

## Chapter 10

### **The Explosive Growth of Psychology: The Livingston College Psychology Department, 1969-1981**

In 1963, when the Defense Department closed Camp Kilmer and declared it "surplus," the university administration applied to the federal government for a portion of the Kilmer site to build several new coeducational colleges. In anticipation of fleshing out its application, the administration appointed an advisory committee with representation from Douglass College and the College of Arts and Sciences to suggest how best to utilize the land should it be granted to Rutgers. Diametrically opposing recommendations came from the committee: Douglass representatives argued that the new colleges be autonomous, modeled after Douglass College; College of Arts and Sciences representatives wanted the disciplines to remain unified with limited autonomy for the new colleges. The application that went forward to the federal government made no use of these contradictory recommendations and simply projected "the establishment of several educational units, each designed to accommodate approximately one thousand five hundred (1500) students" (McCormick, 1978).

With the application still pending, a new advisory group was appointed in 1964. This group agreed on a plan for a "hybrid arrangement which seeks to combine the advantages of the large university structure (with single departments each with its budget) with the best features of the relatively small college unit (with identifiable faculty and student body)" (McCormick, 1978). The plan, known as the Bishop-Lynton plan, clearly tilted toward disciplinary unity. When a large acreage on the Kilmer site was granted to Rutgers in late 1964, the administration accepted the Bishop-Lynton plan as a general guide to how the academic organization of the Kilmer colleges would take shape. Ernest Lynton, one of the authors of the plan was appointed dean of Kilmer I in 1965. The university Board of Governors later renamed this college Livingston after William Livingston, New Jersey's first Revolutionary-period governor.

Dean Lynton set about defining and fleshing out a distinctive identity for Livingston College. His Curriculum Planning Committee (of which I was a member) was encouraged to critically examine fundamental tenets, prevailing practices, and curricula of higher education and contrast them with new educational ideas that might be better suited to the task of preparing students to deal with problems facing contemporary society.

An innovative educational program emerged for the Livingston College student. One of the basic features of the college curriculum was that department and college requirements be minimal ("students need more advice and fewer requirements" urged the Curriculum Planning Committee 10/5/66), including the opportunity for the student to develop his/her own course of study. This was coupled with an emphasis on independent study and field experience. Multidisciplinary courses were encouraged to address topics that spanned several disciplines. These "College Courses," as they were dubbed, varied in content from year to year, and were often taught by two (or more) professors from different disciplines. The grading system was different from that of the other colleges and consisted of three "notations" (Livingston's euphemism for grading): *honors*, *credit*, *no credit*.

New departments and study programs in support of Livingston's focus on societal problems were established in the college: Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development, Department of Community Development, Afro-American and African Studies, Asian Studies, Labor Studies, Puerto Rican Studies. Two academic departments new to Rutgers University, Anthropology Department and Computer Science Department, were also established with a distinguished senior faculty as the nucleus for anthropology and an exceptional young professor (Saul Amarel) for computer science. Within the university community, Livingston College was sometimes referred to as "the MIT of the social sciences" because of its focus on applications of the social sciences to societal problems.

Livingston strongly encouraged student activism. In the 1971-72 college catalog, students were informed that the college's

academic government, which is responsible for all areas of academic policy, is a bicameral structure composed of a student chamber and a faculty chamber. All academic business must be approved by both chambers, and committees are composed of equal numbers of students and faculty. Governing the school, as in all other areas of life at Livingston, demands from the student the willingness to actively take responsibility for his life and community.

Dean Lynton also revised the original Bishop-Lynton plan that, with the exception of Douglass College, was to have united each of the disciplines in the men's college and the projected Kilmer colleges. Lynton now argued that the unique identity of Livingston, as well as that of the other extant and projected colleges, required that each college have its own faculty appointed by the college dean on the recommendation of the relevant college department. The special focus

of a college also required that each college determine its curriculum and requirements for graduation. These and other changes in the original plan now moved Livingston toward the kind of college autonomy originally advocated by Douglass. In its relatively short life as an autonomous college, Livingston did indeed develop a special identity with strong loyalties among its faculty, students, and administrators, comparable to those found among the constituents of the older colleges.

The planning for Livingston College from 1964 to 1968 coincided with a stressful period for higher education in America. Soviet Russia's superiority in space was interpreted as reflecting poorly on education in America; protests about the Vietnam War were a common sight on college and university campuses, where the relevance of traditional college curricula were also questioned; Afro-American students protested the inequities in college admissions and staffing, while the feminist movement focused on inequities in the hiring and promotion of women in the faculty and administration. By 1968, urban riots and unrest in New Jersey (and elsewhere) and black militancy led Livingston planners to add a new mission for the college: the recruitment and education of a substantial number of minority students. When the college admitted its first class in 1969, about a third of the students were minority.

The "understanding" among faculty and administration was that the associate dean responsible for minority recruitment could, given his contacts in the community, identify promising minority students regardless of what their SAT scores might be. In fact, a significant number of the students turned out to be inadequately prepared for a college curriculum. As a result, the college now had two rather different missions — perhaps mutually unsupportive.

As one of a handful of "experimental colleges" and unique in being founded within a large public university, Livingston was gaining something of a national reputation for its innovative programs in higher education. There is a scholarly and comprehensive doctoral dissertation (Kehl, 1977) on Livingston as a case study in this context. Incidents of inter-racial conflict, physical assaults, and drug trafficking on the Livingston Campus soon tarnished the reputation of the college in New Jersey. But Livingston College did provide the university with a response to minority demands for opportunities in higher education in New Jersey. This was no tokenism. The focus of the college on societal problems was also a strong response to the student protest movement of the 1960's that the curriculum be "relevant."

The Livingston Psychology Department embraced the two missions of the college. In a two-page statement prepared in 1969 for psychologists applying for a position in the department, the department described itself as having “some freedom not to duplicate existing strengths [in other colleges] and some possibility of responding to a dominant theme of Livingston College — namely that of the relation of the University and higher education to social and urban problems.”

With regard to minority concerns, the statement said,

An overriding principle—applicable to all of Livingston College—is a genuine commitment to equality of educational opportunity for non-whites. To date the College has the largest non-white enrollment of any State University (that is not primarily a Negro College), a significant proportion of non-white faculty, and wide administrative participation of non-whites. The Livingston College Department intends to build upon these already substantial developments both in its recruiting of faculty and graduate students.

With regard to Livingston’s other mission, there was among the research interests of the early faculty appointments a mix of psychological topics associated with “social and urban problems” and the more traditional topics of personality and social psychology. Included among the interests of this initial faculty group were the nature of human affect, ideology and affect, language and communication, multidimensional scaling of linguistic data, personality development in adolescence to adulthood, sexuality and population control, interpersonal attraction, the psychology of freedom, the bases of prejudice, treatment of offenders, and the development of racial awareness. Future hiring was focused on rounding out the undergraduate psychology curriculum in basic topics — clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, experimental psychology — and on adding topics of relevance to societal problems — community psychology, psychology of the black experience. Personality and social psychology remained the strongest single areas in the department and, as anticipated, enhanced considerably the graduate program in personality/social psychology.

Robert Krauss (b. 1931), an experimental social psychologist, arrived as chair of the department in 1968, a year before the first class was admitted to the college. He and I set about recruiting junior faculty in social psychology, and with the Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991), a distinguished personality psychologist in the Henry Murray tradition,

who would join the faculty a year later, opened the search for personality psychologists. When Krauss moved to Columbia University in 1970, Keith Davis (b. 1936) replaced him as chair, an appointment that also maintained senior-level strength in social psychology. Davis left for the University of South Carolina after serving as chair until 1974. Other very early appointments in social psychology and in personality who stayed on at Rutgers include Richard Ashmore (b. 1943), Mel Gary (b. 1938), Lawrence Pervin (b. 1936), and Daniel Ogilvie (b. 1939).

By 1975 there were 19 faculty members in the department, 4 of whom were Afro-American with research interests both in basic topics and in the psychology of the black experience. With the exception of Rae Carlson (1926-2003), who came in 1974 as a full professor and served as chair for a year, hiring was at the junior level. Among those who stayed on and developed a career at Rutgers were Jeanette Haviland (b. 1944) in developmental, George Atwood (b. 1944) in psychopathology, Maurice Elias (b. 1952) in community psychology, and Arlene Walker-Andrews (b. 1949) in developmental and cognitive psychology.

The dean was generous in providing ample research and office space for the faculty. The department was located in a refurbished World War II Camp Kilmer building, which it shared with biology — the two departments with research as well as teaching laboratories.



**Psychology and Biology Building**, Livingston College Campus, served as offices and research laboratories for the Livingston College faculty in psychology and biology when the college opened in 1969. The building was a warehouse for Camp Kilmer in World War II. Its shabby external appearance belies a well refurbished interior space designed to meet the needs of each of the two departments. (Photo by Linda King.)

Other college departments, which did not need research and teaching laboratories, were housed nearby in newly constructed office and classroom buildings. Even here, social psychology was given well-furnished research and teaching laboratories in Lucy Stone Hall.



**Lucy Stone Hall**, one of Livingston College's new academic buildings also housed research and undergraduate teaching laboratories for social psychology. (Photo by Linda King.)

The early years at Livingston College were an exciting and novel experience for junior and senior faculty alike. The zeitgeist encouraged experimentation in teaching methods, informal student contact, and innovations in curriculum. In the total mix of faculty time and commitment to teaching, research, and service to the college and university, the Livingston College credo accorded highest priority to teaching. Lauded for honoring this within the college, junior faculty members sometimes found themselves at a disadvantage for promotion as the university began to give the university-wide disciplines more of a voice in the promotion process; for psychology (as for several other disciplines) the primary emphasis for promotion was on research productivity as evidenced by publications.

Livingston students were also special — bright and at ease in challenging the ideas presented to them in the classroom and unconventional in appearance (even for the 60's and early 70's). Some thrived under the less structured academic demands at Livingston and probably emerged with an education more resonant with their talents and interests than would be the case at a more conventional college; for others the academic departments provided the necessary guidance for a structured curriculum.

By the mid 1970's, Livingston lost much of its innovative zeal. Incidents of conflict and tension diminished, along with the student activism that had characterized the early years. Also palpable was the backlash from student protests of the 1960's, a backlash that put higher education on a generally more conservative path. At Rutgers, there were also the homogenizing effects of reduced college autonomy. However, many of the innovative features in curriculum, interdisciplinary courses, flexibility for students in devising their own courses of study, and the commitment to minority admissions remained until unification in 1981. Ogilvie served as department chair during most of this period.

### *The Undergraduate Curriculum and Major*

The undergraduate curriculum expanded as the enrollment at Livingston College grew to encompass students in all four undergraduate class years. Courses offered during the first two years were primarily for a freshman class in 1969 and a freshman and sophomore class in 1970. (Starred course titles in this paragraph are courses not offered at the other colleges.) The curriculum during these initial years consisted of seven courses: Topics in Social Psychology, Studies in Social Psychology (a laboratory course), Psychological Topics (the introductory course), \*Prejudice and Conflict (a Gary specialty), Personality, Human Development, Abnormal Behavior. By 1971, the curriculum was sufficiently enhanced to serve both majors and other advanced students interested in psychology. Added to the curriculum were \*Psychology and the Black Experience, Quantitative Methods, Experimental Psychology, Adolescence in Contemporary Society, Motivation, Language and Communication, a topical Junior Seminar, and four different senior-level \*Seminars, one for each of four areas, Developmental, Social, Experimental, and Personality. These Seminars, capped in enrollment, were the heart of advanced undergraduate study with their emphasis on individual research and in-depth examination of specific problems. By 1975 several other courses were added to the curriculum: Psychotherapy

and Behavior Change, Assessments (tests and measurements), \*Community Mental Health, \*Interviewing Techniques, Learning, Cognition and Perception, History, and Psychological Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence. This full and diverse curriculum was intended to prepare undergraduates for graduate work in any of a variety of professional careers in psychology and related disciplines, as well as undergraduates with other career plans who were simply interested in psychology.

To its undergraduate students, the department described itself in early college catalogs (1969-1975) as follows:

The department of psychology serves two principle functions in the university. One is to train students in the principles of the scientific study of behavior to serve as a foundation for graduate work in psychology, in social work, or in other related areas. The second is to give the student who is not necessarily interested in a career in psychology or related fields a deeper and clearer understanding of the psychological processes which will be useful in his or her personal life or career.

In 1971, two years after the first class was admitted to Livingston, the psychology major was defined as any eight (nine the following year) courses in the department. The college catalog provided general guidance for the major who was planning a career in psychology. Students contemplating a research a/o teaching career were advised to take Quantitative Methods and Experimental Psychology and courses that "provide research training"; students contemplating a service career were advised to take Quantitative Methods and three courses from among offerings in human development, abnormal, personality, and social psychology. In addition students interested in professional work in the field were strongly urged to talk with a departmental advisor — all this in the Livingston credo of lots of advice, few requirements.

Also in line with this credo was the establishment in 1972 of a required two-credit course in the sophomore year, \*Tutorial in Psychology for Majors, with the stated goal "to provide career guidance and academic counseling to majors and to help them acquire the study skills and grasp of psychological reading, research sources, and writing that are necessary for majors." The other explicit requirement for the major was the introductory course, which would be needed in any case as a prerequisite for advanced courses.

By 1975, the catalogs no longer addressed preparations for a career in psychology, or related areas but simply described its objectives for majors:

A primary objective of the Department of Psychology is to give its majors a balanced background in several of the main traditions of psychological theory and investigation. Beyond that goal, the department attempts to provide opportunities for advanced students to concentrate in areas of psychology that reflect the interests they have developed during their introductory courses. These opportunities for specialization are provided through advanced courses and seminars and through faculty-supervised fieldwork, internships, and independent study courses.

The Tutorial was also removed from the curriculum.

The department's description to non-majors was stripped of its self-help message and now simply said (in an impersonal tone utterly alien to Livingston's early years):

The department also provides courses for students interested in psychology but not interested in majoring in the discipline. These students should note course prerequisites and contact the department to clear up questions about what courses are available to them.

## References

- Kehl, S.S. (1977). *The academic change process: A case study of Livingston College*. Doctoral dissertation Graduate School of Education.
- McCormick, R.P. (1978). *Academic reorganization in New Brunswick, 1962-1978: The Federated College Plan*. Unpublished monograph in Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives.