

Psychology at Georgetown University: An Institutional History

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Abstract

In this paper I will explore the institutional history of the Georgetown University Department of Psychology. First, I will provide an historical background of Georgetown University, and illustrate what the early program of study looked like as prescribed by the Jesuit tradition of Ratio Studiorum. I will then arrive at my discussion of the steps leading up to the establishment of the Psychology Department in 1967, where I will shed light on the reasons behind the Department's formation, as well as the key players during this time period. Using correspondences between faculty members and administration, as well as undergraduate bulletins that track course offerings, I will explain the history of the Department up until the present day. Then, using material from interviews with current faculty members, I will discuss the present identity of the Department and the direction of the broader field of psychology. My paper will conclude with a prediction, gleaned from faculty interviews, of where the Department is headed in the future.

Foreword/Introduction

I'd like to introduce my Senior Honors Thesis in Psychology by quoting the College of Arts and Sciences' website.

"Founded in 1789 as the nation's first Catholic institution of higher learning, Georgetown College is committed to the Jesuit traditions of an integrated education and of productive research in the liberal arts, including fine arts, humanities, languages, sciences, and social sciences. In the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, Georgetown College strives to provide its students with a multifaceted liberal arts education—an education of the whole person."ⁱ

I have spent the past eight months attempting to uncover the story behind why this highly esteemed institution, seeking an "integrated education" and "research in the liberal arts...including the social sciences" did not have a Psychology Department until the year 1967. *Cura personalis* was pursued for 178 years without a department that studied the person himself.

When I first embarked on this journey, I hypothesized that the Jesuit influence of the University was a potential hindrance for the formation of a Psychology Department. Perhaps the field of psychology was too "new" for an institution so deeply rooted in tradition, or maybe the Jesuit influence deterred faculty members who feared that the religious values ingrained in the University would stifle their research interests and pursuits. My research endeavors, however, suggested otherwise. In fact, the history of psychology at Georgetown is multifaceted and reflects social, religious, and academic movements both inside and outside of Georgetown's front gates. The foundation of a Department of Psychology was not simply a product of one event; rather, its inception, installment and growth were the results of responses to internal and external motivations.

As a result of my completion of extensive research and one-on-one faculty interviews over the course of my senior year, I revised my approach when I took to writing about the institutional history of Georgetown's Psychology Department. Instead of focusing on why a Department of Psychology did not exist for such a long period of time, I started looking at why it came into being when it did. This change in perspective gave me more opportunities to explore the dynamic history of psychology at Georgetown. Thus, in my discussion of the Department's founding, I have chosen to write about the "why" as opposed to the "why not."

My hope is that my thesis project will provide a comprehensive answer not only to the question of "why" the Department of Psychology exists, but also the questions of "what" had to transpire for its establishment to come about and "how" the course of study has changed over

time. Through the compilation and integration of faculty interviews, I also hope to contribute to the dialogue concerning “where” the department is heading in years to come.

Georgetown University’s Academic History

Founded in 1789 by Father John Carroll, S.J., Georgetown University is the oldest Jesuit institution of higher learning in the country. In accordance with its Jesuit heritage, the school prescribed an education based on the *Ratio Studiorum*, or the Jesuit “Plan of Study.” This plan, which established a global system of Jesuit education, consisted of a curriculum that took students seven years to complete.ⁱⁱ The goal of *Ratio Studiorum* was for each student to reach his fullest potential by learning “to distinguish and savor all that should charm the imagination and heart.”ⁱⁱⁱ The earliest Georgetown curriculum based in *Ratio* was rigid and uniform: all students pursued the same program of study without exception, in which the importance of both oral and written communication was emphasized through Latin and Greek classics, English, History, Modern Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Astronomy, Mechanics, and Rational Philosophy.^{iv} Georgetown, for over a century, faithfully held to this academic program; instead of developing a new curriculum to respond to the increasingly diverse interests of students, the University established new schools. The School of Nursing, for example, first opened its doors to students in 1903, while the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service was founded in 1919, followed by the School of Languages and Linguistics in 1949 and the School of Business Administration in 1957.^v In fact, it was not until the 1960’s that the University adopted large-scale changes to the College curriculum.

Why was the College so late to commit to a curriculum change? Historian Dorothy M. Brown argues that “[e]ach of the four new schools affirmed the commitment to liberal arts education and the tradition in addition to their special professional orientation, but the College continued as the ‘heart’ of the University.”^{vi} As the heart of the University, the College maintained the longest academic and religious tradition. It is therefore not surprising that the College was the last school to revise its academic course of study. That being said, it is still somewhat remarkable that the College was over 150 years old when it came to realize that its initial intent to provide students with “a considerable amount of positive knowledge in every department of learning” was coming up short.^{vii}

While there was some expansion in the College’s curriculum in the 1920’s as Georgetown stood for accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, *Ratio Studiorum* remained very much at the center of the academic program.^{viii} Throughout the next thirty years, significant changes were made to the curriculum, such as the reduction of philosophy requirements and the creation of three distinct paths to a Bachelor’s degree. Students, according to a self-study conducted in 1951, were able to pursue an A.B., a B.S., or a B.S.S. (Bachelor of Social Science) as a result of the increasingly available option of taking elective classes.^{ix} It was also during this time that the College received advice from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation team encouraging even more of a reduction of philosophy requirements, a further increase of elective options, and a recommendation to hire new professors to teach courses, as the vast majority of faculty members was Jesuit-trained.^x These recommendations were in line with the considerable – albeit gradual – evolution of Georgetown’s curriculum towards a more conventional liberal arts education, which was characterized as a much more flexible and less strict four-year curriculum.

Finally, beginning in the early 1960’s, the academic requirements of Georgetown’s College of Arts and Sciences started to reflect the flexibility in the curriculum that is currently in

place today. A second accreditation team reported that the College was lacking in its science offerings and did not offer art and music courses.^{xi} The gaping holes in Georgetown's pursuit of *cura personalis* were exposed. The only viable solution was to take the advice of the accreditation team and move towards the installation of a more mainstream liberal arts undergraduate education.

Georgetown University was not the only institution of higher learning that was undergoing these changes. However, its position in this period of curriculum reform was unique: as one of the 350 Catholic colleges in the country, Georgetown was faced with the challenge of expanding its curriculum while also maintaining the Jesuit ideals upon which the Georgetown education is classically founded. This created what Brown called a "double-identity question" for Georgetown and its 349 Catholic counterparts, which was addressed at the North American Region of the International Federation of Catholic Universities in July of 1967.^{xii} The meeting produced the "Statement on the Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University" which established that "Catholicism would be 'perceptively present' and 'effectively operative'" in the required curriculum.^{xiii} Georgetown then participated in a workshop sponsored by the Jesuit Educational Association, which asserted that the Jesuit tradition should "design an effective and educational enterprise aimed at developing all the dimensions of the human person."^{xiv} It is not surprising, then, that Georgetown College began a large-scale revision of its curriculum at the start of the 1967 school year which "incorporated experience in the fundamental areas of Natural Science, the Humanities, [and] Social Science."^{xv,xvi} I argue it is also not a coincidence that, at the same time, a Department of Psychology was officially established at Georgetown University.

The Foundation

External pressures from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools were not the only factors that led to the creation of a Psychology Department. In fact, signs of interest within the front gates were first recorded in December of 1963 at a meeting of the Executive Faculty of Georgetown College. At this gathering, Reverend Juan Cortes, S.J. requested the recognition of Psychology as a minor field of study in the College of Arts and Sciences. He made the following points to support his argument:

- A) There is evidence of need for Psychology: a study made last year revealed that among 37 different majors pursued by premedical students, psychology was fourth.
- B) Georgetown students are interested: 72 students are enrolled in the General Psychology course now.
- C) An adequate teaching staff is already on campus (ten members), so that the increase cost of this project would be small.
- D) Three required psychology courses (two in School of Nursing, one in Business Administration) are already being offered. These courses should be opened to the College students.
- E) The courses to be offered would represent a systematic exploration of the area of psychology.^{xvii}

Those in attendance then voted on Cortes' proposal. Dr. Jesse A. Mann moved that "Psychology be accepted as a minor in the College, open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors" and Dr. Jacinto Steinhardt amended "that the courses be taught by the present staff."^{xviii} Both the motion and its amendment passed unanimously, and a minor in Psychology came into being.

The next major step towards the establishment of a Department of Psychology was taken in the spring of 1964 when the Executive Faculty received a proposal for the creation of a Psychology Department and major. The Executive Faculty reviewed this proposal but, “[b]ecause plans were in such an inchoate stage of development, [the body was] by no means willing to grant approval.”^{xxix} In addition, a year later in the spring of 1965, the Executive Faculty considered the possibility of creating a “Human Relations” or “Behavioral Sciences” department that housed the academic areas of Psychology, Sociology, and Anthropology, as other universities, such as Harvard, had experienced success with such a department.^{xx} However, “meetings with psychologists and sociologists revealed almost universal opposition” to such a broad area of study.^{xxi} Though the first half of the decade saw some progress towards increasing the presence of psychology in the College curriculum, it was not until the fall of 1965 when discussion of a Department of Psychology transitioned from “inchoate” speculation to an imminent reality.

Advancement towards a Department of Psychology was happening not only at the executive level, but also at the student level. “A Report Concerning A Psychology Department At Georgetown” was written and submitted to the administration during the 1964-1965 academic year. Written by a group of students, the petition listed reasons for Georgetown’s administrative body to establish a Psychology Department, arguing that it had “become the duty of any progressive university to institute a comprehensive program of psychology in its curricula.”^{xxii} The report explicitly stated that its intention was for an undergraduate program of study in Psychology to come into being as opposed to a graduate program. At the time, more than 180 colleges and universities across the country offered post-graduate programs in psychology, an indication that “the increasing importance of psychology [was]... a firmly established fact” and Georgetown was, therefore, “duty-bound to the student body to provide a curriculum” that included this area of study.^{xxiii} At the time, many of Georgetown’s Jesuit peer institutions offered such a curriculum to their students. Fordham University’s Psychology Department was created in 1933, followed closely by the establishment of a Department of Psychology at Loyola University Chicago in 1934.^{xxiv,xxv} Soon after, Boston College’s Psychology Department opened its doors in the early 1950’s. It was only fitting, then, that Georgetown College’s curriculum would follow suit.^{xxvi}

The report also included that there were six upperclassman who “by special permission” were studying for a degree in Psychology at the time, contending that the University should extend this opportunity to the rest of the student body as its current course offerings in psychology met the standard number of credit-hour requirements for a major in the College.^{xxvii} In addition to the six psychology courses offered within the College curriculum, the students named the required courses mentioned by Cortes in his case for a Psychology minor: Educational Psychology and Developmental Psychology classes were housed in the Nursing School, and a course in Industrial Psychology was part of the curriculum for students in the School of Business Administration. The authors of the petition argued that the successful completion of these nine courses should result in a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Georgetown.

A more concrete plan for the Department’s creation was prepared in the summer months of 1965 and was proposed to the Executive Faculty after its completion.^{xxviii} According to minutes from the Executive Faculty meeting in November of 1965, “It was moved ... that the executive faculty recommend to the Board of Directors that it consider the possibility of the establishment of a Psychology Department, but only after outside consultation has been made.”^{xxix} In December of the same year, Thomas R. Fitzgerald S.J., the Dean of the College at

the time, announced that a visiting team of specialists – the “outside consultation” mentioned in the previous meeting – would be coming to Georgetown to assess and discuss the possibility of a Department of Psychology.^{xxx} Following their visit in January of 1966, the team of consultants completed a report regarding the establishment of a Psychology Department. The consultants recommended that the Psychology Department should have a B.S. program of study, it should stress experimental and social psychology, and should have high academic standards for its students.^{xxxi} In the following month’s Executive Faculty meeting, Fitzgerald made it known that he hoped the Department could start in September of 1967, and, after deciding that a Chairman must be appointed, the Executive Faculty voted on the establishment of a Department of Psychology.^{xxxii} The motion passed unanimously.^{xxxiii}

The next order of business was the recruitment of a Chairman for the new Psychology Department. John J. O’Hare took on the role of Acting Chairman immediately, although he received the official title after his appointment by President Gerard J. Campbell in October of 1968.^{xxxiv} For the remainder of 1966 and into 1967, O’Hare spearheaded the preparation of the new Department. A decision was made, through correspondences between O’Hare to Fitzgerald, that Psychology majors would, after the completion of 28 required psychology credits, obtain a B.S. degree. Required courses included General Psychology, Elementary Statistics, Experimental Psychology, and Tests and Measurements.^{xxxv} O’Hare also recommended that students planning on pursuing graduate work in psychology also take German or French to supplement their studies.^{xxxvi} It was during this time that the Washington Post reported to the public that Georgetown would, starting in the fall of 1967, create a Psychology Department and offer College students the opportunity to pursue a Psychology major, which I imagine only facilitated its inauguration. Fitzgerald, quoted in the article, referenced student pressure (likely the 1964-1965 student-written report) as having a significant impact on the College’s decision to create a Department of Psychology, adding that this resolution was “also in line with a trend at Georgetown to modernize and update the curriculum.”^{xxxvii} Seeing as Georgetown was the only university located in Washington without a Psychology Department, Fitzgerald noted that psychology was “in many ways a rather modern discipline” and in an “area in which [Georgetown] had not hitherto been developing.”^{xxxviii} This statement is consistent with the outcome of the North American Region of the International Federation of Catholic Universities and Jesuit Educational Association meetings, as it suggested that Georgetown was finally incorporating an education that included “all dimensions of the human person,” including a Department that studied the person himself.^{xxxix}

The Early Years

By August 2, 1967, room schedules for psychology courses to be offered in the fall semester had been confirmed with the University Registrar and the Department was officially ready to welcome students on the first day of classes.^{xl} It was also decided that the Department would be housed in White Gravenor, as the building’s relatively large classrooms could accommodate the predicted increase in student interest reflected in higher enrollment numbers in psychology courses in the coming years. Not surprisingly, this prediction was spot on. Georgetown University saw an explosion of popularity in psychology throughout the 1960’s, jumping from 40 students enrolled in psychology courses in the 1962-1963 school year to 1,514 enrolled students from 1969-70.^{xli} This tremendous increase was, of course, largely due to the creation of the Psychology Department, which, by 1968, saw the first students graduate from the College with a B.S. in Psychology and “place well” in graduate programs in Psychology.^{xlii}

By the end of the 1969-1970 academic year, Dr. J. Gilmore Sherman was nominated to become the new Department Chair starting in the fall semester.^{xliii} Before his term ended, however, O'Hare wrote to Fr. Royden B. Davis, S.J., Dean of the College at the time, regarding the future of the Psychology Department. In his discussion of the role and scope of the Department from 1970-1975, O'Hare stated two directives. Firstly, the Department would maintain an undergraduate program of "high quality, wide diversity, and ready response to the felt needs of the majors as well as the other students in the [University]."^{xliv} His instruction on this was unquestionably followed, as the Department continues to meet the needs of both Psychology majors and students enrolled in elective courses alike. The second of O'Hare's directives, however, was not as readily enacted. In order to remain competitive with other universities, O'Hare wrote that the Department should establish a Ph.D. program in Psychology by 1975.^{xlv} While it did not occur within O'Hare's proposed time frame, the groundwork for a graduate program in Psychology at Georgetown would materialize by the year 1978.

Graduate Studies in Psychology

Following O'Hare's recommendation, the faculty of the Psychology Department made moves to create a graduate program. The first Committee on Graduate Education was assembled in 1973 for the purpose of creating a graduate program, and, in 1978, ultimately submitted a proposal to install a program of study that would accept students in the fall of 1979.^{xlvi} This proposal laid out the structure of the graduate program, listed the criteria that it must meet, spelled out requirements for admission and retention, and explained the rationale behind its foundation. On the basis of the "special nature of the program, the strong outside reviews, and the confidence of the Department," the Executive Council of the Graduate School, the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and President Timothy Healy, S.J., ultimately supported the six-page document and the program welcomed its first graduate students in August of 1981.^{xlvii}

Most notably, the structure of Georgetown's graduate program in Psychology was distinct from that which was offered at other institutions. Specifically, this new program did not follow a "conventional" path but would revive a more "traditional" method of achieving an advanced degree in Psychology.^{xlviii} The standard path to a graduate degree at the time was to take "a five-course/term regimen," which was a curriculum that would have been "judged as preposterous on its face" by traditional education's standards, according to the authors of the proposal.^{xlix} They sought to return the emphasis on graduate studies to the individual's capacity to teach himself, whereby instead of attending lectures in a classroom, the student would "work on the most vexing and abiding problems animating [the field]" in settings such as "the library, the laboratory, [and] the rooms of established scholars."¹ Aside from a two-semester, nine-credit course in Research Design and Quantitative Methods, the graduate program was designed on a tutorial basis, with one-on-one faculty and student sessions that allowed for "personal initiative, intellectual independence, and open resistance to busy-work."^{li}

Students accepted to the program would receive an M.A. in Psychology after completing 30 credits and writing a Master's Essay, which had to be completed within four years.^{lii} After the completion of 60 credits and a Doctoral Dissertation within a seven-year period, students would be awarded a Ph.D. in Psychology.^{liii} Financial aid from the University was not offered to candidates, as the Committee noted that individuals in the program would have ample time to work and "little difficulty in earning enough to pay for their own educations."^{liv} In order to capitalize on the intimacy inherent in the program's tutorial design, faculty members could take

on no more than two dissertations per year. All of these points, according to the authors of the proposal, would “give Georgetown a competitive edge” as it neared the 200th anniversary of its establishment.^{lv}

After much “debate and discussion,” the proposal was accepted and Georgetown’s first graduate program in Psychology opened its doors in the fall of 1981.^{lvi} Admission to the program was highly selective, and in its first year, only 4% of applicants were accepted and received instruction by the then 12 full-time faculty members.^{lvii} Aside from taking the Graduate Examination and Doctoral Examination, these students did not have to take tests but were instead assigned grades based on the quality of their submitted work. This allowed for them to pursue “independently undertaken and completed projects, of an experimental or scholarly nature” as opposed to having to sit for traditional examinations.^{lviii} Georgetown University’s Self-Evaluation Report for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities stated that it would monitor and track the new program in its early years to ensure the quality of its students and their successes as well as its impact on the undergraduate program of study.^{lix}

In time, it became clear that the original graduate program’s tutorial design was unviable. It was, quite simply, economically unsustainable to steer clear from the “conventional” path attacked in the 1978 proposal. Firstly, the anticipated ease with which accepted students would be able to pay for their education proved to be far from accurate. The lack of financial support placed the entirety of the burden to come up with appropriate funds for tuition on students. Those admitted to the program, then, were faced with the challenge of juggling their scheduled tutorials with professors, their coursework, and the hours at their jobs required to fund their program of study. Instead of taking the expected seven years to graduate with a doctoral degree, students were taking up to ten years to get through their requirements, which was not only more expensive but also delayed the onset of their careers in psychology.^{lx} In addition to the obstacles that enrolled students had to face, it is also likely that prospective candidates turned down the opportunity to pursue graduate studies in Psychology at Georgetown for more affordable programs offered at other institutions. The old program admitted its last new students in 1998, and, in 2002, was replaced by a new and improved graduate course of study that is still in place today.^{lxi}

As soon as Professor Deborah Phillips was recruited as Chair of the Department in 2000, she began working on the creation of a new graduate program in Psychology that was decidedly more conventional in terms of its structure and mode of operation. She and Professor Darlene Howard collaborated to develop a program in Developmental Science that ensured “state-of-the-art graduate education” that reflected “exciting new intellectual and professional trends in the field.”^{lxii} The new structure of the program would offer students either a Ph.D. in Psychology or a joint Ph.D. in Psychology and Masters in Public Policy (MPP) from the Georgetown Public Policy Institute. The final proposal for this program, published in January of 2002, overhauled the tutorial-style curriculum and replaced it with an entirely new program of study comprised of required core and concentration courses and elective courses, which totaled 49 credits in lieu of the former program’s 60 credits.^{lxiii} It also outlined required projects and proposals, the nature of which varied depending on year of study, which were designed to supplement classroom work. Students had the choice of pursuing a concentration in either Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience or Human Development and Public Policy. In a nutshell, the new program combined the emerging field of neuroscience with social and policy issues that offered students an “in-depth understanding of the historical and philosophical origins, the central issues, and the contemporary dilemmas that characterize the Developmental Sciences.”^{lxiv}

The new program also improved financial support for admitted students, of which the proposal projected three or four applicants to be admitted per year.^{lxv} In addition to three years of graduate training funded by predoctoral research proposals approved by the NIH and NSF (which was projected to be awarded to about half of the graduate students), the proposal stipulated that Georgetown University provide full funding for four graduate students in each year in the form of four-years of teaching assistantships and scholarships.^{lxvi} This change was brought about as a result of the former graduate program's untenable system that "seriously harmed student recruitment, retention, and productivity."^{lxvii}

Another benefit of the new program outlined in the 2002 proposal was its design "to contribute to both the breadth and depth of the undergraduate program in psychology."^{lxviii} This would be achieved by making graduate students responsible for being teaching assistants for undergraduate courses, teaching advanced seminars for majors, and acting as mentors for undergraduates wanting to get involved in research. More individualized attention could be given to the "2,800 to 3,000 undergraduate students" who were taught by the Department's full-time faculty. In fact, the ratio of faculty to majors at the time the proposal was written was 1/17.4, a statistic that demonstrated the fewer opportunities for direct involvement in small seminars, research, laboratories, and Honors programs for undergraduates.^{lxix} Graduate students would ameliorate these shortcomings by providing additional support for the faculty and facilitating learning opportunities within the Department.

A Psychology Curriculum at Georgetown

Although the Department was not founded until 1967, psychology courses – at least in some capacity – had existed at Georgetown for quite some time. The first documented psychology class was offered in the 1891-1892 school year to senior students on the Honors track, although it was still very much rooted in philosophy in regards to the nature of the questions asked on the final examination and was categorized as Philosophy for the purposes of the College's course bulletin.^{lxx} In addition, as mentioned above, there were required courses in psychology in both the School of Nursing and the School of Business Administration. Psychology elective courses offered in the College, however, were listed as a division of Philosophy until the mid 1960's.

Interestingly, the 1966 College course bulletins revealed to the public that change was imminent before the Department was officially established. In the spring of 1966, Psychology appeared as a division of Philosophy as it had in years prior.^{lxxi} However, in the course bulletin for the fall of 1966, Psychology was a separate listing, which suggests that the Registrar's office knew that talks of creating a Department were in the works despite the fact that its inception was not scheduled until August of the following year.^{lxxii} Additionally, the course offerings in psychology changed drastically between the fall semesters of 1966 and 1967. Only three psychology courses were offered in the fall of 1966: Basic Psychology (a general psychology class), Developmental Psychology, and Psychostatistics. Just one year later, the psychology classes listed in the undergraduate bulletin expanded to include Abnormal Psychology, Elementary Statistics, Psychology of Adolescence, Experimental Psychology: Motivation and Learning, and a seminar in Current Psychological Literature.^{lxxiii} From 1967 onward, the Department continued to grow its course offerings and, although specific courses – especially smaller classes – have come and gone over the years, the overall number of classes available to students has steadily increased since the major was introduced.

The requirements for a major in Psychology have also shifted over time. In the 1980-1981 academic year, students on the major track were subject to completing General Psychology, a full-year course in General Experimental Psychology, and Psychological Statistics.^{lxxiv} At the time, both General Psychology and General Experimental Psychology were offered as 4-credit courses which, when counted with the Psychological Statistics requirement, totaled 15 credits. In addition, these students were required to take seven elective courses (most of which were three credits). At least one of these electives had to be completed in each of the four major areas, which were defined as Advanced General Psychology, Personality and Clinical Psychology, Social Psychology, and Experimental Psychology.^{lxxv} Students also had to take Introductory Biology and “four additional courses in science and/or mathematics” in order to successfully complete the major.^{lxxvi} Altogether, obtaining a Psychology major at Georgetown during this time mandated the completion of no fewer than 36 credits in the Psychology Department and at least 15 credits in the math and sciences.

However, just ten years later, the major requirements looked radically different. The 15 credits required in math and science had been eliminated entirely. Although General Psychology and Research Methods and Statistics were still necessary to complete the major, they were offered as 3-credit classes.^{lxxvii} Furthermore, Experimental Psychology had disappeared from the core requirements and was offered instead as an elective within the Department. An additional 3-credit elective course was required of majors, raising the number of necessary electives from seven to eight.^{lxxviii} As had been the case in previous years, a Psychology major had to take at least one course in each of the listed major areas, although there were now four such areas. Students had to take at least one elective course in Advanced General Psychology, Personality/Clinical Psychology, and Social Psychology and at least two classes in Experimental Psychology. Lastly, Psychology majors at the turn of the decade were also subject to fulfilling a research credit in conjunction with an elective of their choice. To graduate in the year 1990 with a major in Psychology meant a student had successfully completed 31 credits in the Psychology Department.

These considerable changes in major requirements did not occur without explanation. In fact, this shift coincides with a revision in the required curriculum to obtain a Psychology degree. The Department of Psychology, when it officially opened its doors in August of 1967, offered majors a B.S. in Psychology. This course of study had been recommended by external reviewers and cited extensively as the best decision for future majors well before the Department’s creation, as evidenced by numerous official reports and Executive Faculty meeting minutes in the early to mid-1960’s.^{lxxix,lxxx} As a side note, prior to the Department’s official founding, students graduating with a degree in Psychology “by special permission” as well as certain members of the class of 1968 were awarded an A.B. degree.^{lxxxii} However, this was the last cohort to graduate with a Bachelor’s of Arts in Psychology and, by the 1967-1968 academic year, the 71 students enrolled in the College as Psychology majors intended on completing a B.S. by the end of their four years at Georgetown.^{lxxxii}

Not long after the B.S. track of study was introduced, students started issuing a series of formal complaints regarding the abundance of science requirements they were required to take in order to obtain a Psychology degree. In the earliest published objections, students took a stand against the physics requirement that existed for majors in the early 1970’s, demanding a meeting with the Department Chair to defend his decision to impose such “irrelevant” prerequisites on Psychology majors.^{lxxxiii} Although the physics requirement was eliminated soon thereafter, the widespread opposition of students to the stringent, credit-heavy curriculum for Psychology

majors was brought to the attention of President Robert J. Henle in the Dean's Annual Report of 1968-1969. In this document, Fr. Royden B. Davis noted there was "growing student feeling that both a B.S. and an A.B. degree in Psychology should be available at Georgetown."^{lxxxiv} Ostensibly, this feeling continued to grow for the following 20 years until, in the fall of 1988, students were able to pursue an A.B. in Psychology.

The decision to offer an A.B. degree was driven not only by Psychology majors but also by members of the Department. Professor Darlene Howard, who began her career at Georgetown in 1973, cited this shift as one of the most major ways the Department has changed over the years. She remembered that, in addition to the number of requirements, one of the primary reasons the course of study was modified was because the faculty "thought the Department needed to grow."^{lxxxv} With the transition from B.S. to A.B., the Department accomplished its goal of growth, experiencing "an influx of new majors" in the late 1980's into the early 1990's.^{lxxxvi} According to Professor Howard, this had its pros and cons. Increased student interest led to an expansion in the Department, and talented new hires in the early 1990's, like Professor Mann, were brought on board in response to the explosion in psychology course popularity among undergraduates. The flipside to increased enrollment was the loss of smaller, more intimate courses. "In a way, we got too much of what we were looking for," recalled Professor Howard, as course enrollment became so high that classes with traditionally lower enrollment were soon filled to capacity with Psychology majors.^{lxxxvii} Despite this slight disadvantage, however, the Department "has really adapted well to change while keeping its fundamental commitment to education."^{lxxxviii} An example of this can be seen in the introduction of medium-sized, courses at the 200-level to "complement the large 100-level lecture courses so students could have more opportunities for engaging in projects."^{lxxxix}

A Psychology major in the College today faces yet a third markedly different course of study than did students before the millennium. Although 31 credits are still required to complete the major, their allocation within the Department is different.^{xc} The only requirement outside of the Department is Probability and Statistics (which is offered in the Math Department). The remaining 28 credits include General Psychology, a 4-credit Research Methods and Statistics class, two seminar courses, three core courses and two electives. Among the three required core courses, one must be taken within each of three designated areas of study, which mark the most distinct departure from earlier psychology curriculums at Georgetown. The first designated area of study is Conceptual and Developmental Foundations, which includes courses relating to human development and philosophy. The second area is a combination of Social and Personality and houses courses about cultural and community psychology. Lastly, students must take at least one course in the Cognitive and Biological Basis category, in which classes pertaining to learning, physiological psychology, and neuroscience can be found. In this way, the current academic track for Psychology majors is designed so that students "receive a strong foundation in research methods for the social sciences while enjoying the flexibility to choose from three different areas of study."^{xci}

The Future of Psychology at Georgetown

It is critical to note that, much like the evolution of Georgetown's curriculum to ultimately include a Department of Psychology, the Department itself has altered its program of study over the years as a consequence of both internal and external motivations. For example, internally, both student and faculty interest was a driving force for the transition from a B.S. to a B.A. degree. Externally, the Department's course offerings since its foundation have also, to an

extent, reflected the field at large, shifting from an earlier emphasis on behaviorism to the discipline's relatively recent fascination with neuroscience. Since its inception through the present day, the argument can be made that the Department's curriculum corresponds to the nature of the field outside the front gates. However, the Psychology Department faculty at Georgetown "is at an interesting place right now, allowing for a diversity of methodologies and philosophies" that do not necessarily mirror the general direction of the field.^{xcii} Current faculty members vary tremendously in their particular research interests, some of which are rooted in traditional philosophies while others focus more on recent technologies that provide insights on brain activation and structure. The question, then, becomes whether psychology at Georgetown will maintain its unique character or whether it will take on an identity that closely parallels the field at large. In other words, what will the Psychology Department look like in years to come? This paper has explored, in depth, the institutional history of psychology at Georgetown; with this in mind, can we confidently make predictions about its institutional future?

Of the ten current full-time faculty members I interviewed, all ten cited the emergence of neuroscience as the most significant way that psychology as a discipline had changed since joining the Psychology Department. "Talking about the brain used to be unheard of in a behavioral paper," said Professor Abigail Marsh, "but now there is more cross-talk and the brain is seen as an incredibly important part of psychology."^{xciii} Professor Howard agreed, "In general, today, there is more and more of an influence of neuroscience on psychology in almost every area."^{xciv} Understandably, the increased emphasis of neuroscience has made the field even more interdisciplinary. According to Professor Deborah Phillips, the growing influence of neuroscience has made psychology even more of a collaborative field in which experts "are poised to answer deeper questions than ever before."^{xcv} And, consistent with the increasing influence of neuroscience on the discipline, many of Georgetown's course offerings have followed suit. "Recently, the Department has become geared towards neuroscience, which is incorporated into courses and research here more and more," said Professor David Crystal.^{xcvi} In this way, the Department of Psychology at Georgetown emulates the character of the discipline at large. The most recent Departmental self study even goes as far as to paint neuroscience as one of "the most exciting areas of psychological science [because] researchers are crossing disciplinary borders and escaping traditional boundaries."^{xcvii}

However, faculty members were split in regards to whether this shift in direction towards neuroscience is a positive change. "The study of psychology should be person-centered, and neuroscience is not person-centered," insisted Professor James Lamiell, who is also the current Department Chair.^{xcviii} "Neuroscience has a stronger grip on the discipline, but the two are different things," he contended. Professor Moghaddam similarly maintained that neuroscience "should not dominate the future of psychology," arguing that its "role in the field is a matter of interpretation: I believe in another thirty years, psychologists will look back to contemporary interpretations of neuroscience research in the same way we now look back at behaviorism in the 20th century, as a huge mistake."^{xcix} These two professors, though, make up the minority (within the group of professors I interviewed) who believe that neuroscience should not firmly plant its roots in psychology.

On the more enthusiastic side, proponents of neuroscience's increasing presence and influence in psychology include Professors Phillips, Marsh, Mann, Howard, and Crystal. "I think it's a wonderful change," remarked Professor Crystal, adding that neuroscience "is where things need to go."^c Professor Janet Mann was also of the opinion that "the field [of psychology] is still person-centered because the psyche is very much a part of neuroscience."^{ci} Along those same

lines, Professor Marsh emphasized the importance of a comprehensive understanding, stating, “To fully understand anything means understanding all the levels of it, and neuroscience is definitely one [of those levels].”^{cii} Professor Howard expressed her views on the matter, claiming, thanks to neuroscience, psychology has grown its understanding of neural bases of the mind and behavior in general.^{ciii} When asked if she thought neuroscience was just a fad, Professor Howard shook her head and replied confidently, “Neuroscience is here to stay.”^{civ}

Still others in the Department have a mixed attitude about the role of neuroscience in contemporary psychology. Professor Yulia Chentsova-Dutton welcomes the increased emphasis on neuroscience, but cautioned that it should be offset by other sub-disciplines of psychology. “Our Department is more neuroscience-y and quantitative in flavor now,” she said.^{cv} However, she noted that Georgetown’s Psychology Department is unusual in that, compared to many institutions, it still, to some extent, maintains a qualitative focus.^{cvi} Professor Steven Sabat held the same opinion, contending that there is “much more room for narrative and talking about what’s happening with people rather than just trying to convert everything into quantitative data” at Georgetown.^{cvi} However, since joining the Department in 1975, Sabat noted that neuroscience is much more present in both the field at large and within the Department. He made it clear that he did not believe neuroscience should be more dominant than any of the other sub-disciplines, reassuring me that, although neuroscience certainly takes an interesting perspective, “there are still 360 different ways to see an elephant.”^{cvi} Professor Jennifer Woolard took a more guarded stance on the subject, calling neuroscience a “mixed blessing for the field.”^{cix} She said the study of neuroscience is a net positive in the sense that it has sparked “incredibly important work and understanding within psychology” and has made a positive contribution in giving psychology more “hard science credibility,” but believes there is overall too much authority given to neuroscience.^{cx} “Our attention as a discipline has tilted too far to the brain and neuroscience,” she warned, “and it needs to swing back to a greater balance.”^{cx}

The question of identity remains at the forefront of these concerns. Some faculty members believe that Georgetown, in relation to its peer institutions, is less focused on neuroscience and adheres to a more qualitative and philosophical basis.^{cxii} The broader field, however, is going in a different direction. Professor Chentsova-Dutton explained the overriding challenge during our interview. “It’s exciting that the field is growing in this way, but it also means the old and very much cherished identity of the Department is changing,” she said. “There is a group of faculty that might be retiring in the next few years. This means that the identity of psychology at this school will change quite dramatically, and we’re trying to plan for it and around it. It is really a question of to what extent we want to grow the old tradition or let it disappear at Georgetown.”^{cxiii}

Regardless of the apparent divide in regards to the emergence of neuroscience and its implications, the Department of Psychology united to produce a plan for the future of the discipline within the front gates. In its 2012 self study, the Psychology Department put forth projections for its future. In addition to continuing to provide its students with a high quality education, there are plans to improve both the undergraduate and graduate experience in psychology. More undergraduate classes will be offered, especially those designed for majors, requiring an increase in the number of faculty members.^{cxiv} In addition, courses offered in the future will include a policy aspect and will involve undergraduate students more directly in research training.^{cxv} Students at the graduate level will also benefit from the Department’s plans to develop in the future. Plans to introduce a third track in cultural and social psychology to the Ph.D. program, as well as to expand the two preexisting graduate tracks, are in the works.^{cxvi}

This expansion would subsequently provide extra support to the undergraduate education, as the increased enrollment of graduate students would ostensibly assist in teaching and mentoring undergraduates.

All in all, the future of psychology at Georgetown looks bright. Considering the tremendous growth the Department of Psychology has experienced since its official founding in 1967, it is safe to assume that psychology will continue to thrive as a course of study at Georgetown University. The accomplishments and passion of the faculty members coupled with the subject's widespread popularity amongst students has positioned psychology as an academic staple both within the front gates and in the broader educational community. Professor Crystal, who has been teaching at Georgetown since 1994, put it in very simple terms. At the conclusion of our interview, I asked him if there was anything else he could add that would be potentially helpful to my project. "Overall, the Department has improved and expanded in a very promising way," he told me.^{cxvii} Then he paused for a moment, giving me the impression that our interview was finished. As I stood up to thank him for his time, he extended his hand, adding with a knowing smile, "And I can only think that this growth and expansion will continue into the future."^{cxviii}

Notes

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ⁱⁱⁱ Georges Gusdorf, "L'avenement des sciences humaines au siecle des lumieres," (Paris: Payot, 1973), 97.

^{iv} Brown, "Learning, Faith, Freedom, and Building a Curriculum," 82.

^v *Ibid.*, 80.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 81

^{vii} *Catalogue of the College, 1905-1906*, 40-41.

^{viii} Brown, "Learning, Faith, Freedom, and Building a Curriculum," 83.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 84.

^x *Ibid.*, 85.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, 85.

^{xii} *Ibid.*, 88.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, 88.

^{xiv} "Statement on the Distinctive Characteristics of Jesuit Higher Education," in *Guidelines for Jesuit Higher Education: The Consensus Statements, Recommendations, and Committee Reports of the J. E. A. Denver Workshop on Jesuit Universities and Colleges: Their Commitment in a World of Change*, ed. Eugene E. Grollmes, SJ. (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Educational Association, 1969), 9.

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- ^{xxviii} Thomas R. Fitzgerald, S.J., "A Report on the College of Arts and Sciences," 9.
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- ^{liii} Ibid.
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^{cxv} Georgetown University Department of Psychology Self Study, March 26, 2012, 29.

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