

A Brief Response to Dr. Jeffrey H. Golland

Kenneth Feigenbaum

I have read with much interest the letter of Dr. Jeffrey H. Golland describing for the Spring, 2022, issue of the CCR his experience as an undergraduate student in the Department of Psychology at Brandeis University in the late 1950's.

I have no disagreements with his remarks concerning the quality of the faculty of the department at that time nor his estimation of Maslow as an undergraduate teacher. I also appreciated reading his subjective experience of Maslow as a mentor.

Maslow was a popular undergraduate professor both at Brooklyn College and, for many years, at Brandeis. As I reported in my letter (Feigenbaum, 2020), I conducted an informal study of his students from the class of 1955. In short, they loved him. His worldwide reputation and the perceived excellent quality of his teaching continued beyond Golland's tenure at Brandeis with his experimental classes (Maslow, 2019).

Unlike Prof. Maslow's close and supportive relationships with his undergraduate students, his relationships with his graduate students for the most part produced disappointment on the parts of both Maslow and his students.

According to Hoffman (Hoffman, 1988, p. 222):

At best, some doctoral student came to regard Maslow as unintentionally too self-absorbed to become involved with their training. They either worked autonomously or chose to train under someone else on the faculty. "If you want to get your doctorate," was the inside saying, "don't work under Abe Maslow. You'll never get out of here if you do." At worst, they muttered that he hypocritically espoused a whole agenda of humanist and socially relevant research while neither attempting it himself nor guiding anyone else who wished to accomplish it.

However, I strongly believe that *hypocritical* is not the correct word for describing Maslow's lack of closely working with, and supporting the work of, the graduate students. Rather, he believed that a graduate student should possess self-direction by themselves without the hovering of an overbearing mother or father figure. This attitude combined with his emergence as a highly sought-after psychologist, which thus required much wearing travel; his limitations as to his energy due to his physical conditions; and his desire to spread his philosophy before he would die were the main underlying causes.

In the period during which Dr. Golland attended Brandeis the department's fulcrum was still tilted toward undergraduate teaching.

By the time I began to teach at Brandeis (September of 1962) the emphasis in the department had already begun to shift to graduate education. The great majority of the faculty meetings were taken up by discussions about the graduate students. Discussions about the undergraduate curriculum and how to teach these students was left up to the individual faculty members.

The quality and devotion to teaching undergraduates varies over time in most colleges and universities. The Brandeis case may provide an example of institutions that overstretch their resources. This problem may be most severe in small liberal arts colleges whose faculty members have a strong interest in performing research.

I am almost jealous of the outstanding experience that Dr. Golland had with the faculty members who taught him at Brandeis. His letter provides a broader perspective of the Brandeis Department of Psychology than either Feigenbaum (Feigenbaum, 2019) or Lester (Lester, 2020) have portrayed.

References

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- Maslow, Abraham H. (2019). *Personality & Growth: A Humanistic Psychology In The Classroom*. Maurice Bassett, Anna Maria, Florida.