INTERNSHIPS IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY¹

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ABSTRACT

There is substantial consensus regarding the professional roles derived from theoretical models of community psychology. Community field training is necessary for graduate students to experience fundamental role characteristics and develop applied skills relevant to later community practice. A doctoral-level internship and its relationship to professional roles in community psychology is described. Problems associated with development of community internships are discussed from the perspective of both the sponsoring graduate program and the student. Given the importance of understanding Canadian issues, systems, and policies for community practice, it appears highly desirable that graduate students do their internships in Canada.

During the brief history of community psychology, conceptual models have become increasingly sophisticated and differentiated (Iscoe, Bloom, & Speilberger, 1977; Rappaport, 1977). Presently there are both substantial similarities among and differences between community models concerning ideology, values, goals, levels of intervention, and knowledge bases. Most if not all models share certain characteristics, including an ideology emphasizing social causation of human problems, democratic/egalitarian values, and prevention as an im-

portant goal. Most models also stress intervention with social units larger than the individual and view social systems as the most appropriate knowledge base.

These evolutionary advancements have stimulated considerable discussion regarding graduate training in community psychology. Ideally, graduate training should reflect the skills and experiences believed necessary to fulfill the professional roles derived from one or more conceptual models, particularly their interventive aspects. Several authors have already proposed what they consider to be appropriate roles for community psychologists. Speilberger and Iscoe (1972) encouraged community psychologists to function equally as consultants, participant-conceptualizers, and social change agents. Bloom (1973) and Reiff (1977) both emphasized analysis of and intervention with social issues as opposed to

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individual troubles. Sarason (1973) stressed program development and evaluation as important functions. Four different roles were described by Newbrough (1978), namely direct service provider, systems consultant, agency administrator, and liaison worker.

Speaking more broadly, Rappaport (1977) cited development of human resources, scientific analysis, and political activity oriented toward implementing new programs or creating social change. Similarly, Silverman (1978) categorized the role of community psychologists as involving knowledge gathering (research and evaluation), knowledge dispensation (consultation and education), and direct knowledge utilization (administration, community development, primary and secondary interventions).

While these authors do not include all the same roles on their respective lists, and obviously employ somewhat different terms to describe them, a high degree of overlap is apparent. At the same time, the range and complexity of roles is intimidating. While it seems unlikely that any single graduate program could train students equally well for all these roles, it is important that students acquire skill in areas which are relevant to community theory and practice. Andrulis, Barton, and Aponte (1978) argue that:

Community psychology, in theory, is moving away from individual issues and toward broader social system concerns . . . At present, such nonclinical activities as community change and social planning, and the design and development of human service programs, are increasingly seen as alternative areas of training which should be considered as core elements of community psychology. (p.270).

Field Training in Community Psychology

Nearly all applied professions have an intensive supervised field experience as part of their advanced training. Law students are required to undertake a clerkship, medical

students have an internship, etc. The purpose of field training is not simply to develop technically competent practitioners but also to socialize students in the informal customs and relationships that develop within professions over time and can only be observed in applied settings (Enos & Sultan, 1977). Further, field training permits students to experience role characteristics or demands which are often crucial to successful performance and therefore may have an important bearing on completion of their formal degree program. For example, Silverman (1978) discussed each of four role characteristics as being both an opportunity and a potential pitfall for aspiring community psychologists depending on their individual attributes and preferences. These characteristics are marginality, complexity, informality, and involvement.

Field training in community psychology has been heavily influenced by two historical facts. First, community psychology evolved out of clinical psychology and, whether appropriate or not, has continued several of its traditional practices, including certain aspects of training such as an internship (Rappaport, 1977; Sarason, 1974). Secondly, a great deal of community psychology training still takes place within the context of APA-accredited clinical/community programs, all of which require an internship or its equivalent (Barton, Andrulis, Grove, and Aponte, 1976). Therefore, the internship remains a prominent feature of community training. To assist prospective applicants, Division 27 of APA periodically publishes a guide to internships involving a significant community component.

A recent review of field training (Stenmark, 1977) recommended a four-level sequence ranging from course-related practica to full-time traineeships. The term "internship" was neither specifically retained nor excluded for programs having a joint clinical/community orientation. However, for doctoral degree community psychology programs, Stenmark recommend-

ed that both the term and the internship experience itself be replaced by a more continuous, ongoing field training format beginning with the first semester of graduate work. Further recommendations were for community-based training sites, interdisciplinary collaboration, definition of training experiences in terms of specific tasks to be performed or skills acquired, and supervisory responsibilities tied to demonstrated competence rather than degree status. These recommendations were seen as congruent with most conceptual models of community psychology.

The remainder of our paper describes a doctoral-level internship in community psychology initiated by the first author, followed by a discussion of how the various internship experiences are related to community psychology practice. Lastly, problems associated with development of community internships in Canada are reviewed.

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton is a citizen's organization responsible for the planning and coordination of publicly funded social services in the region. The objectives of the Council are to study community needs and resources, to cooperatively establish social service policy and funding priorities, to encourage improvement of existing services, and to develop public awareness and understanding of social problems. In operation for over 50 years, the Council consists of (1) nearly 90 voluntary affiliated organizations, (2) a Board of Directors drawn from government, social service professionals, consumer groups, and private citizens, and (3) approximately ten full-time staff from several disciplines, including social work, sociology, psychology, community development, and nursing. Additionally, volunteers donate their time and expertise to the Council as a whole and to special issues or projects.

The Council receives funds from the re-

gional, provincial, and federal governments, and from private organizations such as the United Way. Totalling several hundred thousand dollars, the largest proportion supports the Council on an ongoing basis by paying salaries, research expenses, publication costs, etc. A much smaller proportion is administered by the Council but directed toward specific priorities or programs by the funder.

The Council's work is conducted primarily through a committee structure. Recurrent areas of social need, such as services for youth or housing for handicapped persons, are overseen by standing committees, as are certain continuous functions such as long-range planning. Ad hoc committees are established around time-limited tasks such as needs assessment in specific areas and demonstration projects. Council committees typically carry out their mandate by engaging in four major activities, briefly described below.

Administrative Review. As well as directly administering funds for certain programs, the Council reviews the cost-effectiveness of member agencies for funders and makes recommendations concerning future support. This function requires a thorough understanding of all aspect of administration, including drawing up budgets, allocating human and material resources, coordinating program components, and liaison with other organizations. The considerable administrative experience of staff prior to joining the Council is enormously helpful in this regard.

Research. Its responsibility as a planning body requires the Council to conduct assessments of both current and future social needs using techniques ranging from community surveys to examination of demographic trends. Moreover, research on policies influencing identified needs and the probable impact of alternative policies is an integral part of effective planning. The Council is also frequently called upon to evaluate existing programs. As would be expected, these evaluations sometime involve classic

experimentation. More often they require quasi-experimental methods which can be flexibly adapted to the program constraints. Statistical techniques vary from simple frequency counts to sophisticated computer-assisted analyses.

Consultation. Perhaps the single most important Council function is consultation to public and private organizations, as well as citizen and consumer groups. Its unique position in the service network, its research activities, and its overall mandate encourage a broad perspective which individuals agencies or programs cannot be expected to achieve. Further, the Council's formal and informal links to various levels of government and to charitable organizations serve as a bridge between caregivers and those responsible for policy and funding. These factors permit the Council to play an important consultative role regarding all aspects of social services.

Advocacy. In addition to their strictly consultative or advisory role, the Council acts more directly as an advocate by preparing and presenting briefs or legislation concerning social issues to policy-makers. Moreover, they work cooperatively with other organizations in planning and implementing actions intended to improve social welfare. The Council also reviews and comments on government policies which influence their affiliated organizations or the services they provide.

Relationship to Community Psychology Practice

All of the activities described above were available to the intern, who negotiated his responsibilities with the Executive Director, his primary supervisor, and his program faculty. The activities actually engaged in cut across nearly the entire range of issues and professional roles in community psychology. Importantly, the role characteristics endemic to community practice, and their attendant intellectual and emotional demands, were experienced firsthand for a full year.

Turning to applied skills, the Council

provided an excellent opportunity to develop expertise in analyzing issues from a social policy perspective (Reppucci & Sarason, 1979), especially service planning and delivery at the local level (Capoccia, 1978). Moreover, the issues addressed involved social welfare broadly defined, rather than being restricted to traditional mental health concerns. Through its administrative and consultative functions the Council also encouraged comparison of public and private organizations in such areas as resource allocation, organizational objectives, and decision-making structures (Rainey, Backoff & Levine, 1976), as well as bringing issues of interorganizational relationships and interaction into sharp focus (Tornatzky & Lounsbury, 1979; Van de Ven, Walker, & Liston, 1979).

The analytical skills described above contributed toward achieving a comprehensive understanding of how large-scale events and processes influence direct services at an individual level. They also illustrated the political context within which social problems are conceptualized and dealt with (Edelman, 1977). Even the apparently scientific task of program evaluation was recognized as having decidedly political overtones (Wilderman, 1979). In nearly all its activities the Council both responded to and helped mold the local political climate, and afforded the intern an invaluable lesson that could only be learned by becoming actively involved in the social service community.

The internship was also related to social change aspects of community practice. Whether working within a consultation (Goodstein, 1978), community development (Rothman, Erlich, & Teresa, 1976), or advocacy (Davidson & Rappaport, 1978) framework, selection and implementation of various intervention strategies was necessarily part of Council decision-making. The intern participated fully in these discussions and helped carry out recommendations, thereby gaining direct feedback on their intended and unintended consequences.

At a more interpersonal level, the Council provided experience working as part of an interdisciplinary team (Brill, 1976) where leadership concerning individual projects was based on interest and perceived competency rather than academic credentials. This resulted in the intern having supervisors from different disciplines and also assuming primary responsibility for a project where his research skills and cross-cultural understanding were particularly relevant. In our opinion, such interdisciplinary collaboration and shared responsibility is the most appropriate type of role modeling for community practice.

Practical Problems and Concluding Remarks

We have discussed several aspects of field training in community psychology and have described a doctoral-level internship that is consistent with the roles and functions community psychologists are, theoretically, expected to perform. Developing appropriate community internships, however, can be professionally and psychologically hazardous, particularly within the context of APA-accredited clinical/community programs. APA imposes restrictive requirements concerning the activities comprising an acceptable internship and who constitutes a qualified supervisor. Depending on their interpretation, these requirements are either irrelevant or antithetical to community theory and practice. Deviation from these standards must be justified to APA by the sponsoring program and loss of accreditation may still result. In addition, program faculty must be persuaded that a community internship is both academically desirable and worth the risk of incurring APA's wrath. Negotiations for the Social Planning Council internship took fully six months of preparation and lobbying, and the controversy continued even after it was successfully completed. Of course, these professional barriers would be less problematic for programs not accredited by APA. In this regard most Canadian programs may have significantly greater flexibility than their counterparts to the south.

The road to community training can also be rocky for interns. Assuming the prospective internship setting agrees in principle to hosting a graduate student, they are often unfamiliar with what community psychology has to offer and with the intern role, and therefore may either underutilize or expect too much from the intern. This situation requires an active, self-initiating stance by the student in clarifying their responsibilities, unlike more well-defined clinical internships.

Equally important is the fact that many community settings are financially unprepared to fund an intern since monies are not routinely allocated for this purpose and the services provided are typically supported indirectly rather than through user fees. Occasionally interns can attach themselves to a funded project or program, especially if they already have demonstrable skills and are willing to do some old-fashioned hustling. Again this requires a certain maturity and sophistication which not all graduate students possess. In order for community internships to flourish in the long term, more stable sources of adequate financial support must be developed. The current climate of fiscal restraint regarding human services makes this task doubly difficult.

There is a little question that community internships or some comparable field training experience is necessary to train students in areas relevant to community psychology theory and to their future professional practice. Further, given the nature of community practice, it seems desirable that graduate students do their internships in Canada. The professional roles described earlier require an understanding of social issues, social policy, political systems, and culture which to a significant extent are specific to Canada. Certainly the best way for students to begin developing such an understanding is to train in the same context in which they intend to practice. In turn this will require sustained efforts toward developing a network of Canadian community internships. We hope our experience with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton is a step in this direction.

RÉSUMÉ

Il existe un consensus substantiel en ce qui concerne les rôles professionnels issus des modèles théoriques de la psychologie communautaire. Il est nécessaire que les étudiants de 2e et de 3e cycles fassent des stages en milieux communautaires, expérimentent les modalités du rôle essentiel et développent des compétences professionnelles pour leur future pratique communautaire. On décrit un stage de doctorat en psychologie communautaire en soulignant les liens avec les rôles professionnels de la discipline. On discute des problèmes liés aux stages communautaires en considérant à la fois le point de vue des responsables de programme et celui de l'étudiant. Compte tenu de l'importance de comprendre les problèmes, les systèmes et les politiques propres au pays pour une pratique communautaire, il paraît hautement souhaitable que les étudiants fassent leurs stages au Canada.

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