

Chapter 1

Introduction

This book is a history of the emergence of psychology at Rutgers during the 19th century and its subsequent development during the 20th century into one of the university's leading academic disciplines. This history is organized around five rather distinct time periods for Rutgers psychology during these two centuries. Each period is identified either by significant innovations in the psychology curriculum at Rutgers, occasioned in turn by innovations in American psychology generally, or by changes in the status of psychology as an academic discipline of the university.

The first period dates back to the 1860's when Rutgers College appointed its first professor of mental philosophy. During those years conceptions of mind were typically taught in American colleges under the rubric of mental philosophy rather than psychology. Courses in mental philosophy became part of the curriculum at Rutgers College and other American colleges in the 19th century. Actually, the ancestry of psychology at Rutgers College goes back even further, to the 18th century. Conceptions of mind were already part of the content of courses in general philosophy, in ethics, and in theology at the handful of colleges in colonial America. And Rutgers College — then named Queen's College, the 8th oldest college in America — was one of the colonial colleges.

The second period began to take shape at the end of the 19th century. It was marked by the introduction of the "new psychology," so dubbed at the time, into American colleges and universities. The new psychology meant ridding the curriculum of mental philosophy in which theories of mind were supported largely by philosophical introspection and replacing it with an empirically based science of psychology. The shift to the new psychology was a radical transformation in the study of mind and was a gradual one both at Rutgers College and at other American colleges and universities. The beginning of the new psychology at Rutgers College is marked by the first listing of a course in 1906 with "psychology" in its title, replacing the course in mental philosophy that been taught for over 40 years. Over the next two decades Rutgers first psychologist, appointed in 1909, continued to incorporate the many innovations in the new psychology into the curriculum. After the First World War Rutgers began its transformation from a college to a university. Part of this transformation was the establishment in 1918 of the New Jersey College for Women (NJC), with Rutgers College remaining as

a men's college. (NJC was renamed Douglass College in 1955.) The new psychology also shaped the curriculum at NJC. In both colleges, and typical of most other American colleges and universities, psychology was part of a more inclusive department of psychology and philosophy.

The third period in the history of psychology at Rutgers began with the founding of a psychology department at Rutgers College in 1928, separate from philosophy. At NJC the psychology faculty remained in a department of philosophy and psychology until 1955. The modest-sized psychology faculty at the two colleges each developed its own, quite comprehensive, undergraduate curriculum. The Psychological Clinic was founded in 1929 and provided a training and research facility for a graduate program in clinical psychology initiated by the psychology department of the men's college. These ambitious developments were soon slowed as the colleges struggled through the Great Depression and World War II. Rutgers, unlike many other state universities, was also slow to recover after the war, given the limited financial support that the state of New Jersey gave to higher education until the 1960's. In psychology (and in other disciplines as well) at Rutgers, the graduate and research programs languished for almost two decades after the war.

The fourth period, which began in the early 1960's, is marked by the transformation of Rutgers into a major state university as the state gradually began to give it adequate financial support. For psychology this support was coupled with generous research and training grants that became available to American universities from federal agencies, and which were garnered at Rutgers by a young research-oriented faculty in psychology. By the end of the 1960's there were four undergraduate colleges — Rutgers College, Douglass College, Livingston College, University College — each with its own psychology department, and with a graduate program in psychology gleaned from the faculty of these colleges. This kind of structure, in which the colleges retained considerable autonomy over hiring and promotion of its faculty, caused serious problems in the coherent development of each of the academic disciplines at Rutgers, particularly at the graduate level.

The fifth, and final period as of this writing, began in 1981 with a major change in the organization of Rutgers University: the unification of the separate college departments within a discipline into a university-wide department. This meant organizing the university along academic disciplinary lines like that at other major universities — a single department of psychology, of physics, of sociology, and so on — rather than such

departments in each of the autonomous colleges. This is still the organization at Rutgers as of this writing (2008).

The basic idea that guided the historical narrative of each period is how the following three components influenced the shape and shaping of psychology at Rutgers during a given period: 1. The major ideologies and transitions in American psychology; 2. The support that the University gave to psychology and the support that Rutgers received from the state of New Jersey as it developed into the state's major public university; 3. The aspirations and goals of psychology's leadership at Rutgers.

The content of this book is based on several primary sources, depending in part on the historical period. The extensive resources of the University Archives in the Rutgers Library were invaluable in composing the early history of mental philosophy and psychology at Rutgers. The Archives contain college catalogs, photographs of people and places, professors' academic histories, memos by administrators at all levels, minutes of meetings, and letters, all dating back to the early 19th century. Archival material in the Psychology Department dating from the late 1950's to the present was also an important primary source for the latter half of the 20th century. These archives resulted in a narrative that is detailed and well documented.

Richard McCormick's book, *Rutgers: A bicentennial history*, is a history that covers the period, 1766-1966, and was invaluable in helping me understand how Rutgers College, first a private men's college founded by the Dutch Reformed Church, and then Rutgers as a state university shaped the emergence and growth of psychology here; that is, how the ups and downs in financial support, both from the Dutch Reformed Church and then from the state of New Jersey affected decisions by the university administration for the allocation of its resources.

As for the general role of American psychology in shaping the Rutgers curriculum, there is a voluminous secondary literature on the history of psychology in America in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to the numerous texts on the history of psychology, the discipline continues to study its history assiduously as reflected in scholarly articles published in several outlets including the official quarterly journal of Division 26, The Society for the History of Psychology, of the American Psychological Association. Also available to me in explicating the content of the Rutgers curriculum as it changed in 150 years are primary sources such as copies of

American texts in mental philosophy and psychology used in Rutgers courses dating back to the middle of the 18th century.

Oral history, still another source for a history, became feasible for guiding the narrative of psychology at Rutgers during the last 50 years. I was able to obtain oral histories from a number of faculty who were at Rutgers starting in the 1950's. These oral histories when combined with the archives in the psychology department were important in composing the narrative of a most important period, the 1960's and 1970's, when psychology at Rutgers experienced its explosive growth into a major department.

The Organization of the Book

The Chapters

This section describes the mapping of the chapters onto the five historical periods, along with a brief summary of the content of each chapter. These summaries may be of use to the reader who wishes to read selected portions of the history. Although there are occasional references to content in a previous chapter, it is possible to read chapters in any sequence. The reader may jump to a chapter with the link provided at the title of the chapter.

The first period in the emergence of psychology at Rutgers – from the middle of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century – is described in [Chapter 2](#), *Mental Philosophy and Psychology: The Curriculum at Rutgers College in the 19th Century*. The chapter starts with a brief history of the founding in 1766 of Queen's College (renamed Rutgers College in 1825) by the Dutch Reformed Church. At Rutgers College, as at many other American colleges, conceptions of mind were covered in the curriculum under the rubric of mental philosophy. These conceptions were dominated by the Scottish school of mental philosophy. One of the aims of the Scottish school was to construct a mental science consistent with a devout belief in God. Scottish mental philosophy thus met the needs of American colleges in the 18th and 19th century when religion exerted a strong influence on parts of the curriculum. Mental philosophy in the college curriculum in America became more eclectic over time with topics that included the senses, intellect, emotions, will, and psychopathology.

The course offerings at Rutgers College in mental philosophy, documented by college catalogs at the University Archives dating back to the early 1800's, are described in Chapter 2. A year-long course in mental philosophy, first offered in 1864, was revised in content in the ensuing decades to reflect changes in conceptions of mind during this period, changes clearly evident in the textbooks assigned for the course. Descriptions of the academic background, writings, and photos of the professors who taught mental philosophy are included in this chapter, thanks to the availability of this material in the Archives. These professors were brilliant scholars who infused the courses they taught with a vitality that the curriculum had not seen in the earlier decades. Although they were trained ministers in the Dutch Church, as were many of the professors at Rutgers College during this period, they were committed to the academic innovations demanded by the spirit of the times in America following the Civil War.

The second period in the history of psychology at Rutgers —from the first decade of the 20th century to just before the founding of a psychology department at Rutgers — is described in [Chapter 3](#), *The New Psychology in Early 20th Century America*. The new psychology that arose in America during the early part of the 20th century was the creative synthesis of a variety of scientific developments, a goodly number of them European in origin. With aspirations to take its place as a natural science among other 20th century sciences, the new psychology was also devoid of any of the religious content of mental philosophy. The new psychology was shaped by leading, creative American psychologists who gave American psychology a scientific, albeit not always an experimental, stamp. These were the pioneers of American functionalism and the mental-testing movement in America. The transition from mental philosophy to the new psychology and the emergence of psychology as an academic discipline was a gradual but steady transition with a mixture of the old and the new.

[Chapter 3](#) covers this transition in the Rutgers curriculum under the aegis of Rutgers first psychologist, Walter Marvin. Though his graduate training was in Germany (a common pattern of the time), he brought the new psychology of America into the Rutgers College curriculum. Also covered in this chapter is the founding of NJC — the women's college — in 1918 with its nascent psychology curriculum, initially under the aegis of Marvin and Sidney Cook, an American trained psychologist that Marvin hired to help him cover the course offerings at both the men's and the women's college. These courses in psychology were still given within a combined philosophy and psychology department. Following the First World War, with

the founding of NJC and other autonomous colleges, Rutgers was beginning to experience the growing pains that would persist and, indeed increase, for several decades.

The third period in the history of psychology at Rutgers began with the founding in 1928 of an autonomous psychology department at Rutgers College, separate from philosophy and with Henry Starr as its chairman. This was an era when other colleges and universities in America also experienced the organizational separation of psychology and philosophy. [Chapter 4](#), *The Psychology Department at Rutgers: Founding and Development of a Psychology Curriculum*, describes the department's growth from its founding through World War II. Under the aegis of the newly-founded psychology department at Rutgers College, and a second psychology faculty at NJC, the psychology curriculum quickly grew from an introductory course and an advanced course to that of a well-rounded and modern set of course offerings at each of the colleges. With Henry Starr as Director, The Rutgers Psychological and Mental Hygiene Clinic was also established on the College Avenue Campus in 1929 as an autonomous unit of the University. The Clinic provided a training facility and research laboratory for the department's new graduate program in clinical psychology, while rendering psychological services to the community. Although the psychologists at NJC were still part of a combined philosophy and psychology department, they developed a full undergraduate curriculum in psychology, characterized by its chairman as on a par with that of the prestigious "seven sisters."

[Chapter 4](#) also describes the difficulties faced by psychology, and indeed by the University, during the great Depression, and how the faculty coped with retrenchments. The graduate program started in the 1930's lapsed during World War II although the Psychological Clinic continued to serve the larger community.

[Chapter 5](#), *1945-1959 at Rutgers: A Postwar Interlude of Aspirations and Frustrations*, describes how a determined group of Rutgers psychology professors attempted to revive the graduate program in psychology — a frustrating task given the continuing lack of sufficient funds from the state to mount a modern program. I chose the year 1959 to close this chapter because the 1960's and beyond heralded a new era at Rutgers in which the state finally started providing fairly stable funding for Rutgers.

The fourth period in this history spans two decades, the 1960's and 1970's. It is marked by a transformation of Rutgers into a major state university and the explosive growth of psychology both at the undergraduate colleges and in the graduate program. There are seven chapters devoted to this complex period of development.

The first of these is [Chapter 6](#), *The Transformation of Rutgers into a Major State University*, which is a brief description of the major organizational issues facing the university administration in its aspirations to create a state university with a national standing. The basic problem was the autonomy of the several colleges, each with its own set of departments in the arts and sciences. This represented a handicap to the cohesive development of university-wide academic disciplines, an organization present in virtually all American universities. A number of organizational arrangements were tried during the two decades under the aegis of the Federated College Plan, a plan concocted to satisfy what were two incompatible demands — college autonomy and the overseeing of a discipline as a whole.

The next chapter, [Chapter 7](#), *The Explosive Growth of Psychology, 1960-1981: An Overview*, is an integrative summary of the growth of the undergraduate departments at each of the four colleges and of the gradual development of a graduate program in five specialty areas of psychology. The content in this chapter rightly belongs here but the growth of the undergraduate and graduate programs is too extensive and complex to summarize here.

The remaining five chapters are as follows. [Chapter 8](#) is devoted to the growth of the Douglass College Psychology Department; [Chapter 9](#) to the Rutgers College Psychology Department; [Chapter 10](#) to the Livingston College Psychology Department; [Chapter 11](#) to the University College Psychology Department; and [Chapter 12](#) to the graduate program and the gradual formation of a University-wide Psychology Department under the constantly changing guidelines of the Federated College Plan.

It might be of value to note here that in addition to Douglass College, Rutgers College, Livingston College and University College, there emerged in the 1960's and 1970's several other units at Rutgers with psychology faculties and researchers: The Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP), Rutgers Medical School (now UMDMJ), and the Center of Alcohol Studies (CAS). The psychologists in these new units then began

to play a critical role in the growth and diversity of psychology at Rutgers. The graduate areas at the time consisted of experimental psychology (primarily at Rutgers College), personality and social psychology (primarily at Livingston College and University College), developmental psychology (primarily at Douglass College, and included the Day Care Center and the Douglass Disability Center for developmental research), and clinical psychology (drawn from the various colleges, and from GSAPP, the Medical School, and CAS.

The fifth period dates from 1981, when a radical change in the organization of the department and the university took place. Within each of the major disciplines in the arts and sciences, one centralized department with one chair to direct and co-ordinate both the undergraduate and graduate program replaced the several college departments. Unification at Rutgers consisted of two parts. One was this organizational change that replaced college autonomy with unified academic disciplines — essentially the present organization of disciplines at Rutgers. The other part was to put a discipline in one physical location. Psychology did not receive the second part, with about half of the department on the Busch Campus and the other half on the Livingston Campus. [Chapter 13](#), *Unification of Psychology*, describes how psychology fared under Unification, including the problems that arose by the geographic split of the department. The chapter concludes with some prognostications for the future of the department under these conditions as well as the centrifugal forces in American psychology generally that may change the shape of academic psychology in the 21st century.

Appendices

There are three appendices in the book. [Appendix A](#) is a listing of the titles of all PhD dissertations through 2007 and MA theses from the early years starting with the first Master's thesis in 1930. Included in the listing of titles are the names of the students, their dissertation advisor, and the year the degree was awarded. [Appendix B](#) is a listing of the names, dates, and ranks of all tenured faculty since the inception of a psychology department, including the small handful of mental philosophy professors of the 19th and early 20th centuries. [Appendix C](#) is a 32-page synopsis of this book, which appeared initially in the souvenir booklet distributed during the celebration of the department's 75th anniversary in 2003. The reader who wishes to read an extended synopsis of the entire book will find such in Appendix C.