

## Retrospective and Prospective Views of Psychology at Creighton University (1955-1978)

As you know, Creighton has started celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a variety of events including the course in Sociobiology, the Count Creighton lookalike contest, and so forth. I hope the University's celebration doesn't overshadow the fact that next year, we psychologists will be celebrating the centennial date for the founding of the first experimental psychology lab by Wundt in Germany. Although psychology at Creighton does not extend back quite that far, the department's history has something in common with the discipline. As Ebbinghaus said, "Psychology has a long past but only a short history." (Abriss der Psychologie, 1908.)

But before I describe the long past and short history of the department, I would like to mention the objectives I had in mind for this presentation. I plan to provide a perspective about the department in which most of you are members, whether faculty or student. Thus, the presentation is divided into three components, including the department's antecedents, emergence, and future. Within each era, I will describe characteristics of faculty, curriculum, and students. Moreover, I hope to communicate something of the flavor of historical research, including its problems and limitations of data and interpretations, but at the same time, its contributions and advantages for appreciating and learning from one's past mistakes and successes.

### Antecedents and Establishment

The "long past" of the department is reflected in the teaching of Experimental Psychology in the Philosophy Department by Fr. Frederick Meyer, S. J. from academic year 1920-21 to 1925-26. The course description read "a lab course dealing with phenomena of sense-perception and attention". It may be of interest to note that one of the first labs in the U.S. was initiated by Wolfe at Nebraska only 30 years before in 1890. I have been unable to discover very much about that first course in Experimental Psychology except that at least an indirect link existed between it and the establishment of the psychology department some three decades later.

The link was a person by the name of Leo Kennedy. Kennedy was a student in that first course. Following receipt of bachelor and masters degrees from Creighton and a Ph.D. from Nebraska, Kennedy taught in the Education Department at Creighton from 1931 to 1938. After an absence of ten years, divided between St. Louis and Marquette Universities, Kennedy returned to Creighton and the Education Department as its chairman in 1947.

Indications of the formal beginning of the Psychology Department are found in the 1955-57 Creighton University Bulletin in which Kennedy was identified as Professor of Education and Psychology and Director (i.e., Chairman) of the Departments. In addition, the 1955-56 Schedule of Classes listed courses under the heading Psychology for the first time.

What conditions were associated with the founding of the department? Kennedy reported that the impetus for the department stemmed from his perception of the need and his desire for more Catholic psychologists. As yet, additional variables or conditions associated with the establishment of the department have not been discovered.

## Emergence and Development

### Years of Survival

Information about faculty and students during the department's first decade is somewhat sketchy when compared to the second decade, because of my lack of firsthand experience with that era and because of the absence of either departmental or university records.

We do know that during those ten years the number of full-time faculty never exceeded two; and as mentioned before, one of them, Kennedy, served simultaneous terms as chairman of Education and Psychology. Table 1 also indicates that, in general, the level of training for the faculty during that period was the doctorate.

Early efforts at building a department must have been frustrated by many variables, not the least of which was faculty turn over. During the first decade, except for Kennedy, only one person stayed as long as 3 years and 3 others stayed only 2 years each. Survival in the form of continuity was not something that could be taken for granted.

Psychology's early dependence for survival on Education was also reflected in the number of its courses that were cross listed with Education. The cross listing, in general, reflected courses that were either taught by faculty in Education or taken primarily by their students. Table 2 depicts the number of courses that were cross listed with Education or listed only under the Psychology Department. During the first decade the median percent of courses listed only as psychology was 31%. Psychology's survival was dependent on the Department of Education.

What were the curricular requirements for the first psychology majors? The biennial bulletins were very helpful in answering that question. Table 3 presents the elective and required semester hours for a psychology major. During the first decade, the percent of the major which was specified by the Department is depicted in the right column. The median per cent of the major which was required was 38% and varied from 33-63%. The specific courses which were required are presented in Table 4. At the outset, Introductory, Statistics, and Rational Psychology were required. By the end of the decade, Introductory, Statistics, Experimental, Measurement and Evaluation, and History were required.

Who were psychology majors and students during the first decade? Unfortunately, I have not as yet been able to answer that question, either because of the failure to maintain records or because I have been unable to find them if they still exist.

### Autonomy and Identity

The mid 1960's were to usher in a new era in the development of the department. Inspection of Table 1 reveals that there were 3 faculty, but only 1 of them possessed the doctorate. However, it should be known that in 1965, Psychology's chairman was now chairman of only Psychology and the other two non-doctorate faculty were Murphy, who arrived in 1964 and Ware in 1965. By 1967, a fourth faculty member by the name of Gardner was added. By the end of the 1960's, the department was twice the size it had been during the first decade and with Murphy's receipt of a doctorate, 75% of the faculty possessed the highest degree in the discipline.

What happened to the curriculum during this era? The heavy reliance on the Education Department reflected in the cross listing of courses decreased. Table 2 reflects the increased autonomy with 57% being the median percent of courses listed as psychology only, as contrasted with 31% during the first decade.

Changes were also occurring in the requirements for a psychology major. Table 3 indicates that during the latter half of the 60's the percent of the major specified by the department increased to a median value of 67%. Part of the identity of the department consisted of exercising greater control over what courses constituted an undergraduate psychology major. Table 4 indicates which courses constituted the required percent of the major. By the end of the decade, majors were required to take Introductory, Statistics, Experimental, Advanced Experimental, Measurement and Evaluation, and either Learning Theory or History and Systems of

Psychology. A further dimension to the identity of the department was a reflection of the general experimental psychology background of the faculty, particularly among the new members.

If asked to identify what I believe to be one of the most important events during the latter half of the 1960's which contributed to the establishment of the identity of the department, I would include a decision that was made regarding the establishment of a graduate program in psychology. Minutes of departmental meetings reveal that an investigation of a graduate program began in the fall, 1967. In the spring of that year, half of the faculty moved into Rigge Science Building in the immediate proximity of the lab, RS 115. A small comparative lab was provided for Dr. Gardner. Animal care facilities, shared with the Biology Department, were subsequently acquired. The department became increasingly identified with the experimental/educational tradition of the discipline. Late in the spring 1968, a special departmental meeting was called for the purpose of providing the administration with more detailed information about the proposed masters program in psychology. In the fall of the same year, the Academic Vice President escalated the progress by asking for even greater detail. In my mind, with the vice president's memo, the possibility for a graduate program was a reality for the first time. For the next two months a comprehensive evaluation took place. During that time, a question that had been taken for granted was seriously examined and a change took place. No longer did we ask, "How can we establish a graduate program?" but rather we began to ask, "Should we establish one?"

Numerous considerations influenced the answer to that question including: 1) the size of the department – very small; 2) its diversity – limited; 3) specialization of the degree – general experimental; 4) competition in the immediate area – UNO, UNL, Iowa State; 5) cost relative to quality of product – high/probably less than competition; 6) prospects for employment or further education – limited; 7) consequences to the undergraduate program – devastating; 8) our preference for the level of teaching – undergraduates. Although it took us two months to reach a formal conclusion, you have probably anticipated what we decided – no graduate program at this time.

It is my belief that the consequences of that decision added another important dimension to the identity of this department, namely that it is an under-graduate department that tries to serve the needs and interests of undergraduates which can be dramatically different from those of graduate students.

Who were the students of psychology during the latter half of the 1960's? The data that has been located can tell us some things about psychology majors and others who took psychology courses. Table 5 depicts the number of senior and junior psychology majors and students in the College of Arts and Sciences from 1965-70. The results reveal that the total number of majors increased 93% during this interval versus a 60% increase among a comparable group of students in the College of Arts and Sciences. A further evaluation of the growth in the number of majors can be accomplished by a comparison with that of other departments. Table 6 depicts the ordinal position of the Psychology Department among other departments in the college. The results indicate that its rank did not change from 1965 to 1970. Apparently, the growth in the number of psychology majors did not exceed that experienced by at least 7 other departments.

Table 7 provides a somewhat different student measure, that is, the total number of students taking psychology classes and the total number of students in the college. The results reveal a 73% increase in the number of students taking psychology classes, although there was only 16% increase in the number of students in the college. The results indicate that college growth accounted for relatively little of the increase in students in our classes. Students were interested in the topic for several reasons; and when college curricular changes allowed students more flexibility in choosing courses, many of them selected psychology. Thus, with Louis E. Gardner another dimension of identity was added. The Psychology Department acknowledged the more general student interest and accepted the challenge not only of its majors but also of others who might wish to take its courses.

### Expansion (1970-75)

If it can be said that the Department's autonomy and identity were at least moderately established by the end of the 1960's, then the first half of the 1970's brought dramatic expansion. Table 1 reveals that the full-time faculty continued to grow in an orderly fashion with a net gain of two. However, some significant changes occurred. Dr. Murphy had assumed the chairman's position in 1969. I left for doctoral studies in 1970. Kennedy retired and Dr. Dahl joined the faculty in 1971. By 1972, the first full time clinical psychologist was hired, Dr. Gardner assumed the position of chairman, and I returned from graduate school. Although there was a dip in the percent of faculty holding the doctorate, all faculty who didn't possess the degree had completed most requirements except for the dissertation.

Changes in curriculum were to be somewhat dramatic during this period. The earlier dependency on the Education Department was further reduced. Table 2 indicates that the extent of independence in the listing of courses increased to 66%.

A more significant change in curriculum was reflected in the requirements for a major. Table 3 reveals that during the first half of the 1970's, the percent of courses that were specifically required for the major dropped to the lowest in its history. The curriculum change was the product of the recommendations of a departmental curriculum committee consisting of Ware, Dahl, Trumm, and a student member. The changes were unanimously supported by the departmental faculty. The major requirements were derived from several guidelines or objectives, four of which are printed in the Creighton Bulletin. In addition, we agree that: 1) faculty have responsibility for curriculum design; 2) students should have increased freedom and responsibility for designing a curriculum which is consistent with their needs, interests, and aspirations; 3) students should be given the opportunity to be advised by faculty in designing their program; 4) there are some fundamentals of psychology to which all majors should be exposed (as indicated in Table 4 Introductory, Statistics and Experimental); and 5) that the major should have some minimum degree of diversity, with as much latitude for student selection as possible (Categories II, III, IV). In general, identification of the requirements for a psychology major reflected an extension of the department's identity previously referred to, which included, in part, an emphasis on a distinctive undergraduate education.

The apparent attractiveness of the major not only continued but increased significantly. Using 1965 as the baseline year, Table 5 indicates that the increase in the number of majors by the end of 1974-75 was 238%. By contrast, enrollments in the college for a comparable group of juniors and seniors was only 10%. While the end of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam contributed to reduce enrollments in the College, the Psychology Department showed substantial increases. Moreover, Table 6 reveals that the Department had increased to the second largest, with only the Biology Department having more majors. (Incidentally, the distribution of male and female students was 70/30% respectively among majors and 55/45% among a comparable group for the college, Tables 8 and 9.)

However, it was not only the number of majors that increased but also the number of students taking psychology classes. Table 7 reveals that by 1974-75 the total number of students enrolled in psychology courses had increased 218% whereas the total number of full-time students in the college had decreased by 5%. Thus, the department experienced consistent and dramatic growth while the College had not. As an aside, your attention is called to the extreme right column that

presents the number of full-time equivalent faculty during the same period. Whereas the increase in majors was 238% and the number of students enrolled in psychology classes was 218%, the fulltime equivalent faculty increased only 76%. Although the departmental faculty expanded during that period, the student expansion outstripped it by a wide margin. One of the somewhat painful lessons we learned about growth was that an increase in faculty lags behind an increase in students.

### Future Prospects

For the last part of the paper I would ask you to imagine yourself as living in the context of the academic year 1975-76, the beginning of the third decade of the department. In that year, the future held in store both pressures and opportunities.

1. While the professional training of the faculty was quite respectable, by the mid 1970's a fact of life was that doctorate training had become a criterion for long-term employment in psychology at Creighton.
2. As the department continued to grow, the attitude existed that we should enhance the diversity of offerings particularly when related to the needs and aspirations of our students. All agreed on the value of having a fulltime clinical psychologist in an undergraduate educational setting.
3. Another area consisted of the need of psychology majors to prepare for postgraduate years, whether that entailed immediate entrance into the job market or admission to graduate or professional school. However, the remedy for that need was not conceptualized as a placement service but rather as a process of career development, which includes facilitation of self-examination and understanding, skill development, evaluation and decision-making.
4. In addition, several variables contributed to the identification of physiological psychology as a high priority offering by the department.
5. Finally, by 1975, faculty were becoming acutely aware of a change in emphasis at Creighton on the relative importance of research. Criteria for promotion and tenure included more explicit references to scholarly activity. Although not "a publish or perish environment," evidence of scholarly activity was expected.

How well were the expectations from two years ago addressed? Presently, all full-time faculty in the department have doctorates, which last occurred in 1970-71 and prior to that 1963-64. With the hiring of Drs. Matthews, Beischel, and Lupo during the last year in the areas of clinical, career development, and physiological have been covered, as well as several others that those

faculty are prepared to teach. Finally, the amount of research activity has drastically increased, as evidenced by the submission of at least half a dozen papers to national, regional, and state psychology conventions and by the submission of articles to scholarly journals. In addition, several research projects are in progress. Several students are working directly or indirectly with faculty on research projects. Such activity can be particularly advantageous to those interested in pursuing graduate study in psychology. Marge Smith has been working on a project with Drs. Dahl and Gardner. Two students, Jim Herzog and Mike Kagan, have had a research paper accepted for presentation at the Southwestern Psychological Association Convention in April. Lynne Gurciulo is co-author of a paper submitted to the American Psychological Association Convention in August; Dave England, student-parent value consensus. We hope and expect that some of our students will continue to make scholarly contributions. Opportunities for presentations have been steadily increasing. For example, the Colloquium Series was designed in part as a vehicle for students to gain experience in presenting their scholarly efforts. Dr. Matthews and I are already planning next year's Series and would welcome and encourage student participation. In addition, the Nebraska Psychological Association sponsors an annual undergraduate research competition. An announcement describing that program is posted on the bulletin board near the office.

From today's perspective (1977-78), what does the future hold in store? Several issues occur to me. What about a graduate program in psychology? How about a survey of psychology alumni? What are the advantages of expanding the career development course to students other than psychology majors? What specialty should the next faculty member possess? How would students react to a program similar to externship that consisted of placements in business, industrial, or governmental settings? Rather than addressing those questions myself, I would prefer to use the remaining time getting your reactions to them as well as other past or future issues pertaining to the Department.

Table 1

## Full-Time Psychology Faculty and Doctoral Status (1955-56 – 1974-75)

Years	Number of Full-time Faculty*	Number of Doctorates	Percent Doctorates
74-75	6	4	66
73-74	6	4	66
72-73	5	2	40
71-72	5	3	60
70-71	4	4	100
69-70	4	3	75
68-69	4	3	75
67-68	4	2	50
66-67	3	1	33
65-66	3	1	33
64-65	2	1	50
63-64	2	2	100
62-63	2	2	100
61-62	2	2	100
60-61	2	2	100
59-60	2	1	50
58-59	2	1	50
57-58	2	2	100
56-57	2	2	100
55-56	2	2	100

\*Chairman was always counted as full time faculty

Table 2\*

## Listing of Psychology Courses (1955-57 – 1973-75)

Year	Number Cross listed**	Number Listed Psychology Only	Per Cent Psychology Only
73-75	9	18	66
71-73	9	18	66
69-71	8	12	60
67-69	9	12	57
65-67	9	8	47
63-65	15	8	34
61-63	12	7	36
59-61	13	6	31
57-59	20	4	16
55-57	17	3	15

\*Data based on Creighton biennial bulletins

\*\*No more than two courses in any biennial issue were cross listed with other than the Education Department

Table 3\*

## Elective and Required Semester Hours for Psychology Majors (1955-57 – 1973-75)

Year	Hours Elective	Hours Required	Per Cent Required
73-75	21	9	30
71-73	12	15	56
69-71	9	18	67
67-69	9	18	67
65-67	9	15	63
63-65	9	15	63
61-63	15	9	38
59-61	15	12	45
57-59	18	9	33
55-57	15	9	38

\*Data based on Creighton biennial bulletins

Table 4\*

## Courses Required for a Psychology Major (1955-57 – 1973-75)

Year	Course
73-75	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Experimental Psychology
71-73	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Experimental Psychology
	Measurement and Evaluation
69-71	History and Systems of Psychology
	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Experimental Psychology
	Advanced Experimental Psychology
67-69	Measurement and Evaluation
	History and Systems of Psychology
	Or
	Learning Theory
	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Experimental Psychology
65-67	Advanced Experimental Psychology
	Measurement and Evaluation
	History of Modern Psychology
	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
63-65	Experimental Psychology
	Measurement and Evaluation
	History of Modern Psychology
	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics

	Experimental Psychology
	Measurement and Evaluation
	History of Modern Psychology
61-63	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Experimental Psychology
59-61	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Experimental Psychology
	Rational Psychology
57-59	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Rational Psychology
55-57	Introductory Psychology
	Psychological Statistics
	Rational Psychology

\*Data based on Creighton biennial bulletins

Table 5\*

## Senior/Junior Psychology Majors and Students Enrolled

In the College of Arts and Sciences (1965-66 – 1974-75)

Year	Psychology Majors	College Students
74-75	98	651
73-74	91	625
72-73	79	621
71-72	79	745
70-71	60	816
69-70	56	954
68-69	46	1002
67-68	34	797
66-67	31	704
65-66	29	596

\*Data was based on the average of two semesters, except for 1865-66 and 1966-67 that were based on data from one semester. Data supplied by Registrar's Office.

Table 6\*

## Rank of the Psychology Department

Based on the Number of Majors (1965-66 – 1974-75)

Year	
74-75.	2**
73-74	2
72-73	2
71-72	3***
70-71	4.5***
69-70	8
68-69	8
67-68	8.5
66-67	8
65-66	8

\*Data based on information provided by the Registrar's Office

\*\*Biology = 1

\*\*\*Biology = 1; Nursing = 2

\*\*\*\*Biology = 1 Nursing = 2; English/History = 3

Table 7\*

Total Student Enrollments in Psychology Classes,  
Total Number of Full Time Students in the College of Arts and Sciences,  
And Psychology Faculty (1965-66 – 1974-75)

Year	Psychology Students	College Students	F.T.E. Faculty****
74-75	2113	1635	6.5
73-74	1833	1629	6
72-73	1866	1640***	5.5
71-72	1779	1868	5.5
70-71	1500	1905	4.2
69-70	1151	2002	4.3
68-69	859	2110	4.2
67-68	770	2079	4.2
66-67	613**	1949	4.2
65-66	665**	1722	3.7

\*Data based on average for two semesters, supplied by the Registrar's Office

\*\*Departmental Files – class counts

\*\*\*College of Nursing established

\*\*\*\*Data based on Creighton University Schedule of Classes

Table 8\*

## Psychology Majors Subdivided by Class and Sex (1965-66 – 1974-75)

Year	Seniors		Juniors		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
74-75	35	11	37	15	98
73-74	23	9	42	17	91
72-73	20	15	30	14	79
71-72	24	4	32	19	79
70-71	15	9	28	8	60
69-70	18	6	2	11	56
68-69	11	3	21	11	46
67-68	9	6	15	4	34
66-67	12	3	9	7	31
65-66	10	3	9	7	29
Total	177	69	244	113	603

\*Data was based on the average for two semesters, except for 1965-66 and 1966-67 which were based on data from one semester. Data supplied by Registrar's Office.

Table 9\*

## Students Enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (1965-66 – 1974-75)

Year	Seniors		Juniors		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
74-75	160	97	235	159	651
73-74	124	104	247	150	625
72-73**	136	124	210	151	621
71-72	179	136	214	216	745
70-71	189	178	251	198	816
69-70	238	208	273	235	954
68-69	216	198	298	290	1002
67-68	151	171	259	216	797
66-67	148	126	222	208	704
65-66	147	112	195	142	596
Total	1688	1454	2404	1965	7511

\*Data based on average for two semesters, supplied by the Registrar's Office

\*\*Nursing College established