

ORAL HISTORY TAPE INDEX

R-53

Roberts, Carl L., Jr.  
Assistant Professor of Psychology, 1957-1961  
Associate Professor of Psychology, 1961-1967  
Full Professor, 1967-1987  
Senior Status, 1987-

Interest in Psychology

- Influence of Vernon Lytle at Idaho State University
- Lytle was critical of theories of behavior
- "I, like him, was a skeptical person; we were temperamentally suited to each other, and he really got me interested"

Entered College

- Out of Navy in 1946
- Immediately went to Syracuse University to major in journalism
- Freshman requirements: Responsible Citizenship, Russian, English, Philosophy
- Hated it; quit after one semester

After College

- Sold life insurance for two years
- Had jewelry business in Idaho
- Quit to return to college

College at Idaho State University

- Returned to school because "I didn't know what else to do"
- Attended Idaho State because it was convenient; lived at home
- Met Dr. Lytle and went into psychology

Graduate School at University of Missouri

- Went to Missouri to meet Melvin Marx, who edited Theories in Psychology
- Dealt with philosophy of science, which fascinated Roberts
- Entered clinical program
- "I thought that I wanted to be a clinician and help people in the 'usual' way"
- Found program very unsatisfying
- Changed to experimental psych and eventually received Ph.D. in that field

Decision to come to Colorado College

- While working at Christian College, a two-year women's college which is now Columbia College, and completing Ph.D., met Dean of C.C. Lew Worner
- Taught four psychology courses and one introductory philosophy course
- One afternoon, after an hour and 1/2 of Intro to Philosophy, I walked out of the classroom
- There, leaning against the wall, "was this big, tall, grey-looking man with a crew cut"
- Lew Worner had been listening to the entire lecture
- Worner was looking for an experimental psychologist to solidify program at C.C.
- He had visited Elmer Ellis at the University of Missouri
- Ellis suggested Melvin Marx; Marx recommended Roberts
- Roberts accepted

#### Arrival on job and first impressions

- Psych department consisted of Doug Freed, who came in 1956, and William Arthur Blakely
- Blakely demonstrated genuine concern for students
- Impressions of physical facilities:
  - Department was located on the second floor, West end of Palmer Hall
  - "It was a dump"
- Equipment consisted of things like a dead cat, a plastic bag, formaldehyde solution, an old black maze, ancient resonators
- "...dark ages stuff"
- Departmental budget was \$1500, half of which went to a Dept. Graduate Assistant, Tom Gentry, and half for equipment
- Roberts overspent the budget, bought a much needed calculator for \$900

#### Why Roberts came to C.C.

- Major function of professors was to teach, but research and student involvement in research was encouraged, according to Worner
- "There was nothing here...what an opportunity to build something in my image, what I think psychology should be like"

#### Building the department under Benezet

- Scrounged everything they could
- Took station wagon on excursions to Fort Carson dump on weekends
- Helped themselves to hardware cloth, metal rods, cage building material, etc.
- Built things at psych major, Kenny LeBow's, cabinet shop
- Tony Johnson, another major, wired equipment
  - Strategies included inviting Lew Worner to come visit and see dangerous wires, deplorable conditions
- Roberts made wires look even more dangerous
- Received bigger budgets
- 1963: requested \$20,000 from Benezet for twelve experimental set-ups for working with pigeons
- Benezet got money for department

#### Desire to move to Olin Hall

- Roberts and Don Shearn had argued that proper place for psychology was in Olin with biology
- "Psychology is a branch of biology involving the behavior of living things, the mechanisms by which those happen"
- Psychology and biology could share facilities, save money
- Roberts requested again, upon proposed renovation of Olin (1986), that psych be included in Olin
- "While no one in biology today knows the first thing about psychology, and have not been supportive in any real sense of this move, times are changing"
- "We've made a serious mistake...C.C. could have been on the forefront of something, could have taken the lead, but we didn't"
- "There shouldn't even be a psychology department"
- Psychology was started as a discipline in 1879 in Germany
- It was a discipline by stipulation; no one was bothering to consider it

#### Psych Department initiative

- In the mid-sixties Roberts applied for two grants:
  - one for \$20,000 over three years from National Science Foundation
  - one for \$30,000 over four years from National Institute of Mental Health

- department accepted \$20,000 from NSF, and NIMH still offered \$5000 of its grant
- Roberts acquired \$25,000 for psych department
- Don Shearn got \$30,000 grant; Gilbert Johns got \$23,000
- Biggest grant before this was \$12,000 for biology dept
- "We like to believe that the college administration, seeing this initiative on our parts... said 'okay' to requests to remodel the facilities"
- Brought in enormous amount of money in the sixties
- received good budgets from college

#### Move to third floor of Palmer Hall

- Department wanted to move to top floor of Palmer, "attic"
- No windows, easily air-conditioned, no traffic, perfect for lab facilities
- Remodeling cost about \$160,000

#### Building the department: faculty

- Don Shearn came in 1961
- Gilbert Johns in 1962
  - Jeff Eichengreen in late 1960's
- endeavored to remain small department

#### Donald Shearn

- Dept looking for someone in core area of physiological psych to replace Blakely
- Roberts corresponded with Shearn
- Shearn interviewed and accepted position
- He had to wait a year before coming to C.C., so he took a South Seas cruise with his wife and then taught in Indiana
- Department at that time: Roberts-learning and motivation Freed- clinical (abnormal, etc.) psych; Shearn- physiological psychology
- Shearn taught Roberts to use electromechanical equipment
- "Shearn has been a great asset to the dept. through all these years"

#### Hiring Process

- Much easier (in sixties) to find people
- didn't have to advertise in 'every journal' like now
- Roberts gave thought to hiring a minority (in the conventional sense of the word)
- Didn't think of hiring a woman specifically
- "...Women shouldn't be classified as minorities...maybe 'unfairly treated people' but not minorities"

#### Gilbert Johns

- Also a University of Indiana graduate
- specialized in hearing
- Had worked with Robert Cantor, an eminent psych historian
- Psych dept looking for someone who could teach the history of systems of psych, sensory processes
- Johns was hired

#### Marcia Johns

- Taught occasionally, helped with intro courses, replaced professors on leave
- Specialized in mathematical models of behavior/learning
- "She was very smart"

#### Gilbert Johns as administrator

- Fall 1964, got a call from Johns
- Johns had been asked by Worner to become Dean of Summer Session
- Johns was essentially read out of psych department because of his schedule as administrator
- Eichengreen hired to replace Johns

#### Recollections of students

- There were some superb students
- Joy Baisinger-killed in a car accident after getting her MD
- Rhea Myers, Arlene Hayne, Jill Steinbrugge, Rosemary Barnes, Charley Garthwaite, Sylvia Thorpe
- Most went on to get advanced degrees
- Department averages 11 or 12 majors
- "For every truly superb male major we've had, we've had four or five women as good; women are smarter than the men at CC generally"

#### Formation of the Block Plan

- First intimation of the block plan came from Don Shearn
  - He said,"We always talk about having a student\faculty ratio of 1:15. Give me my fifteen students"
- Glenn Brooks was main designer, implementor of block plan
- Psych dept "dropped the ball on the block plan"
- "We didn't get any baseline data before we switched"
- Should have developed a variety of tests against which to measure the effects of change to Block Plan
- We don't know if students do better now than they did before the Block plan

#### Students in the 80's

- "I don't think our students are today what they were yesterday"
- In the last three or four years, quality of students in my classes has declined
- "C.C. doesn't get the very best, but we do get some first rate people"
- Students complain about working, don't work
- I'm giving more C-s"
- Quality of students after 1957 increased, is decreasing now
- A lot of variation from block to block

#### Benefits of Block plan

- Block system prepares students for grad school
- better way to teach, better way for students to learn
- "hard as hell on faculty"

#### Changes in department under Block plan

- Early 1960's intro courses:
  - Shared departmental lectures two mornings a week
  - Afternoon labs: divided students into five 30-student groups
- Very little change in upper division courses such as Learning/Behavior Theory, Physiological Psych.
- Block plan is bad in area of learning and experimental work
  - Learning often takes longer than 3 1/2 weeks
- Used to teach fundamentals in four months as opposed to 3 1/2 weeks now
- Learning lab is not as satisfying as before block plan

#### Personal effects of Block plan

- Faculty worked a lot less hard before block plan
- But I am a believer in 'finding your own salvation'
- "I teach my courses back to back...two sections of Intro. to Psych, and it gets easier the second time."
- Block plan imposes restrictions on people's behavior that semester system does not
- Beginning was exciting, exhilarating
- Like any novelty, it gets old
- People often say that they don't have a social life with colleagues and

blame it on Block plan  
-Have to ask ourselves if we ever did, if it's really  
Block plan  
-I've changed living style aside from Block plan,ex: quit  
drinking  
-"It's no fun going to cocktail parties when everyone's  
half in the bag, and you're sober"

Eight Block year

-Not in favor of eight block year  
-It will cost us in ways that are undesirable  
-Will preclude independent research block each year  
-People talk about giving students more independence, making them take more  
responsibility for their own education  
-"When you do that, you end up giving more no-credits"

Faculty/social life

- "I don't spend much time getting to know faculty; I do three things:"  
LUNCH

-Eat lunch in Gates Common Room  
-Major factor in improving collegiality  
-Most faculty don't eat there  
-Mostly men, sit around the big table; "women go off by  
themselves"  
-Love to have lunch there, learn a lot  
-For instance, Bob Loevy once talked about railroads  
-Bill Weida talked about armour and swords  
-"fascinating stuff"

INTEREST IN MATHEMATICS

-Math department is one of the finest at CC  
-Not one bad prof  
-I started going to talks given by math dept candidates  
-I am as ignorant of math as you can be and still have a

Ph.D.

-Developed a lot of friends in math dept: Fred  
Tinsley, Jim Henderson, Marlow Anderson, Dave Roeder OPEN HOUSES  
-My wife and I occasionally hold open houses  
-Invite about 65 people who wander in and out

Impressions of changes in faculty and administration

-When Roberts first came to CC, people sat around and got to know other  
faculty  
-You could meet with the president in the Hub over coffee to discuss things  
-Now, I don't know most of the people on campus

College operations over the years

-committee structure of today: "pain in the ass"  
-Things used to be much simpler, maybe not better, but simpler

Example: Hiring

-Used to use "old boy network"  
-Wrote, talked to people you trusted at various schools  
where you or someone else had been  
-Admittedly, there was not an equal chance, and it was  
probably wrong, but it was simpler

Example: Tenure and promotion

-Much harder now  
-Roberts got tenure in 10 years- unheard of now  
-It used to be that if there wasn't much against you, you got  
tenure  
-Now a lot of things have to be in your favor as well  
-When I was chair of psych dept I would write letters on

behalf of the dept

- "Now the chair writes a letter, and the faculty member makes a list of his or her own accomplishments"
- It then goes to the executive committee, to the dean, and to the committee on committees
- A colleague recently said, " I still like to teach here, but I'm tired of being a manager"

#### Different administrations

- Riley runs a more democratic college than Worner
- There have been no bad presidents or deans in my experience at CC

#### Philosophy of teaching

- My relationships with the students have been good
- 1962 graduate, Gary Martin recently dedicated his new book to me
- "I must have done something right"
- I have a reputation as demanding but fair
- Work the students hard, try to devise study guides that require thought development
- Believer in task systems
- Pedagogy is mastery approach, typical to field
  - Don Shearn began mastery courses at CC
- General Studies course: connaitre rather than savoir approach
  - Taught very differently
  - Vacation from 'interminable exams'
  - Examines concept of creativity, sources of creativity
  - Plato, Socrates, Skinner (Plato to modern)
- Skinner's approach stressed at CC
- Socrates suggests inspiration from gods
  - Today creativity attributed to unconscious

#### Interests outside college

- Flyfishing
- Dirk Baay, Max Taylor, Dick Storey are fishing buddies
- Reading
  - Oil painting
  - I hope to take art lessons when I go on SSS

#### Senior Status

- Granted senior status
- Will be teaching four blocks
- Receive 45% of salary until 65 years of age
- I'm going to be here working on research, etc.

#### Concluding thoughts

- Psychology department has an enviable record in sending students to grad school
- Upper 5% of 873 undergraduate institutions in country for Ph.D s in psych since 1920
- Advice to chair of psych dept: "Hang in there"
  - -I would hope that eventually that there won't be a chair, that a psychology department won't exist, that it will be integrated into a sensible biological science