Reconsidering Assumptions: Half-Time Internships in Their Historical Context

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The historical assumptions that have influenced internships in professional psychology need to be reconsidered to articulate what actually happens in current training programs and what the graduate students gain. Beginning with the historical and intellectual context, the authors discuss internship models and pedagogies along with competencies and the cultures of programs. The differing emphases on the production of science are seen as less important than stated in current regulations. Internship politics, prejudices, and economics are critically evaluated from various perspectives. The 5 current types of internships are described. Conclusions, implications, and practical next steps are offered with an emphasis on the development of innovative internship models, including half-time internships, which may better suit the needs of many current graduate students.

Keywords: internships, training models, professional psychology education, clinical training, National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology

The purpose of this article is to encourage the reconsideration of assumptions about internships, particularly half-time internships. It examines the historical political context of the relative lack of development of such internships and of the apparently increasing disparity between supply and demand for internships. This article was strongly influenced by the circumstances in California—the large number of unaccredited internships, many of which are members of the California Psychology Internship Council (CAPIC), which are often relied on by doctor of psychology programs on the West Coast. In fact, without this reliance on half-time internships, many of these programs could not be accredited and could not graduate their students. Nevertheless, the issues are clearly national. This article’s point of view was developed from 6 years on the American Psychological Association Committee on Accreditation (APA CoA) and from active involvement in the development of the doctoral practitioner–scholar model of training (R. L. Peterson, Peterson, Abrams, & Stricker, 1997).

Half-time internships as well as internship models in general have been deeply embedded in psychology politics, particularly the politics of the doctor of psychology versus the doctor of philosophy. Of course, this political debate sits alongside some of the other great debates in psychology of the last 50 years, including the questions of the master’s degree versus the doctorate, prescription privileges, and whether university psychologists or practicing psychologists shall be the dominant voice in American psychology. Relevant definitions of politics as it is understood here (drawn from Google’s online dictionary search tool, www.google.com; April 27, 2006) include “intrigue or maneuvering within a political unit or group in order to gain control or power,” “the often internally conflicting interrelationships among people in a society,” and “social relations involving authority or power.” When the ideas in this article have been presented in earlier versions, some people have responded with encouragement and relief, others with distaste and the belief that this is fundamentally an intellectual issue. However, the history and the situation in California and elsewhere make the politics very real and significant.

Intellectual and Historical Context

So to begin reconsidering assumptions, one of the initial questions is about the intellectual and historical context in clinical psychology education that led to the dominance of the full-time internship model and the associated difficulty in establishing half-time models, even though they have been a part of the accreditation criteria since the very beginning (Belar & Kaslow, 2003). To start at a relatively arbitrary point 40 years ago, what was professional psychology like in the late 1960s? (a) There were no professional schools and no doctors of psychology. The Vail conference (Korman, 1973) had yet to happen. (b) There was no
student debt. Those of us lucky enough to be educated in that time typically had fellowships, assistantships, and tuition remission. (c) There were hardly any women. Seven of 10 in Peterson’s class at Purdue were men—and 7 of 7 of the on-time graduates were men. Now, of course, it is the opposite. (d) This generation was, many of them, young and often unattached. (e) With a few exceptions in big cities, there were no friendly, large, local doctoral programs in which one could count on studying where one lived. To go to graduate school in clinical psychology, one planned on moving. (f) There was no insurance reimbursement for clinical practice. It was only in 1968 in New Jersey that Gene Shapiro and others were the first to be successful in getting psychology included in third-party payment programs. There was only institutional practice (community mental health centers were near their zenith) and lace curtain fee-for-service practice. Managed care and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) were far away. (g) Of course, as Thorp, O’Donohue, and Gregg (2005) pointed out, students in these days had much fewer hours of practicums. (h) There were few services available in rural areas. (i) It was assumed that graduate students in those days would go off for a year to some other place in the country for a “vision quest,” to use Lorraine Mangione’s painfully accurate metaphor (personal communication, March 2005).

Developing out of the same complex history, arguably more practical and less conceptual, are the differences in the relationships that internships have with accredited doctoral programs. The current situation is that accredited doctoral programs need not necessarily require their students to have accredited internships, though APA CoA members frown when they make that decision. This situation seems to have grown up for a number of reasons: (a) The APA CoA felt itself obligated to respect different doctoral training models that sometimes have had conceptual reasons for not requiring or even encouraging more traditional, APA-accredited internships for their students. Used in some professional schools, this “integrative” model involves half-time internships in which students complete their internships at the same time as they finish one or both of the last 2 years of their program. (b) A number of the programs that have espoused this integrative model have been accredited for years, and a change would have been not only perceived as anti-professional school but potentially open to legal challenge. (c) It is clear that the large relative shortage of APA and Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) internships would work a hardship on students—from accredited programs—who are moving through the system, especially in certain regions. (d) There were and are no clear data that indicate that APA-accredited sites, or any particular internships model for that matter, provide better training. As an APA CoA member, Peterson looked at the outcome data from many internships; it is no surprise that none shared negative results. Data are not going to solve this problem.

Just as the educational models for programs developed in arts and sciences schools of major research universities, the framework for internships grew up in major university medical centers and in hospitals run by states and the Veterans Administration (Bellar & Kaslow, 2003, p. 64). Many of the elements of internship accreditation were much more readily met by these large institutions that already had seminar series or grand rounds, specialized professional staff for a variety of supervisory and teaching experiences, and the like. Accreditation procedures were generally familiar to such institutions, and costs and fees were much more readily borne. However, the industrialization of medicine along with the penetration of managed care and the rise of for-profit institutions has threatened this historical level of resources. These pressures have resulted in the elimination of some established sites and added to the difficulty of establishing new ones. The economics of internships are discussed in more detail later.

As they occur in most settings across the United States and Canada, the quality of APA-accredited internships as they currently exist is impressively high. Yet models that have developed in these traditional settings, although often superb, have substantial downsides. The most obvious and frequent focus of concern has been the careful placement of psychologists on seats at the back of the medical–psychiatric bus, though circumstances have much improved in the last 40 years. The location of institutions offering APA internships often reinforced the oversupply of psychologists in urban areas and the undersupply in rural areas, a situation that still exists today. It is certainly reasonable to suggest that training for suburban, semirural, and rural practice with the relative lack of availability of the specialists may not be best done at internships in large institutions who excel in a different type of service. To take an obvious example, the complex assessments that are a usual element of medical center training are seldom done more than a few hours drive from urban centers. Managed care constraints are dominant, and small regional medical centers cannot readily support a broad range of psychology specialists.

Of course, much about internships has improved since the late 1960s. Belar (1992, 1998; Belar et al., 1989; Belar & Perry, 1992) has been a leader in the development of many sophisticated enhancements and solid training experiences that have been included in internships during the last 30 years. These include enhanced attention to rotations, to didactics, and to diversity. The problems professional psychology education now faces are not about what has been developed but rather what has been excluded.

This, in turn, has at least partially been the result of a series of historical forces that has led to a narrow conceptualization of internship models, which are themselves in a state of disarray and confusion. The point here is to present an analysis of the way we in the professional education community talk about internships, with the aim of reconsidering assumptions and stimulating debate. Perhaps we are all stuck, even those who, like Peterson, have been privileged to be in a position of influence. The late novelist Saul Bellow had one of his early alter egos Augie March point out that it is sometimes “astonishing to learn” that people who seem to control most everything “suffer, perhaps worse than others, from their predominant ideas” (Bellow, 1981, p. 592). Peterson’s six-year membership on the APA CoA has provided a special window into the internship accreditation process (but we [the authors] are speaking only for ourselves).

Models and Pedagogies

From the current perspective, there are now four conventional aspects of how internship programs describe their training models. **Producing Psychological Science**

First, as a matter of historical precedent, programs have been obliged to define themselves in terms of the nature and quantity of
the psychological science produced at the setting. The most common variations are clinical scientist, scientist practitioner, practitioner–scholar, and practitioner. Most likely this situation emerged as the result of both the numerical and intellectual dominance of research-based educators on the APA CoA during the period in the early to mid-1990s when the Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology (APA CoA, 2003) were dramatically revised. What seemed to fit academic programs was applied all too readily to internships. In the larger scheme of things, of course, arts and sciences based academics whose own contingencies emphasized research productivity over practice have long dominated education in clinical psychology (see D. R. Peterson, 1991, 2000; D. R. Peterson & Peterson, 1997; Stricker, 1997, 2000). The development of the professional psychology education movement and the doctor of psychology was spurred by a vision in which psychologists would be trained for their ultimate primary professional activity—practice—instead of research. This is not a particularly novel idea. The midwestern cognitive–behavioral tradition so influential in professional psychology directed that the learning processes should be explicitly related to the anticipated outcomes. If you want to train researchers, have them do research. If you want to train practitioners, have them do practice. Of course, no one is against research training. It is valuable. But if we want to help people to learn tennis, we don’t tell them to spend half their time golfing.

From conversations and from the implicit and explicit meanings derived from articles and accreditation materials, there remains a good deal of disagreement and confusion about what the model names actually mean. Like the cognitivists talking to the analysts and vice versa, there is an understandable tendency to expand the relevance of one’s own perspective and shrink the relevance of the other’s. Proponents of the scientist–practitioner model typically mean that the best way to train both scientists and practitioners is to train them equally for both (Belar & Perry, 1992). As programs develop, the question of time is often ignored. But further, this grand goal is seldom obtained. It is notable that only a very few in our profession excel at both; rare examples include Paul Meehl, Arnold Lazarus, and David Barlow. Practitioner–scholar advocates believe that training ought to focus on the most likely outcome, being practitioners, but with a secondary strength in scholarship. At the same time, scholarship was understood to be a broader term than science and inclusive of it when the authors of the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology (NCSPP) models appropriated that language (R. L. Peterson et al., 1997). When the word is used alone, practitioner model programs further decrease the emphasis on science and scholarship in training. Still, the focus of this discussion is about the activity of producing knowledge. Psychological science is always supposed to be integrated with practice in all of these settings. All practitioners should be scholarly and scientific. On the ground, the situation is even more complicated: There are meaningful variations in how much science production a particular student chooses to accomplish in his or her program. Certainly some students from doctor of psychology programs are quite well trained in and interested in research. And, of course, many doctor of philosophy students have preferred clinical career paths.

This usage has certainly led to some moderately interesting questions: Depending on the student, shouldn’t it be reasonable for students coming from one model program to move into another model internship? What about internships staffed by psychologists who believe in the scientist–practitioner model but in their day-to-day activities produce little or no science themselves? Is this like a skier who no longer skis or a writer who doesn’t write? Is one still a skier or a writer? Similarly, what credentials should be required of faculty who teach on the practitioner end of the scientist–practitioner model? Ironically, we imagined that the phrase practitioner–scholar would help to resolve such dilemmas. But these traditional model labels mostly have led to experiences that look like ethnic clashes—what those scientist–practitioner folks come to think of those professional program psychologists on the other side of the river. These phenomena might be best understood based on the anthropological writings on diversity (e.g., Geertz, 2000) or the cultures of practice and of science (D. R. Peterson, 1997) rather than intellectual debates. Like ethnic clashes, the labels all too often have become flags waved as the raiding parties go out. Further, these labels are not likely to be meaningful indicators of the full array of training events that go on in a particular program. It would be very desirable to make this debate more intellectual and less political than it has been.

On the basis of those years on the APA CoA, Peterson concludes the following: All internships are designed to provide capstone experiential clinical training. Only a very few internships are designed to have interns produce science (Rodolfa et al., 2005). Even in those programs, the production of science occupies a relatively small proportion of the interns’ time. Therefore, it makes decreasing sense for internships to articulate their differences in terms of traditional model names that describe how much science is produced in the training and documented by the associated vitae of the faculty. It follows therefore that it is increasingly important for internships to elaborate their training goals and pedagogies. Under the surface of this observation is the suspicion that there is not much difference in what those participating in internships labeled scientist–practitioners, practitioner–scholar, and practitioner actually do at the internships. Recent research by Emil Rodolfa and his group (Rodolfa et al., 2005) supports this contention. They found that training model labels are unrelated to activities at internships.

Pedagogies

Second, programs have developed descriptions about how the process of training is understood at internships. In self-studies and brochures, they have often used these terms in place of models. Some can more appropriately be collected under the rubric of “pedagogies.” They include developmental, experiential, integrative experiential, mentoring, critical thinking, and local clinical scientist (e.g., Stricker & Trierweiler, 1995; Trierweiler & Stricker, 1992; Trierweiler & Stricker, 1998). More appear in Rodolfa et al.’s (2005) article. From reading a number of internship self-studies, one can conclude that for the most part, those pedagogies do not have a particular referenced meaning but yet seem to be face valid. As may be becoming obvious here, these viewpoints are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, one could have a model that was integrative and experiential, attended to the development of the intern through focused mentoring, with a vision of local clinical science that embodied critical thinking. There is a bit of truth here; programs should be this inclusive. Yet at the same time there is a bit of absurdity in the fact that all of these terms
might reasonably be included in a single description of internship pedagogy. Later it is shown how these sorts of descriptions knit together pedagogies into training cultures. By systematically articulating these ideas, it would be most productive to bring the training processes and pedagogical issues into the foreground while leaving to the background the issues surrounding models focusing on science production.

Here is the practical point with regard to half-time internships: As many thoughtful people have pointed out (e.g., Erickson Cornish, Roehlke, & Boggs, 2000), half-time internships can have just as interesting and virtuous pedagogies, learning processes, and training cultures as do full-time ones. There can be many advantages: Students have two years to grow and develop, rotations can be longer, 10-hour days are possible with evening hours, and longer term clients can be taken on (D. Arbeitman, personal communication, October 4, 2004). No training compromises are necessary.

**Competencies**

Third, most programs specify generic competencies consistent with the Guidelines and Principles. Competencies are typically thought of at the level of professional training as developed originally by the NCSPP (e.g., R. L. Peterson et al., 1992) and adapted by the APA CoA and other groups. The usual list is relationship, assessment, intervention, research and evaluation, management and supervision, consultation and education, and more recently, diversity. NCSPP originally thought of the global idea of competencies as a way to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a given area. The idea was to pull together these various aspects in a gestalt. Unfortunately, this integrative, more holistic position has not carried the day. Instead, the field has taken up what seems to be a more detail-oriented approach to competencies that has produced ever longer lists but, in our view, little improvement in education and training.

The idea of competency has also been used in other ways. Another usage of the term links much more closely to anticipated behavioral outcomes (e.g., competence in administering Wechsler tests, ethics, case management). Particular minicompetencies and content are often nested within the generic competencies that are an element of the training at a particular site—for example, in interventions with seriously disordered children, cognitive assessment. The APA CoA has ended up encouraging this approach by asking programs to specify goals particular to that setting and then to evaluate those articulated goals. Yet another use of the term is global and tends to focus on the overall outcome, such as competency for general practice or critical thinking.

Clearly, there has been an enhanced attention to competencies in professional psychology training as manifested in the APPIC Competencies Conference in November 2002 in Scottsdale, Arizona. On the one hand, it can be argued that if competencies are clearly articulated and evaluated, the politics of half-time internships might be set aside. As mentioned earlier, though, no negative results appear in outcome data provided by numerous internships over Peterson’s time on the APA CoA. So it should be possible to reassure people. On the other hand, maybe the hallmark of a political situation is that data are not key.

**Culture of Programs**

Fourth, there is a broader way of thinking that promotes conversation about the creation of training cultures. In a recent article, R. L. Peterson (2004, pp. 420–421) provided descriptions of three clinical training cultures that are represented in clinical training programs—the romantic, the modernist, and the postmodern or integrative cultures:

According to Gergen (1991/2000), the *romantic* view attributes to the self personal depth, passion, soul, creativity, moral fiber, deeply committed relations, friendships, life purposes (p. 6), and a “world of the *deep interior*” (p. 20). In psychology, this is symbolized as “soft”: the clinical, the interpersonal, the intuitive, the supportive, the sharing, the “playful,” the evaluation free, and often the “female.” The fundamentally interpersonal and relational activities of psychotherapy and teaching are part of this tradition (see R. L. Peterson, 1992b). One thinks of certain theories and ideas as embodying this kind of softness: Rogerian theory (Rogers, 1965); object relations, self theory, and terms like holding environment (e.g., Kohut, 1977; Winnicott, 1971); and ideas such as safety for regressive learning.

The *modernist* view traces its lineage to the Enlightenment and emphasizes beliefs, opinions, and intentions (Gergen, 1991/2000, p. 19). People are “rational agents who examine facts and make decisions accordingly” (Gergen, 1991/2000, p. 19). This view emphasizes knowledge and progress; human beings are knowable, and problems can be fixed. In psychology, this is symbolized as the “hard”: the scientific, the statistical, the empirical, the technical, the scholarly, the intrusive, the academic, the debating, the evaluation intense, and the “male.” A fundamental activity in this tradition is the creation and acquisition of knowledge. Typically, the ideas associated with this perspective are drawn from behavioral psychology, cognitive psychology, cybernetic systems psychology, experimental psychology, and the like.

The [*integrative* or *postmodern* view (Gergen, 1999)] is characterized “by a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality” (Gergen, 1991/2000, p. 7). Objects in the world become a “product of perspective” (Gergen, 1991/2000, p. 7). Persons, institutions, and cultures are to be examined in an historical context and are “in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction” marked by “reflexive questioning” and “irony” (Gergen, 1991/2000, p. 7). In psychology, postmodern views emphasize the importance of context; meaning as derived from context and the problem of context stripping; constructionism (e.g., Gergen, 1985, 1999; Mahoney, 1991; R. L. Peterson, 1992a); reflexivity (e.g., Singer, Peterson, & Magidson, 1992); multiculturalism and diversity (e.g., Stricker et al., 1990); the importance of local phenomena and pragmatic constructionism (D. R. Peterson & Peterson, 1997); and narrative (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Sarbin, 1986).

The reason the models of science production do not show up clearly in Rodolfa et al.’s (2005) study is that training programs at both the doctoral and internship levels are best understood as cultures (see also D. R. Peterson & Peterson, 1997, on local cultures). Perhaps it is a little grandiose, but the ideal practitioner–scholar is ultimately the product of a multifaceted and complex postmodern or integrative training culture that includes, both respectfully and critically, science and practice, based on both romanticism and modernism as well as other perspectives, and excludes the most narrow and doctrinaire positions. The key creative question is how to create and facilitate this kind of training culture.
Politics and Prejudices

Before going further, the politics and prejudices need to be named. Half-time internships are associated with professional programs, which in turn have been associated in certain regions with women, minorities, and other nontraditional students, potentially underqualified students, who are either not able or not free to do things “right.” Consider an element of J. G. Farrell’s (1978) novel about the British in Singapore in the 1930s leading up to the Japanese invasion. The book was part of his unflattering trilogy on the British abroad, including the Booker prize winning The Siege of Krishnapur (Farrell, 2004). The wealthy British plantation owners with great sincerity speak of the benefits they have brought to the native population of Indians, Malays, and Chinese. Oblivious to cultural dislocation and destruction, they are so much better off than they were before, the owners say. When there are labor problems, they think perhaps the workforce is not quite up to it or they do not work hard enough or they are not sufficiently grateful or they are organized by Communists. People of color are seen as arrogant and foolish when they imagine that they might aspire to run these great systems. It is hard not to wonder whether those of us long associated with the status quo of internships are not a bit like those British aristocrats, congratulating ourselves, quite reasonably, on how much work we have done and how far we have come. And yet we put aside the concerns of certain categories of students, and we do not see their repeated requests for half-time internships as asking us to attend to their possible cultural dislocation and financial hardship.

There is also a strong regional element to the use of unaccredited internships by accredited programs. Though there are exemplars around the country, internships for students in the professional schools in California, such as the California Schools of Professional Psychology (now Alliant University, where students now choose which sorts of internships they will apply to), often grew up outside the APA internship system. Old-timers familiar with the beginning of the professional psychology movement in the 1970s and 1980s often report that students from professional programs in those days were not welcomed at APA sites, and like now, there were not enough of them. As was true with wave after wave of ethnic immigration to the United States, when a group of increasing size and importance finds that it is not welcome in the institutions of those in power, it sets about creating its own. One impressive element of these unconventional models has been the emphasis on work with underserved populations and people of color. As Gilbert Newman (personal communication, January 2003) and others have pointed out, these sites carried an early recognition of the importance of diversity and the importance of providing psychological internship and practicum training in the service of social justice. For these and other reasons, many accredited (and unaccredited) professional psychology doctoral programs have simply not developed a long-term commitment to traditional APA models or even found them attractive—except when the APA CoA hints or indicates that doctoral program accreditation would be made more difficult or students would be jeopardized. The APA CoA has been complicit in the development of this set of circumstances in at least two ways: (a) As already implied, it talked out of all sides of its many mouths by accrediting programs that did not subscribe to a model that endorsed APA-accredited internships while at the same time seeming to imply that they ought to. (b) With the clarity of hindsight, the APA CoA should have helped to facilitate a much more comprehensive and open discussion of internship structures and models, which might have helped to resolve this dilemma by enhancing the number and variety of internship programs that might fit within the accreditation tent.

Economics

The more the economics of internships are examined, the more complex and entangled they seem. As the poet says, “money doesn’t talk, it swears” (Dylan, 1965). The economics are examined from the perspectives of APPIC and the APA CoA, the interns, the underserved populations, doctoral programs, and state laws.

APPIC and APA CoA Perspective

On the face of it, who can argue against the necessity of pay for interns? Being compensated within mental health systems—especially at this penultimate level of professional psychology training—carries a strong symbolic importance. Why should we allow more debt to sit on the shoulders of the already difficult lives of students and, soon, new professionals—a debt that will act as a deterrent from seeing minorities, rural, and other underserved populations? Why should we encourage managed care and others who would make mental health cutbacks at interns’ expense? Worst of all, and APPIC and the APA CoA are right in this, accrediting internship without stipends would be likely to result in a disastrous cross-country domino effect in which stipends would disappear. Then no one would be paid.

Interns’ Perspective

Turning to the interns’ perspective, here are the facts: According to APPIC (S. Zlotow, personal communication, April 22, 2005), the mean salary across all full-time internships in 2005 was $19,400; for accredited internships it was $20,200. For all half-time internships, the comparable figure was $7,600; for accredited internships it was $8,800. Remembering these are average salaries, the situation is dreadful.

If the intern is a single person, healthy, young, footloose, and fancy-free, maybe she (mostly) can do it. Maybe it’s an adventure. But what if she has a partner or a family or parents to care for? What if her partner has a good job that supports her and provides the health insurance? What if she has kids in school? Does she move her family to the full-time internship across the country—how does she pay for that? Does she maintain two households, one to keep the home fires burning—another spare like a nun’s cell to make ends meet? What if insurance is not included? Insurance can cost $12,000 or $15,000 a year for a family. And maybe, because she is a fourth year student already, she has or can get a decent half-time job. In the current rubric, some combination of this stuff is called being “geographically restricted,” and we think of caretaking an invalid mother. The phrase has a negative tone, as if it were somehow bad to wish to stay local and have relationships, connections, and obligations. Maybe it should be called “geographically selective.”
It is time to own up to the larger problem. In some tuition-driven programs, students accumulate $60,000, $80,000, or even upward of $120,000 of debt. Even in programs with assistantships and partial tuition remission, students can easily need to borrow $40,000 or $50,000. Yes, of course students accumulate huge debts for medical school or law school, but that doesn’t help our people. With grim black humor, the painful joke is that graduates come out with monthly payments equivalent to that needed for a small house. Even in rural New Hampshire now, one cannot get much of a home for this sort of money, putting aside urban areas and California. So how do we ask such a person to follow their values and serve the poor?

Underserved Perspective

It may be that the restrictions imposed by demands for salary and full-time service inherently limit the sorts of internship programs that have social responsiveness as their central value. To get paid, typically one must be working in a setting where money is coming in. Underserved diverse clientele, by their very nature, do not have that money. Debt levels are already forcing graduates away from providing services that do not pay well. Our profession needs to be very careful that relatively rich and powerful organizations, here accredited programs and the accreditation system, do not crowd out small internship programs that carry some of the values of the Peace Corps.

Of course, no one would argue seriously that payment is necessary for an appropriate internship learning experience. Most practicum experiences are unpaid, and everyone believes that appropriate learning takes place. But the economics of internships are more complicated.

Doctoral Programs’ Perspective

With better support, the financial pressures are lower on students from most doctor of philosophy programs, and they have been less interested in half-time internships. But the perspective of students sketched above does have an impact on some doctor of philosophy students, and it would be helpful if those doctoral programs would join in this effort.

A related issue is whether students should pay tuition while they are on internships as they do at some professional programs, a practice that the APA CoA has been against. On the face of it, paying tuition seems even worse than not being paid. Nevertheless, some programs have argued that tuition is basically for a whole program divided over a certain number of years and that to collapse payments into 3–4 more costly years rather than 4–5 is not necessarily in the students’ interests.

Doctoral programs as a group need to take a much stronger interest in the development of sufficient numbers of high-quality internships. Certainly more captive and semicaptive, integrated, and consortia programs are needed.

Perspective of State Laws

Arguably, the real problem surrounding internship salaries is statutory. In most states, there are laws that govern the sorts of settings in which the work of unlicensed professionals (here, interns) can be billed to insurance companies. Typically, those settings are limited to hospitals and community mental health centers. Internship training, of course, has found a comfortable home in hospitals, community mental health centers, and particularly in large teaching institutions. The high costs of supervision can be offset by the provision of billable services. There are some superb internships in these sorts of settings. Unfortunately, it follows that it becomes very hard to develop paid internships outside of these institutions. Of course, insurers and health maintenance organizations could choose to pay interns if they wished, perhaps even at a lower wage. But at least in the Northeast, the prevailing view of those extraordinarily profitable companies was to limit the total number of reimbursable providers and never pay money for what they could get for free. It may be that legislative action at the state level is most important—indeed, critical.

Varieties of Structures

Internships are not just practicums on steroids. On the APA CoA, the main concern is whether a new institution actually has a program and is not just supervised work experience with an occasional professional development meeting. Here are where the questions of models, pedagogy, and culture return. Practicums, it should be remembered, are a part of a program, the doctoral programs themselves. Some internships have been designed in the same way. At least five kinds of internship structures are known to exist (cf. Stedman, Hatch, Schoenfeld, & Keilen, 2005).

Known Kinds of Internship Structures

Traditional. These are the great majority of internships and are in settings such as hospitals, Veterans Administration medical centers, university counseling centers, and community mental health centers.

Consortia. In such settings, a number of training sites, often ones that could not support an internship on their own, get together in a single administrative structure to provide a shared array of training experiences, intern socialization, and rotations. Until recently, consortia were developed and organized by the consortium group itself. One new advancement is the exclusively affiliated consortium (Cornish, Smith-Acuna, & Nadkarni, 2005), in which doctoral programs develop and administer the internships, as well as organize the didactics, manage accreditation, provide space for meetings, and cocreate the coherent training culture so that it is more than the assembly of pieces. Such programs can be open, captive (only certain programs’ students can come), or semicaptive (Cornish et al., 2005).

Integrated. In these settings, the internship experience is integrated with the doctoral program. Though this structure is seldom used, most observers seem to agree that, in principle at least, the possibilities for integration of classwork, program collegiality, and research can be seen as quite attractive. In many ways, these programs could be seen as consortia that are administered by the doctoral program; they are typically captive. The doctoral program provides the “integration.”

Organized like practicum. Under the supervision of some programs, internships have been set up very much like practicums, in which the school sets the standards, monitors the sites, and so on. Some programs do this occasionally while an internship develops or a student is in a particular circumstance. These need to develop into a captive consortia or an integrated program.
Independent, other, innovative, and different. It is known that there are other experiences that licensing boards across the country are counting as internships that take varying forms. Sometimes this has taken the form of individual students negotiating with individual sites without doctoral programs assuming the responsibility and/or without program membership in APPIC or CAPIC. Though this happens, it is widely agreed that internships are not to be confused with on-the-job training. Some have brought up the question of how to understand separated internships in which training takes place among two or more sites, perhaps a first-year half-time internship at one, and a second-year internship at another. How are such experiences sequential and cumulative, to use the jargon of the APA CoA?

Monitoring and Maintaining Standards

With the espoused goal of maintaining standards, traditional consortia and integrated internships are all monitored in the conventional fashion. They can be APA accredited, and through membership in APPIC or CAPIC, the programs can agree to uphold well-established criteria for what an internship is. APPIC and CAPIC are careful to say that they are not accrediting bodies. Integrated internships are accredited separately from the connected doctoral programs, though the site visits can be coordinated. When schools have adopted the structure of organizing the internships like a practicum, the APA CoA has taken the stand that the internships are the doctoral program’s responsibility—that is, they are integrated internships whether the program likes it or not.

In the era of managed care and brief therapy, some have suggested that the APA CoA should put forward an abbreviated set of standards short of accreditation that programs do not use accredited internships or half-time internships would be obligated to have their sites meet. Less supervision is sometimes proposed. It is not convincing. Although reasonable in some ways and consistent with the approaches taken by the National Register and licensing boards, one anonymous commentator stingingly characterized such an approach as “accreditation-lite.” Moreover, by defining what an internship is, perhaps APPIC and CAPIC already serve this purpose. It would be a step forward for the APA CoA to formally adopt these definitions.

Data Needed

There certainly is a variety of questions about which better data are needed. What is the number of interns in each structural category, with particular attention to non-APA, non-APPIC, and non-CAPIC sites? The APA CoA’s online annual reports should be of help. It would be good to have comparative outcome data. Can it be shown that there are advantages in one area in this approach to internship training. As with practicum, doctoral programs should be held responsible for the integrated internships they create for their students. There are many possibilities for innovative internships, and the future is bright.

References


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