Observations on the position of the school psychologist attached to the central staff of any sizeable school system are grouped under three headings: (1) entree, (2) task and job rationale, and (3) professional identification. The organization point of entree into a system is determined by the administrative structure of the school system and by the personal outlook of administrative individuals. To help develop a model of the school psychologist's job, the following tasks which have been carried out by the author in the central office setting are described: (1) offering a plan for the improvement of the pupil and program appraisal function, (2) organization of a program for a school faculty and administrative group interested in self examination and problem-solving, (3) advising and acting as a reference source for supervisors and curriculum specialists with regard to emotional and cognitive development, learning and assessment problems, (4) initiating a vehicle for the use and dissemination of classroom interaction analysis, techniques in the schools, (5) analyzing the school system's use of research in policy formulation, and (6) creation of a model for the development of leadership. The question of professional identification provides another view of the questions about job rationale and entree. (PS)

The School Psychologist and the Central Office Staff

We have heard much talk over the years about the broadening of the school
psychologist's role, about achieving greater impact and efficiency through
deemphasis of the individual-clinical-treatment model in favor of the insti-
tutional-educational-preventive model. The more traditionally placed school
psychologist, insofar as the circumstances of his work with pupils and local
school personnel permit, may have a choice between these two models. But the
school psychologist who is assigned directly to work with central office
administrators and supervisors is necessarily involved in the second model. He
is attached to administration rather than directly to instruction, and he is con-
cerned with educational program rather than with individual deviation from classroom
expectations. His experiences, then, should throw some light upon tasks and
problems involved in the newer model.

The observations which follow, while based on first-hand experience over a
two and one-half year period, are limited to service in a single placement of
this kind, that of psychologist-consultant assigned to a department of supervision
and curriculum development in a county school system with well over 100,000
students. I am assuming that similar opportunities, tasks, and problems to
those encountered in this position would be found by a school psychologist
attached to central staff in any sizeable school system. I have grouped my
observations under three headings: (1) Entree; (2) Task and Job Rationale; and
(3) Professional Identification--partly in an attempt to keep a wary eye on the
question which always dogs us, what is the true nature of school psychology?

Entree

The point of entree (or attachment or linkage or leverage, etc.) for the
school psychologist operating in support of central office staff may be determined

in part by the administrative structure of the school system. The most obvious points of entree are provided by the offices or departments which have system-wide jurisdiction and impact. Which of these offices are among the more accessible to the psychologist and which provide the more effective bases for his work: special education? curriculum? in-service training of teachers? personnel? As far as effectiveness goes, I see great opportunities for a psychologist operating in any of these offices and in other central offices as well. Neither the logic of school system organization nor the training of school psychologists forces a narrow choice. With regard to accessibility to the school psychologist the central offices are again alike--in their lack of it.

The personal outlook of the individuals concerned is obviously important with regard to gaining access, along with special qualifications of the psychologist in relation to organizational needs. The position I now occupy was created when a department of curriculum development was newly formed in our system, by a department director who wanted a psychologist to help, particularly with planning and development. It was that general, and succeeding psychologists in the position have each filled the job in different ways. We might call this the "easy entree," backed by the authority of the office director.

There exist other modes of attachment, e.g., as consultants to key individuals, or to specific functions or to special projects. The director of appraisal in our system has recently begun using school psychologists to develop means of appraising student academic progress on dimensions not previously used in our schools, e.g., motivation and interest, value change, originality, etc.

Even more critical than questions which have to do with organizational point of entree are those with regard to role perceptions and interpersonal relations.

Tradition does not support the school psychologist as central office consultant in the way it does the school psychologist who works directly with students in conformity to the older, more clinical model. Should the psychologist wait until called upon to perform in accordance with the newer model of services? If not, how should he offer them? And if he does offer them, how best to handle the question, whether it is put to him directly or only implied, of why he thinks of himself and his colleagues as the persons best fitted to run the school system?

Perhaps it is fortunate that, while many are confused enough by the complexities of work relationships and interdependencies to wonder about this question, few will be bold enough to ask it outright. If this silence is at all fortunate, it is because school tradition offers no model which would give substantial help in clarifying the consulting relationship to educators were the question to be raised. To confirm this lack, consider that area which one would expect to provide a closely allied educational model, teacher supervision, and recall the standard texts on this subject. Beyond denouncing the wicked old authoritarian model of supervision, they have little to offer except generalizations about the creation by the supervisor of that splendidly enhancing interpersonal atmosphere which frees the teacher's creative abilities, etc. Mutually rewarding interpersonal relations are important, but they do not, of themselves, constitute a model for supervision; nor for consultation. In the absence of any substantial understanding of the role of support personnel in relation to the role of the practitioner, problems of entree for the school psychologist who follows the newer model will continue to be acute, and deep misunderstandings can easily arise. I stress this, not only as a warning, but also because it may be seen as one of the tasks of school psychologists to help clarify the meaning of professional consultation in educational contexts. It most certainly would be one of our tasks if consultation

is the model we select for our relationships to teachers, supervisors, and adminis-
trators. But should this be the model? To avoid getting too far from the topic
of this paper, I will do little more than pose the question, and note possible
alternate models, such as that of knowledge mediator or translator between the
theoretical and the utilization levels, or, to think in more organizational
terms, that of linkage agent between groups and/roles.
_{between} Before we can explain
ourselves clearly to school personnel, we will have to become clearer ourselves
about what we are doing and hope to do.

Tasks and Job Rationale

Guiding concepts and models of the school psychologist's job are necessary,
but equally so are the day-to-day specifics of just what he does and what he
tries to do. What might the school psychologist have to offer in the central
office setting? Let me at this point list a number of specific tasks which
this school psychologist has worked on or is working on in the central office
setting, pausing to elaborate a little about some of them.

1. Offering a plan for the improvement of the pupil and program appraisal
   function through the creation of a cadre of school-based teacher-appraisal
   specialists who, through teaching only part time in their respective
   schools, would have their remaining time available to serve as appraisal
   support personnel in their schools as well as liaison between the schools
   and the central appraisal office. This plan was offered through a
   committee, and committees of course abound in bureaucratic structures.
   But the central office location can give the school psychologist greater
   knowledge of the hidden agenda, greater choice in participation among
   committees and greater opportunity for planning and for follow-through
   on recommendations.

2. Organizing a program, including techniques and outside personnel, for a
   school faculty and administrative group interested in self-examination
   and problem-solving.

3. Advising and acting as a reference source for supervisors and curriculum
   specialists with regard, particularly, to emotional and cognitive
   development, learning, and assessment problems. This task area is
   the one most closely tied to the older model of school psychology work,
   and thus involves a minimum of new expectations on the part of central
   office staff or new relationships between them and the central office
   psychologist. Once entree has been established, requests for information
   along the lines named come quite naturally, and the school psychologist
   then faces the question whether to establish his work sphere on this
   level alone, or whether, and to what extent, and how to build upon this
   level to further participation in those plans and projects for which the
   information was originally requested.

4. Initiating a vehicle for the use and dissemination of classroom inter-
   action analysis techniques in the schools. Working in a complex
   organizational structure, one's consultative objectives may be achieved
   only by a lengthy sequence of prerequisit steps. The school psychologist
                                        first steps he
   can wait hopefully for these/to occur, or/may consider helping make them
   occur to be part of his job. This particular project was only a part of
   a much grander scheme aimed at placing tools for modulating and
   differentiating instruction in the hands of teachers. Even with regard
   to the single tool of classroom interaction analysis, conceived of as
   the use of any system of categories for describing and modifying teacher

behavior, the planning was complex. Following initial planning, it was thought best, for purposes of later spread of the program into the schools, to give the analysis of teaching program, as it came to be called, an interdepartmental base. Rather than having it sponsored solely by our Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, all of the departments and offices falling within the jurisdiction of the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional and Pupil Services were involved through an inter-departmental committee which had to be sold on the idea, and which in turn then created a smaller steering committee which did the further planning, obtained onsultants, materials and the rest, and solicited participation. The outcome was a cadre of about 15 people from the various central offices represented who met several times during this past school year to learn a few of the existing category systems for analysing classroom interaction and to invent one or two for their own purposes, who worked on the problems of observation, direct or through audio and video tape recording, and on the problems of scoring and interpreting matrices, and who role-played supervision via the use of category analysis and discussed various means of introducing such supervision into the schools. This summer several members of the cadre completed what might be considered stage two of the plan by running workshops for two groups composed mostly of resource teachers in which the cadre members pretty much repeated with these teachers the training program they had themselves just completed. In our school system the term "resource teacher" corresponds somewhat on the elementary level to the "master teacher" notion, and on the secondary level, to the subject matter department chairman. These resource teachers are based

in the schools, and represented our major means of moving the program, once the technical competence to sponsor it had been developed within the central office, into the schools. Stage three will consist of the continual provision of personnel, technical, and material support to these resource teachers and their schools as they request it.

I dwelt a bit on this particular task in order to make a number of points. "central office" means organizational complexity and the involvement of a large number of people. Successful programs of any scope are likely to be long term, both in their planning and in their implementation. The central office school psychologist, insofar as he adheres closely to a consultant role or "knowledge mediator" role, will miss out on much of the action. But, if his role does include planning and development, how is this incorporated into a model of school psychology, and how close does it bring the psychologist to administrative responsibility? The brief description of this particular task should, hopefully, also make it clear that the tasks listed here, stated mainly in terms of objectives, do not achieve fulfillment as the work of one individual. They become group projects in different ways, but they do become group projects. On the analysis of teaching project, I remained as planner and coordinator throughout. On other projects, I have served only initially, or occasionally when called on during the life of the project.

5. Offering a criticism of the school system's use of research in policy formulation. This kind of task can be individual, since it is at best only an initial move, taking the form of a paper or lengthy memorandum, and circulated upward. It is also likely to be short-lived through

being substantially ignored. On the other hand, I regard it as a kind

of seeding, even though the outcome may be uncertain, and an important

critical function--the careful elaboration of a point of view--

for which there seems to be very little time in busy school systems.

6. Creating a model for the development of leadership within our school

system. This took the form of a lengthy paper, based upon a view of

the school system as a center of inquiry and training for its own

personnel. It included the general specifications of such a plan, an

illustrative conceptual model upon which to base job descriptions, and

suggestions as to the relevance of such a model to the development and

assessment of job skills. This project too flowed out of committee work,

in this case a committee of higher level administrators appointed at the

request of the superintendent with the very general charge of improving

leadership training. With regard to this particular committee work and

project, the psychologist was able to increase his influence greatly by

volunteering to draft the committee report, an offer which is usually

accepted quickly by committee members who feel almost too busy to attend

meetings, let alone write lengthy position papers, which is what this

report then turned out to be.

I will generalize a bit about this last project, to bring this list of tasks

or projects to a close. A considerable part of my time has been employed in

writing sometimes what might be called position papers, sometimes critiques, but

more often the drafting of conceptual models. I am presently working on two. One

has to do with the creation of an overall curriculum design or model, based on work

in our department over a period of several years on the development of individual

designs for each subject area. The second model has to do with the organizational
structure and functioning of our own department of supervision and curriculum
development in relation to the flow of decision-making in our school system. This
kind of work assignment stems from the orientation of the department and its
director, and from the nature of my own interests. Does it fall within the realm
of school psychology?

The same question might be asked about each of the tasks mentioned. I can
think of a point of view about school psychology from which all of them would be
fitting tasks for a school psychologist; and another point of view from which
almost none of them would be. I am not arguing for or against their fitness,
but seeking to point out how varied are our ideas about what school psychology
is. Perhaps one of the reasons that our approaches to answering this question
have been inadequate is that they so often begin at the "top," so to speak, i.e.,
with the model or generalization, and never move downward to consideration of the
details of what is being done and might be done by school psychologists in various
placements.

On the other hand, even when we do talk specifically about our activities, the
rigorous exercise of the inductive method is saved for other targets than ourselves.
Consider, in the comments just offered in this paper, the deliberate ambiguity of
the use of the term "consultation," and, in the listing of specific tasks, the
equally deliberate ambiguity with which I have avoided that term by the substitution
of a group of others in which the psychologist "offers...," "organizes...,"
"advises...," "initiates...," "develops...," "supports...," and so forth. Much work
would be required to give specific meaning to these terms. Before one could
set to work on such a list, in the hope of building "upward" toward some model
of school psychology, he would have to know a great deal more about

each activity on the list: exactly what activities were performed by the

psychologist, employing what specialized knowledge and techniques, in relation

to which personnel, and on the basis of what mutual expectations and relation-

ships. We seldom look at our own activities with this degree of care before

beginning to build our models.

Professional Identification

The question of professional identification provides but another view of the

questions about job rationale and entree. If the psychologist who seeks to work on

a continuing basis with central staff offers himself as a neophyte and learner

with regard to the detailed workings of a given central office, and so sees him-

self--which seems a propitious stance for achieving entree--would not this call

for a substantial allotment of his time, perhaps all of it, for the duration of

his assignment to that office? Does the school psychologist then become yet

more specialized, a school psychologist specializing in curriculum, or in school

system data processing, or in the use of instructional materials and library

services, or in school system organization, etc? Would this mean then that he

would not remain a school psychologist in the sense of one who could, in the

course of his career, to move from one central office to another, and from

central office to classroom? Would two such school psychologists, coming from

positions of different sub-specialization within the school system, find them-

selves unable to talk to one another as colleagues?

I am aware that I have raised questions without answering them. I _can_

assert that the position of school psychologist attached to central staff offers,

along with its difficulties, as great an opportunity to work directly on

educational problems as exists anywhere in a school system. In addition, it

offers opportunities just as great for testing our notions about the proper

functions and the nature of school psychology.

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George Usdansky, Psychologist
Montgomery County Public Schools
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