Professional Networks and Hiring Patterns at Top-Rated Family Science Programs

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This paper is an attempt to illuminate several ideas about professional networks in family science programs. Data were gathered from faculty in a number of family science departments as part of a survey of prominent programs. It was discovered that there were few chairpersons or mentors who could be identified as having leadership for a large proportion of professionals in the field. Instead, faculty members seemed to have been trained by a wide variety of individuals. Based on the connective hiring patterns of prominent family science programs, suggestions are made about which schools seem to produce sought after graduates. Several implications are suggested for students considering different doctoral programs in family science.

Mullins (1973) explored the emergence of the discipline of Sociology by examining its' professional network development. The current project was conceived with the intention of examining similar emergent patterns and groupings. A second major goal was to create a type of "genealogy" of the intellectual heritage of faculty members who teach at universities having "prominent" family science programs. It was hypothesized that there would be a few easily identified mentors who had been the leading chairpersons for a high percentage of the faculty members now in the field. By identifying those mentors and categorizing theoretical orientations, it was hoped that groupings would appear, showing the emergence of theoretical frameworks in the field of family science.

A third goal of this project was to identify other types of information that could be helpful in understanding the strengths, connections, and patterns of hiring at top programs. It was reasoned that information about types of degrees, year of final degree, date of hiring, and length of time between degree acquisition and hiring at a top program would illuminate part of the basic structure of family programs. As an extension of the information on hiring, faculty job movement was examined. Analysis also was

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performed to show how many faculty members at top programs had been students at other top programs. It was hypothesized that top programs would recruit from other top programs and that one could give a rough prestige rating to a school based on how many graduates it had placed on the faculties of other top programs. "Better" programs would have students who were highly regarded and pursued. Also, using the same analysis, one could identify programs with faculty from top schools. By identifying mentors and professional connections, one could begin to better understand the emergence of theoretical and professional networks in family science.

The study of academic and scientific groups in general has its roots in Kuhn's (1962) classic treatise on the nature of scientific revolutions. He postulated that changes in scientific thinking represent shifts in discipline paradigms. Price (1963) presented an analysis of such shifts and group relations stating that academic social structure could be grouped by "invisible colleges". The purpose of this project was to identify invisible colleges in the field of family science and study the academic heritage of group members, movements into top positions and issues of hiring within top programs.

Method

The data for this study were collected as part of a larger project initiated by George Roleder. His initial interest was to collect information about family science programs and how they operated, who worked in the top programs, and the theoretical program emphases. The sample for the overall project was an accidental one. That is, data were obtained from faculty members who were available and were employed at programs rated as outstanding by the California unit of the National Council on Family Relations. The data were collected during a funded sabbatical of George Roleder in the spring and summer of 1984. Each of the schools with strong family programs was visited and the available staff were personally interviewed. Some faculty not available for the personal interviews did respond to a follow-up questionnaire, in addition, an effort was made to collect professional resumes of each of the respondents. It is important to note that the findings in this report must be viewed in cautious light because of the incomplete nature of the data. At best we hope to show trends and patterns and make suggestions. More extensive data collection is necessary before hard analysis can be made.

Results and Analysis

The first part of this analysis was designed to identify mentors in the field of family science whose students had taken university positions in prominent family science departments. It was hypothesized that if these mentors could be identified, the theoretical orientation of the mentors could also be identified; with that, theoretical groups could be charted and examined. To that end, a frequency score was computed of those interviewed for this study and the mentors they cited. The results showed that for those who graduated with degrees in psychology, no mentors were mentioned twice.
there were as many mentors as there were interviewees. For those who 
graduated from some type of family program, the frequency picture was nearly 
the same. Only two individuals were mentioned more than twice: James 
Walters and Ruth Dales. The list of chairpersons and mentors revealed a 
wide diversity of degrees, training and program experience; there was no 
systematic grouping. One might have expected that notable family scholars 
such as Beatrice Paolucci, Reuben Hill, Murray Straus, Ira Reiss, Harold 
Christensen, Carl Whitaker, or Ivan Nye would have been mentioned more 
frequently. One explanation is that many of the highly visible scholars teach 
and advise in sociology departments; Reuben Hill for many years directed his 
students and personal research from such a setting. Therefore, his students 
appear as faculty in similar departments rather than in home economics, 
family ecology, human development, or family science programs.

This finding does not support the idea that theory groups or networks 
can readily be identified by groupings about certain individuals. While there 
are individuals who have created and maintained strong images in research 
and in family science organizations, they do not seem to have clusters of 
students who are now faculty members in prominent family science programs.

Next, we examined whether faculty members of top programs were 
products of certain time periods, certain types of programs or certain 
universities. Table 1 addresses the question: During which time clusters did 
faculty currently teaching at top programs graduate? Frequencies, means and 
standard deviations of the year of reported graduation were tabulated. Based 
upon the standard deviations, five time periods were generated representing 
approximately equal groupings. The mean year of graduation was 1970. The 
school with the most recently graduated faculty was Iowa State University 
with an average graduating year of 1971. The University of Georgia had the 
least recently graduated faculty (x = 1968). Most of the other university 
faculty averages were within a year of the overall mean.

Next, majors reported by the respondents were grouped into six 
categories: psychology (including developmental, counseling, clinical, and 
general psychology); family science (including emphases in family studies, 
family ecology, and family relations); sociology; human development (including 
early childhood education, child development, and child psychology); marriage 
and family therapy (usually designated as some type of counseling degree with 
an emphasis on marriage and/or families); and home economics.

As can be seen in Table 1, psychology graduates made up a high 
percentage of top school faculty: more than one-fourth had degrees in 
psychology. This trend decreased through the first four time periods. Many 
of those reporting degrees in psychology were hired to positions in child 
development areas within a mixed department. It was difficult to tell exactly 
how many of those who reported degrees in psychology were teaching or 
doing research in family science.

Another interesting finding is that sociology seems to be losing ground. 
For faculty employed at more prestigious schools who graduated between 1975
Table 1. Degree Major by Year Grouping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>Psychology</th>
<th>Family Science</th>
<th>Sociology</th>
<th>Human Development</th>
<th>Marriage &amp; Family Therapy</th>
<th>Home Economics</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1942-1963</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1974</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1979</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 +</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note that the sample size is smaller here than Table 2. These data are less complete because of missing data.
Family science programs contributed to these faculties fairly steadily over the five time periods. The decrease in sociology graduates who are now members of family science faculties has been countered by increased faculty from marriage and family counseling, home economics, and human development. The diversity of the backgrounds lends support to the idea that the field of family science is very eclectic and dynamic.

Table 2 shows information about degree acquisition and hiring. Most of the resume material contained information about when individuals had been hired. Additionally, Table 2 show that average number of years a person had been working in the field after he/she graduated and after he/she was hired at a top program. The first analysis, average hiring date, shows some diversity in hiring date averages. Those who now work at Cornell were hired, on the average, around 1969. By contrast, those who now work at the University of Nebraska, Penn State, and Virginia P.I. were hired around 1976. The overall hiring year average was about 1973. In other words, the average faculty member teaching at a top school had been there for about 11 years.

Next, the time span between the year of graduation and hiring date was examined. The overall average of those hired at top schools reported a hiring date by the fourth or fifth year after they received their degree. Those with positions at Michigan State had only been out half of that time (2.1 years) while those at the University of North Carolina (Greensboro) had been in the field 6.6 years before hiring. Several schools seem to hire assistant professors with little experience, other schools hire more experienced faculty. Those experienced faculty, however, may be more expensive to recruit; programs may have difficulty offering tenure or advanced rank at the time of hiring. Additionally, there are few positions open each year, resulting in fewer movements between programs. One could hypothesize that hiring year averages reflect the economic slowdown of the past few years. A person with job security is unlikely to risk new challenges when there are few alternatives available. If individuals were still being hired into the top schools at about four to five years after graduation, the average year of hiring would not be 1973. Very few of the interviewed group (12) were hired since 1980. That is startling considering the increases in nationwide output of family science graduates between 1979 and 1984. In one recent job search at a relatively small Midwestern school having a fledgling master's degree program, the search committee reported 62 applications. This type of job response is widespread in academia; job scarcity creates a situation of low mobility.

Another computation recorded in Table 2 is the percentage of faculty at top schools who came from top schools. For example, 72 percent of the faculty surveyed at Florida State University reported degrees from other top
Table 2. Descriptive Data About Top-Rated Family Science Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Number of Faculty Surveyed</th>
<th>Mean Year of Graduation of Faculty</th>
<th>Mean Number of Years Between Degree &amp; Hire</th>
<th>Number and Percent of Faculty &quot;Inbred&quot;</th>
<th>Number and Percent of Faculty Graduating From Top Schools</th>
<th>Number and Percent of Faculty Contributed to Top Schools</th>
<th>Mean Year of Hiring Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BYU</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1970.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1973.6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of Connecticut</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1969.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1970.8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1969.12.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1969.12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1971.6.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1973.6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of Georgia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1968.7.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1973.3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1974.4.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1974.6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1972.7.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1973.8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of Minnesota</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1967.8.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1974.5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of NC-Greensboro</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1969.6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1976.7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of Nebraska</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1973.9.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1976.5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn State</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1970.9.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1973.8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon State</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1971.5.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1976.6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1969.11.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1970.1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1972.6.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1975.5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Tech.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1972.7.1</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1976.4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia P.I.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1969.5.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1976.4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
<td><strong>X=1970</strong></td>
<td><strong>X=4.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>26  X=.18</strong></td>
<td><strong>58  X=.42</strong></td>
<td>58**</td>
<td><strong>X=1973</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Top five programs contributing faculty to top programs.
family science schools. Penn State, on the other hand, has 11 percent graduating from other top family programs. This percentage may be useful when identifying highly rated programs. While having faculty from top-rated programs does not insure high program quality, it does increase the probabilities of having better trained instructors and better program development. None of these findings can in and of themselves damn a program, but they can be viewed as indicators to be considered when examining program quality. Notice that Florida State (10 percent) and Penn State (9 percent) have contributed the highest number of faculty to the prominent schools in family science. Combining the number of faculty who have graduated from Florida State, Penn State, North Carolina, Minnesota, and Cornell (32 percent), with those who have graduated from the school at which they are now working (19 percent) accounts for 51 percent of all faculty. Even though a high percentage of these individuals are from psychology and human development backgrounds, a high percentage of faculty are coming from a very few schools.

As an extension of those percentages reported above, the diagram in Figure 1 was prepared. This diagram is a pictorial representation showing from which universities top-rated programs fill open positions. Figure 1 also shows an "inbred" score, the percentage of the faculty of a particular university who graduated from the same school at which they now work.

The diagram shows that some schools contribute significantly to the faculties of other top-rated programs. One way to understand faculty movement is to group the schools into four categories: those schools having no (or few) faculty from other top programs and have no (or few) former students currently teaching in top programs, those schools having faculty from top programs but do not currently have former students as faculty in other top programs; those schools that have no (or few) faculty from top programs but have former students who are now faculty at top programs; and the most dynamic category, those schools having faculty from top programs who also have former students in faculty positions at top programs. This analysis demonstrates the nature of faculty groupings and networks around certain highly visible programs. Those groupings may say something about how well-respected a program is or was.

If a school has graduates who are consistently chosen for positions in top programs, then one of the following must be true: either that program has trained individuals who have either developed in significant professional ways, the school has a powerful reputation, the school's faculty have significant influence with fellow faculty in other schools, or the school was the "only show in town" during a certain time period.

Based on our four categories, a quick glance at Figure 2 shows that Florida State falls into two categories: both sending faculty to top programs and receiving faculty members from top schools. By that standard it would seem to be a very dynamic program. An example of a school that gives to top programs but does not take is Penn State. Very few of its faculty who were in the sample came from top programs. On the other hand, schools
such as BYU, Texas Tech, Virginia P.I., and Michigan State are excellent examples of programs taking faculty from top schools but placing few in return. In the case of Texas Tech, the faculty were recruited from a variety of sources (including a high percentage from Florida), but does not place its graduates in top programs. This may be a function of time; Texas Tech has a newer program than a school such as Florida State. The University of Syracuse is an example of a school that neither receives nor contributes faculty to top program faculties. Also notice that all the interviewed faculty at Syracuse were “inbred”. while the purpose of this is not to criticize program policies, "inbreeding" would seem to lower a school’s "dynamic" or "network" standing. This would be particularly true if policy has limited the variety and richness of a program. That is not to say that Syracuse’s program is lacking in richness or variety; it is to say that those tasks may be more difficult to achieve in that type of situation.

Implications

There are several ways this information can be used. It may be used by students who want to rate the dynamic nature of the various top-rated schools. Part of a student’s decision to attend a particular school is a function of how he/she perceives that school. That perception may have to
do with the prestige of the school, its ability to place students, and a host of other issues unrelated to the present study (such as finances and assistantships available). One important finding of this study is that one does not have to be a student apprentice with a certain researcher or research team to find job success in one of the top schools. Clearly, there are not identifiable individuals in the field of family science who dominate the scene in terms of student placement in top-rated positions.

A more important consideration for the student may be the type of school, connections that faculty have with other schools, and possibly the most important issue, finding a chairperson who will be supportive of the student's research interests. In addition, a student may want to focus on current interests of faculty members rather than attending to issues of theories and theory groups. In this case, it may be to the student's best interest to consider the breadth of a faculty.

There are also implications for faculty who examine these findings. Notice that adding the frequency of the top five contributing schools to the "inbred" frequency accounted for one-half of the current faculty in top programs. If one aspires to work at a top school, one should note these statistics. Not graduating from a top school may make the task of obtaining professional visibility, connections, and excellence in professional activities more difficult. If one is coming from a top school, he/she probably will have had many opportunities to work with individuals who are at the forefront of the profession and doing projects in the mainstream of current research. Coming from a top school is no guarantee that one will have gained the necessary skills to produce, but it does increase the probability of that happening. The other half of the faculty not from top family science schools were from a mixture of schools, and many of these schools are well-known (e.g., Stanford, Columbia, Ohio State, and Harvard). Even though some of these schools do not have front-line family science programs, a graduate is not automatically eliminated from consideration of a top job.

The economic times have had devastating effects on many aspects of university life. One of the most devastating effects on academia is that well-trained, bright graduate students are produced and then are not allowed to express their potential because they can find no job, or because the job they get seems inadequate compared to their expectations. These data give just a hint at the hiring problems family science graduates face. It is clear that there has been little recent movement into top-rated universities, a discouraging dilemma for those wishing to seek new challenges or even to get a position at all. The data become important to the many applying every year for the few available jobs. It would be easy for those wanting to move to different challenges to become despondent and even wonder about his/her ability when job rejection is the order of the day. These data also provide the basis for a warning to those who recruit and train individuals in family science. It is an important responsibility for faculty advisers to make sure that students know the difficulties of upward movement in this field. It is important that faculties find ways to readjust programs so that graduates are marketable.

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Another finding in this study is that there are certain regions of the country apparently having little contributory input into the family science scene. This is startling when one considers that these regions are among the most populated and have some of the finest educational resources in the nation. For example, California and New York (except for Cornell) have had minimal impact on family science programs according to the data gathered here. None of the surveyed faculty reported graduating from a California school (except one, who was a psychology major from Stanford). This is particularly odd considering that Californians have typically been at the forefront of many family issues. California was one of the first to initiate licensing for marriage and family counseling; and California has also been a very active state in NCFR and AAMFT. The obvious question is: Why are there no prominent family science programs in California when states with much lower population, fewer students and less well developed university systems have generated very productive programs? One possible answer, that also is rather frightening, has to do with school reorganizations within the California system that has tended to dissipate family scholars and programs. The result being that there is not a critical mass on which to develop strong programs and future scholars.

Finally, the importance of this study will increase when more complete data can be gathered. It will be crucial to redo this study in about three to five years and watch the top schools as they begin to hire the next wave of faculty in the 1990's. Which schools will emerge as top schools, and which will be notable in their ability to attract the type of students who will eventually be placed in top-rated programs?

Another limitation has to do with an historical bias because it is an early analysis of a relatively new field. For example, family science sometimes gets confused with family sociology, and when we begin to identify early mentors they are not synonymous. Further, there have been relatively few women in mentoring positions, and few early family therapists in basic academic programs where they could be identified as significant mentors producing new scholars with the credentials and interests needed for such networking in academia. New generations and developments in the field may bring new groups of significant mentors and new patterns of networking in a more established field of family science.

REFERENCES

