

Edith Kaplan: Educational Background and Her Impact on Neuropsychology

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Edith Kaplan (nee Freund) was born in Brooklyn, New York, and earned her bachelor's degree near her home, at Brooklyn College. Edith bragged that she almost did not graduate because she lacked two credits of physical education, which she eventually completed through swimming. After completing her undergraduate degree, Edith went to Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, for graduate studies. Her Ph.D. dissertation focused on the development of word meanings and apraxia in children. As a graduate student, Edith worked with Heinz Werner (who had moved from Brooklyn College to Clark a year earlier) and then later collaborated with Norman Geschwind and Harold Goodglass at the Boston Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center.

Throughout her 50-year career in psychology, Edith made invaluable contributions to the promotion of clinical neuropsychology as a specialty area in psychology. Her impact on the field is widespread and encompasses many different domains. She made significant contributions to the knowledge of brain-behavior relationships through her scholarly research in such areas as aphasia, apraxia, developmental issues in clinical neuropsychology, and normal and abnormal aging. She has served as a role model and mentor for many women psychologists. And, of course, through her clinical practice, Edith made immeasurable contributions to the lives of many patients and their families.

Edith was a professor in the departments of neurology and psychiatry and in the behavioral neuroscience Ph.D. program at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM). In addition, she was professor of psychology at Suffolk University, affiliate professor of psychology

at Clark University, and a member of the Psychology Department at the Baycrest Hospital in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Through her teaching, Edith played a vital leadership role in the education and training of neuropsychologists worldwide. From 1976 to 1987, Edith was the director of Clinical Neuropsychological Services at the Boston VA Medical Center, where she was responsible for the development of an internationally renowned predoctoral and postdoctoral clinical neuropsychological internship-training program. In those 11 years, she trained 52 interns, many of whom are now recognized neuropsychologists who have made significant contributions to the field and are involved in their own training programs. Later, at Suffolk University, BUSM, and Tewksbury Hospital, she continued with her dedication to student education, research, and clinical training. A partial list of her former interns and postdoctoral fellows was published in the manual for the *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised, as a Neuropsychological Instrument* (WAIS-R-NI; Kaplan, Fein, Morris, & Delis, 1991). Through her volunteer efforts in national organizations, including the National Head Injury Foundation and the World Health Organization, she helped to promote psychology and neuropsychology in the public interest.

Edith made revolutionary contributions to clinical neuropsychological assessment. Bringing her intensely observant clinical eye and her research rigor to the assessment of neurological patients, she made observations about patient behavior and test strategies that evolved into a philosophical school of neuropsychological assessment, called by most people the Boston Process Approach. Before introduction of the process-oriented approach, clinical neuropsychological assessment followed a fixed-battery global-achievement approach and stressed quantitative interpretation of test results. The process-oriented approach offered a revolutionary advance in test interpretation, stressing the qualitative aspects of patients' performance profiles. The introduction and promotion of this alternative approach to clinical

neuropsychological practice have served to expand knowledge of brain functions, as well as to generate much scholarly discussion about diagnostic issues in clinical neuropsychology.

Edith developed and coauthored numerous tests such as The Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination, The Boston Naming Test, The Boston Stimulus Board, The California Verbal Learning Test (Adult and Children's Versions), Microcog: A Computerized Assessment of Cognitive Status, the WAIS-R-NI, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III, as a Process Instrument (WISC-III-PI), The Kaplan-Baycrest Neurocognitive Assessment, and The Delis-Kaplan Executive Function System.

Edith was one of the founders of the American Academy of Aphasia and the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology and was among the first to be awarded the Diplomate in Clinical Neuropsychology. She was president of the International Neuropsychological Society, president of the Clinical Neuropsychology Division of the American Psychological Association (Division 40), and president of the Boston Neuropsychological Foundation, which she cofounded in 1983. The Boston Neuropsychological Foundation was established to provide continuing education opportunities in clinical neuropsychology and uses proceeds to fund predoctoral and postdoctoral internships.

In addition to her role as a leader of neuropsychology in general, Edith was also among the first and most prominent women to enter the field of neuropsychology, and in this capacity she served as a role model for future generations of women neuropsychologists. Reflecting this, the National Academy of Neuropsychology's Women in Leadership Committee annually presents the Edith Kaplan Scholarship Award to defray the costs of attendance at committee events at the National Academy of Neuropsychology conference for several students.

Edith received many awards, including the following:

1993 National Academy of Neuropsychology Distinguished Clinical Neuropsychologist Award

1994 Edith Kaplan Neuroscience Scholarship Fund established by MeritCare Medical Center, Fargo, North Dakota

1996 New England Psychological Association first annual Distinguished Contributions Award

1998 Massachusetts Psychological Association Career Contribution Award.

1999 Massachusetts Neuropsychological Society Career Contribution Award

2008 International Neuropsychological Society Distinguished Career Award

Origins of the Boston University Ph.D. Program in Behavioral Neuroscience

Edith and I (M.O.-B.) first met in 1970. This was to be my first experience with hospital rounds. It was at the Boston VA Hospital (now called the VA Boston Healthcare System, Jamaica Plain Campus). On a Thursday morning at 9 AM, a large group had gathered in a conference room for the Neurology Service's aphasia grand rounds to discuss a patient with a recently acquired language disorder. The group met every Thursday morning at 9 AM for grand rounds such as these. Seats for the audience were arranged in rows facing a small stage, and the room was full. On the stage, there were two chairs, side-by-side, and tilted inward toward each other by about 45 degrees, to accommodate an interviewer and an interviewee. The interviewer that Thursday was Dr. Harold Goodglass.

Because hospital rounds were totally new to me, and I felt awkward and a bit like a voyeur, I sat at the back of the long narrow room. Quite a few men in white coats sat in the front row facing the stage. Among them were Drs. Frank Benson, Norman Geschwind, Nelson Butters, Martin Albert, and Davis Howes. There may have been one or two women as well in the

front row, but only one woman stood out. It was Edith. She clearly played an important role in the rounds that were about to begin on the morning that I met her. I soon discovered that Edith routinely evaluated the patients who were to be presented at the aphasia rounds, and her comments were extraordinarily insightful. Moreover, she was animated and energized, and she seemed like she was having a really great time.

Only recently had I begun my new job at the VA as a research associate in the Psychology Research Service. In my prior positions as a graduate student and then a postdoctoral fellow in physiological psychology, I had been working with rhesus monkeys. Until I became a researcher at the VA, I had encountered no patients with neurological disorders, nor had I ever conducted research with human participants. I was at the VA to learn about the devastating consequences of damage to the human brain. I had intended to spend 2 years at the VA. Some 40 years later, I am still working there.

Because there were few women in the Psychology Research Service in the early 1970s, Edith and I gravitated to each other and became friends as well as colleagues. We worked together to organize a few neuropsychology courses, which became extremely popular over the years. Edith's Neuropsychological Assessment course was especially popular, and people filled the classroom beyond capacity, with students standing, or even sitting on windowsills, or jammed inside the doorway to listen to her wise words and insights. Her classes usually began at 4 or 5 PM, and often they lasted well beyond the 3 or 4 hours for which they were scheduled. If someone nodded off in class, Edith time and again would throw a coffee candy or a chocolate-covered espresso bean at them to bring them back to complete attention, before she continued lecturing at full force. She could speak nonstop, and she seemed to love sharing her enthusiasm for her topics, which were filled with anecdotes, humor, and personal experiences.

Our courses at the VA were so popular that Edith, Harold, Marty, Edgar Zurif, and I decided to formalize a Ph.D. program in behavioral neuroscience, which, in 1985, was established as the first interdisciplinary Ph.D. program at BUSM. Of course, Edith was a primary strength of our teaching lineup. The new program was the first interdisciplinary degree-granting program at BUSM. Since its inception, the program has turned out an entire generation of productive and respected behavioral neuroscientists.

Even after Edith's retirement from the VA, she remained a major force in our program. When she became a professor of psychology at Suffolk University, she encouraged Suffolk students to enroll in our courses. To this day, we have Suffolk students participating in our classes at the VA.

For more about Edith Kaplan, we recommend the excellent chapter that Edith published in 2002, "Serendipity in Science: A Personal Account." It details many additional facts of her life and accomplishments.

References

- Kaplan, E. (2002). Serendipity in science: A personal account. In Stringer, A.Y., Cooley, E., & Christensen, A. (Eds.), *Pathways to prominence in neuropsychology: Reflections of 20th century pioneers* (pp. 157–170). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
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