



Interview with Shane Jimerson, PhD

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ICD: How did you choose to attend graduate school at the University of Minnesota?

Jimerson: As a first-generation college student, I was extremely fortunate to have the support and guidance of faculty and graduate students.

As an undergraduate student at the University of California – Berkeley (Psychology major and an Education minor), I had the good fortune of taking numerous courses focused on many different facets of child development. I was also fortunate to work on a project that was examining the emotional and cognitive development of infants exposed to cocaine in utero with graduate students under the direction of Professor John Watson, who was one of my undergraduate mentors. Another faculty member who provided me with invaluable counsel, guidance, and support regarding graduate school was Professor Joe Campos. As a first-generation college student, I had no idea that there was even such a thing as “graduate school,” but with the guidance of Professor Campos, Professor Watson, and several graduate student mentors at Cal, I developed an understanding of what graduate school was, and the processes of identifying and applying to programs that would be a great fit with my interests. I was particularly keen to advance my knowledge and understanding of social and emotional development.

Through the process of exploring faculty in graduate programs across the country, I identified many whom I thought may be a really good fit with my interests in social and emotional development, including stellar scholars Professor Byron Egeland and Professor Alan Sroufe at the Institute of Child Development (ICD) at the University of Minnesota. Upon interviewing, I was impressed by the faculty, the graduate students, and the amazing intellect and energy at the ICD. Each of the programs I visited across the country had outstanding faculty, amazing students, and impressive facilities, thus, I arranged meetings with Professor Campos and with Professor Watson to obtain their perspectives on the assorted programs. I recall Professor Campos stating that “the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota is a world-renowned location for the study of child psychology and development.” Furthermore, Professor Watson highlighted the tremendous depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise among the dozens of faculty, post-doctoral scholars, and research scientists at the Institute of Child Development, declaring “It’s simply the best.” Considering the clear endorsements of Professors Campos and Watson for the Institute of Child Development, coupled with my incredibly positive experiences with Professors Egeland and Sroufe and graduate students while visiting, my path forward was clear.

ICD: Tell us about your dual studies in developmental psychology and school psychology.

Jimerson: Throughout my coursework and research experiences at the ICD, I was continually seeking to use this knowledge of child psychology to help support the development of children – an emphasis that was emerging as applied developmental science. At the University of Minnesota, I was fortunate to enroll in several courses taught by school psychology and special education faculty and recognized that there were tremendous opportunities to use the knowledge and research skills that I was developing within my ICD experiences, to obtain further experiences and knowledge of the intersect between children, families, schools, and education which was emphasized in the school psychology program. Moreover, given that -- most children, most days are at school -- it was clear to me that schools are an essential context to provide supports to facilitate the development of all children. Pursuing doctoral studies in both of these programs was precisely what I needed to inform and inspire my career pursuit of bringing science to practice to benefit children and families.

As those in the respective fields recognize, the University of Minnesota is world renowned in both developmental psychology and also in school psychology. Thus, I was incredibly privileged in having such outstanding learning opportunities, including coursework, research assistantships, teaching assistantships, and internship with the amazing faculty in each of these programs. Those whom I worked with directly and inspired me tremendously, included Professors Byron Egeland, Alan Sroufe, James Ysseldyke, Sandra Christenson, Andy Collins, Bill Hartup, Ann Masten, Scott McConnel, Mary McEvoy, and Geoffrey Maruyama, along with many others. The learning opportunities at the University of Minnesota were absolutely inspiring, as I was learning about each area of child development and school psychology from leading scholars and experts in their respective areas. My experiences with the MN Longitudinal Study of Parent and Children (aka, the Parent Child Project, led by Professors Egeland, Sroufe, and Collins) were transformational in my learning about so many aspects of child development. I learned so much about child development, with an emphasis on the dynamic, reciprocal and transactional influences over time and the confluence of many factors, including the importance of systems level, families, schools, and communities, and, recognizing the vast cultural and contextual factors influencing individual differences across development. I was so immersed in the learning at the University of Minnesota that I kept a sleeping bag and nutrition bars in my office at the ICD, and coupled with working out and showering at the Rec Center I would go days focused on readings, classes, and research activities, without even leaving campus. This was a particularly valuable strategy in the winter, when weather conditions included snow, wind, and extreme sub-zero temperatures – and I felt so incredibly fortunate to be there!

While at the ICD, I also had the good fortune of working with Dr. Eric Durbrow who was a postdoctoral researcher, and established an important longitudinal project on the island of St. Vincent. Through these collaborations I learned a tremendous amount about anthropology, observational methodologies, and the tremendous importance of interdisciplinary international research, as well as the importance of cultural and contextual considerations. These experiences inspired me to engage in further international collaborations throughout my career with, participation in international research conferences, learning from and contributing to efforts



to advance science and practice to support children in more than 30 countries around the world, and ultimately serving as President of the International School Psychology Association.

Completing the developmental psychology and school psychology doctoral programs proved to be instrumental in my obtaining my faculty position at the University of California – Santa Barbara. In 1996-1997, UC Santa Barbara was seeking a professor for a joint appointment with the Child Development program and the School Psychology program – and when I interviewed Dr. Michael Gerber highlighted that there were very few individuals who might contribute such expertise across both programs, and given that he knew many of the faculty at the University of Minnesota, he was confident that I was one of the few who may well be capable. I then joined the faculty at UC Santa Barbara in 1997, admitting, advising, mentoring, and teaching graduate students in both Child Development and School Psychology. Over the years, the School Psychology program became part of a new department, and the school psychology program grew from new PhD program with 3 faculty when I arrived (and was Dr. Michael Furlong and myself for a few years) -- to a ranking of #2 in a national analysis of school psychology faculty productivity by 2006, having graduated more than 35 school psychology doctoral students who have taken faculty positions to prepare the next generation of school psychologists, more than 100 practicing school psychologists serving children and families throughout the country, and 7 school psychology faculty as of 2021.

Overall, the tremendous learning and opportunities that I experienced at the ICD and in the educational psychology department were instrumental in preparing me for my career pursuits. Thus, I will always be grateful for the enriching and inspiring time in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota.

ICD: What have been some of the highlights of your career regarding your work on school safety and violence prevention, bullying prevention, and the development of multi-tiered systems of support.

Jimerson: Using the research, practice, and scholarly knowledge I developed at the University of Minnesota, I have focused throughout my career on bringing science to practice to promote the development of children. In efforts to prevent and address the deleterious impacts of bullying, victimization, and crisis events, through multi-tiered systems of support, I have applied my scholarly energies in preparing more than 400 publications, including more than 30 books across these areas. As a scholar and leader in the field, the books that I have been immersed in as an editor or an author, aim to advance science, practice, and policy, including: *The Handbook of School Violence and School Safety (1st and 2nd Editions)*; *The Handbook of School Bullying; Best Practices in School Crisis Prevention and Intervention (1st and 2nd Editions)*; *School crisis prevention and intervention: The PREPaRE model (1st and 2nd Editions)*; *The Handbook of Response to Intervention: The Science and Practice of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support*, and *School Safety and Violence Prevention: Science, Practice, and Policy*; *Supporting Bereaved Students at School*; and *The Mourning Child Grief Support Group Curriculum*; and *Identifying, Assessing, and Treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at School*.

Professionally, I have been actively engaged in providing supports to children and families who have been impacted by tragic events, including for example victimization, bullying, suicide, natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and shootings impacting schools and communities. Through collaborating and consulting with education, mental health, and other emergency response professionals, I have contributed to supports for children and families across the United States and in more than 30 countries around the world. My professional activities in these areas have been incredibly intense, consuming, and impactful.

Perhaps the greatest impact of my scholarship, leadership and professional activities related to advancing safety and violence prevention, bullying prevention, and the development of multi-tiered systems of support has been the *PREPaRE School Crisis Prevention, Preparedness, and Intervention Comprehensive School Safety Planning* curriculum, which is distributed through the National Association of School Psychologists. PREPaRE trains school-employed mental health professionals and other educators how to best fill the roles and responsibilities generated by their membership on school crisis response teams. Over the past two decades, the PREPaRE curriculum has been used to prepare tens of thousands of professionals who have contributed supports to children, families, and communities across the country and around the world.

ICD: Do you have any key messages on how we can support students through the COVID-19 pandemic era? What role does research play in finding the best solutions for supporting students?

Jimerson: Indeed, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated numerous existing challenges and created many additional challenges associated with deleterious developmental trajectories (from children, adolescents, young adults, across adulthood). Having dedicated my career to bringing science to practice to support children and families, I am absolutely confident that the extant research and scholarship provides valuable information to the contemporary exigent challenges that children and families are facing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that continues. Indeed, it is imperative that we use contemporary science to inform our efforts to support and promote the social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, academic, and mental health development of all children. Effective knowledge mobilization (a term encompassing a wide range of activities relating to the production and use of research results) requires scholars, practitioners, and policymakers who are committed to communicating and collaborating to understand the relevant findings on a given topic of focus, and then use that knowledge to inform practice.

There are instances wherein, randomized controlled trials have yielded important empirical findings regarding those practices that may benefit students. Additionally, there are many instances, wherein, the confluence of research findings, including systematic reviews, meta-analyses, in addition to robust longitudinal studies have contributed tremendously to informing strategies to support students. Notably, it is imperative to consider cultural and contextual factors that may (may not) have been included in the research, and those pertinent to the children and families that we are attempting to support. Interpreting the confluence of



empirical findings, through a transactional ecological developmental lens, informs our efforts to support children at multiple levels with multiple strategies – recognizing that there is no “one size fits all” solution to provide the supports that are needed to promote the development of all children, across diverse contexts, cultures, countries, continents, etc.

ICD: Do you have any advice for current ICD students?

Jimerson: My general advice is to:

1. Follow your bliss and pursue your passions. There are so many areas of specialization and expertise among colleagues at ICD, thus, there are so many areas where each of us may contribute.
2. Make the most of your 86,400 seconds each day – you can't make them longer, so make them better.
3. Be the Change. Our individual and collective efforts are essential to facilitate positive change that contributes to advancing the well-being and healthy adaptation of all children in all communities around the world.
4. Enjoy Being. Make the most of your daily experiences at the ICD, embracing the incredible good fortune of having such talented peers and faculty. It is likely that many of the folks you meet at the ICD will continue to inform and inspire you throughout your life. For some who are so fortunate, you may even find your life long best friends and in some extraordinary instances, your life partner.
5. Ultimately, identify and secure the “best job in the world” (for you). The “best job in the world” is the activity that you would do every day, even if nobody paid you to do it – but you do it so incredibly well, that everyone wants to pay you to do it for them.
6. Whatever your daily adventures include, strive to be your own self, at your very best, each day.

ICD: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Jimerson: First, related to my ongoing emphasis on advancing and using science focusing on promoting the social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and mental health development of children, I have continued to engage in numerous scholarly projects. Recent efforts on the research front, include securing over \$8 million in federal funding as Principal Investigator;

Jimerson, PI; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, **Project TEAMS: Collaboration to Train Special Education and School Psychology Scholars to Advance Equity in the Study of Mental Health among Students** (2021-2025), \$2.7+ million

Jimerson PI; U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program, **UCSB School Psychology JEDI Project: Preparing Professionals to Promote Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Mental Health Services at School** (2023-2028) \$5.3+ million.

Project TEAMS and the JEDI Project further advance ongoing efforts of the UCSB school psychology program to advance justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in the field of school psychology and to support culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse children. Each of these projects provide funding for school psychology graduate students focused on scholarship and services to support culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students. Each of these projects also further expand our ongoing efforts to provide empirically supported support services to children and families throughout Santa Barbara County. These projects build upon the success of our ongoing collaborations with schools, districts, and other community organizations in SB County across the past two decades. Throughout each of these projects, we will share the methods and results of our efforts as exemplars for preparing the next generation of school psychology faculty and professionals.

Second, in efforts to further disseminate research and communicate with others, I have begun using Twitter [@DrJ_ucsb](#) during the past few years. In my role as the Editor in Chief of the *School Psychology Review* journal (published by NASP and Taylor and Francis), we have been using social media to further promote bringing science to practice. From these experiences and the relevant literature, I have co-authored a book to provide academic colleagues with information, resources, and guidance to use social media to share research and relevant information with practitioners, parents, students, scholars, and many others around the world. Social media serves as a powerful communication tool, yet while many academics are aware of the benefits of social media, many are unsure of what to post, and how to do it in a way that is authentic, engaging, and above all, comfortable. For those interested in engaging in social media in an effective and productive way, you can check out this recent resource.

Allen, K. A., Jimerson, S. R., Quintana, D., & McKinley, L. (2023). *An Academic's Guide to Social Media: Learn, Engage and Belong*. Routledge.

Finally, I want to give a shout out to acknowledge the support and powerful influence of my peers at ICD, including Arturo Sesma, Maya Sen, Katie Thomas, Emma Adam, Sunita Duggal, Dan Hyson, Kate Chippendale, John Ogawa, Adrian Teo, as well as Dr. Elizabeth Carlson, the tremendous support of the ICD staff, and last, but not least, my fabulous life partner and best friend – Kathryn O'Brien (ICD 1999 alumni).