to many current social/professional issues that ignore this group altogether.

Continuing Professional Development

A recognition of the need for relevant continuing professional development (CPD) experiences for all professional psychologists constituted a major theme of the Conference. Not only must CPD experiences permit psychologists to update their skills in the context of a knowledge explosion and the emergence of new professional roles, but they must also facilitate career changes for psychologists wishing to prepare themselves for new functions.

A number of specific recommendations emerged, designed to facilitate the prompt implementation of CPD programs:

1. Institutions already involved in professional training are encouraged to establish or cooperate in CPD programs. Since these programs should encompass broader resources than are typically available in single instructional units, they should look to multidisciplinary content and participation.

2. Training formats must be eminently flexible because such programs often deal with part-time students. Evening sessions, one- or two-day workshops, short-term apprenticeships, cable TV, and other innovative approaches should be considered.

3. Educational institutions need to devise sys-

tems for giving "credit" for CPD participation, perhaps via "CPD units" reflecting a block of hours of participation. The convertibility of CPD units into regular academic credit would open the door to eventual completion of degree requirements for part-time students.

4. One can conceive of a series of distinct CPD offerings ranging from one-time presentations (suitable for professional psychologists wishing to stay informed about new developments) to planned sequences of educational experiences (geared to psychologists preparing themselves for new professional roles). In either case, program effectiveness must be determined by built-in evaluative mechanisms.

Professional Training and Minority Groups

The Conference's concern with the implementation of affirmative action programs—viewed as a basic ethical obligation—for the identification, recruitment, admission, and graduation of minority group students has been discussed above. In addition, the participants felt that it was important for *all* students to be prepared to function professionally in a pluralistic society. To this end, it was suggested that (*a*) training experience should occur in a multicultural context both within the university and in fieldwork settings; (*b*) the content of training must adequately prepare students for their eventual professional roles vis-à-vis a wide diversity of target groups; (*c*) students must be helped to maintain a balance between acculturation into a professional and scholarly role, on the one hand, and retention of their group identity and cultural sensitivity, on the other.

Because of dissatisfaction with the scope of APA's response to the concerns of ethnic minorities, the Conference accepted a resolution which recommended: (*a*) that a Board of Minority Advocacy, composed of representatives of ethnic minority groups, be created in APA and be responsible for examining policies touching on minority concerns; (*b*) that this Board have a prior review function regarding other organizational units of APA and that it advise the Board of Directors in the general area of minority affairs; (*c*) that an Office of Minority Affairs be created, with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating APA projects, programs, and policies, for developing and disseminating information related to minority concerns, and for initiating appropriate relationships with public and private agencies.

To the extent that federal funding continues to be a major variable in initiating training and service projects, the recommendation was made that appointments to grant review panels should parallel, through significant minority membership, the composition of target populations.

Professional Training and Women

Large numbers of well-prepared women apply for admission to graduate programs. They should be admitted at least in proportion to their numbers among the institution's applicant population. Obstacles to graduation unrelated to student performance (frequently related to family status and geographical moves) must be eliminated.

The Conference deplored the application of sex role stereotyping in the counseling and advisement tracking of undergraduate women. It was also noted that pressures on employers are creating opportunities for women in fields that heretofore were not readily open to them.

The Conference endorsed the notion that extensive empirical research is needed to examine many prevalent biases in such areas as sex role stereotyping, the definition of psychological adequacy in women, the effects of child care roles on women and men, and concepts of masculinity and femininity.

Schools and the media were singled out as institutional settings that often reflect harmful sex role stereotyping; psychologists must help modify such practices wherever they exist.

Finally, the concept of *personism* was offered as a suitable alternative to sexism. This is a term designed to reflect the awareness and acceptance of the individuality of all persons, male and female; both employers and trainers have an ethical obligation to exemplify this value in their professional behavior.

Service Delivery Systems and the Social Context

Professional training programs must develop strong linkages with service delivery systems in the community and maintain a continuing dialogue which includes the *recipients* of the services as well. It is anticipated that the introduction of the client's perspective into what then becomes a collaborative effort will significantly modify values and beliefs held by professional trainees.

Field settings present the student with a laboratory opportunity to study the interplay between

social systems and life events, as well as the parameters of system change. No other experience can drive home so forcefully the extent to which psychological distress and social dysfunction are intertwined. Ideally, a number of these community settings will be characterized by the availability of a full range of human services in addition to innovative mental health technology: job and legal counseling, welfare, vocational and physical rehabilitation, and a variety of child and family services.

The Conference alluded frequently to the fundamental importance of a problem-oriented service commitment, perhaps because society's pressing concerns with its psychological casualties demand no less of professional psychologists. At the same time, there was a definite undercurrent in what seemed to some the opposite direction: a motivation to build programs that foster and maintain human competencies and prevent dysfunction or disruption. Psychology, the conferees felt, must be fully responsive to both sets of demands, although individual psychologists may have a more focused commitment. Training opportunities should therefore encompass the full range of remediation, prevention, and development.

It is desirable that students have the opportunity to learn advocacy roles with regard to the recipients of psychological services. It is particularly those underserved populations—the poor, the aged, the prisoner, the alcoholic, and the retarded—who are the appropriate target populations for *both* service and training efforts. New service modalities designed to expand the scope of services while reducing their unit cost are badly needed. Fledgling psychologists must be sensitized to the need for the multiplicative transfer of human skills through layers of professionals, subprofessionals, and other helpers.

Evaluation of the impact of service delivery systems must take place in an interdisciplinary context, with objectives so clearly specified that their attainment or nonattainment can be adequately assessed. Finally, because of the growing disparity in quality of service between various sectors of our society, the Conference recommended that APA, together with state associations, explore the legal procedures necessary to bring about in public agencies and institutions a uniform standard of psychological service equal to that now existing in the private sector.

Conclusion

The NIMH grant which funded the Vail Conference had the unique provision of a two-year follow-up plan to disseminate as widely as possible the work of the Conference and to help initiate the process of implementation of the proposals that emerged from Vail. To that end, a Follow-Up Commission, composed of the original 10-member Steering Committee and 10 additional members chosen by the Conference participants from among themselves began to function in the waning minutes of the meeting at Vail.

The Commission continued its work at a meeting in Washington, D.C., in October 1973, where it laid plans to review and reorder the Vail resolutions along the dimensions of implementability and priority. It also decided to initiate a dialogue with all the relevant elements of the APA governance and affiliated organizations regarding the issues at hand.

The resolutions themselves were conceived of as a significant starting point in this dialogue, a deliberative explication of a certain point of view. Following consensus seeking, discussion, and feedback, it is hoped that forward-looking action plans will be developed that will quicken the emergence of American psychology into a new era of professional competence and responsivity.