

Brandeis Psychology in the Late Fifties: Further Comment on Feigenbaum (2020)

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Recent articles in this journal spoke about A.H. Maslow and the Brandeis University Psychology Department of the 1960s (Feigenbaum, 2020, Lester, 2020), the first from a former junior faculty member, the second from a former graduate student. I learned from each of them, and they triggered my own memories as an undergraduate psychology major who went on to earn a PhD in clinical psychology. Maslow taught the introductory course in fall semester; I took it in the spring (1958) with Ricardo Morant, who succeeded Maslow as department chair, and held that position for decades.

I first met Maslow during my junior year, in his course on motivation, already having studied with Walter Toman, Ulric Neisser, Richard Held, James Klee, Richard Jones and David Ricks. All but Klee were young men who hadn't yet made their mark. Maslow did hire one woman, Eugenia Hanffman, who did not teach, but instead founded the first college counseling service, a facility now universal in American higher education. Friends had told me Maslow's introductory course was excellent; my recollection of his teaching was that it lacked organization and consisted mostly of anecdotes. However, at my graduate admissions interview I was asked to name three psychologists who had most affected my thinking. I cited Freud, Wilhelm Reich (1934), and Maslow.

Later, at the five-year anniversary reunion of my Brandeis class, I saw Dr. Maslow just outside the Brown Building. Eager to tell him I had just completed my doctorate, I thanked him for his leadership of the very special group with whom I had studied (by then several had decamped). He seemed to this newly-minted clinician to be depressed. He said he was sorry he'd chosen to be a psychologist and regretted much of what he'd written, especially the *Abnormal Psychology* text co-authored with Bela Mittelman. I was shocked, reiterated my appreciation, and backed away. This was a year before his election to the APA presidency,

Maslow's "humanistic psychology" could not be considered a specialty. It was instead a general attitude that influenced the entire profession. Ulric Neisser's entry in *The History of Psychology through Autobiography* (Lindzey & Runyan, 2007) spoke of Maslow's Humanistic Psychology as the "third force;" Freud and Skinner were the other two. Known as the father of "cognitive psychology" and coining that term, Neisser ultimately displaced Maslow to become a real third force. Maslow's reputation as an eminent psychologist remained estimable, finding adherents (paradoxically, it seems to me) in Industrial Psychology.

I've often mentioned Maslow as my teacher, and I refer to myself today as a "flexible Freudian," my flexibility related to the humanistic atmosphere conveyed by each of the several members of the Brandeis faculty Maslow assembled. Walter Toman and Richard Jones were the two faculty Freudians. Toman gave a definition of "cathexis" — "learning to appreciate" — that enabled me to resist the word's quantitative implications then in fashion for the neologism, James Strachey's translation of the German *beziehung*.

Jones's focus on applications of psychoanalysis (which led to his 1968 book, *Fantasy and Feeling in Education*) oriented me to Freudian thinking as a study of the human mind and its products. In several tutorials and a course, Klee exposed students to the multiple manifestations of offbeat ideas. Neisser taught a great statistics course, as well as one on memory, and Held taught the History of Psychology, the best single course I've ever taken. Jones and Ricks jointly led a "personality laboratory," what is now referred to as a process group, not therapy but surely a therapeutic experience. Morant was a steadying influence, a research scientist and humanist who spent his full career at Brandeis.

I like to say that this faculty was — pound for pound — the best psychology department ever established. Like *Camelot*, that department would not last, but an unusually high number of classmates (plus many students in other classes at the time) became psychiatrists or psychologists, passing on the wisdom of those mostly young men. An important characteristic of contemporary psychoanalysis, which I hope is also true of psychology at large, is respect for multiple perspectives, and Maslow's great accomplishment as founder and chair of that small department at Brandeis was, I believe, to nurture a quality of openness among the undergraduates lucky enough to have been there at the time.

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