



Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences

Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences

A Seventieth Anniversary History

REDMOND BARRY
BUILDING

Roderick D. Buchanan

A Seventieth Anniversary History

Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences The University of Melbourne 1946 to 2016

Roderick D. Buchanan

History and Philosophy of Science
School of Historical and Philosophical Studies
The University of Melbourne

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Published August 2016 by
Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences
The University of Melbourne
Parkville, Victoria 3010

Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Roderick D. Buchanan
A Seventieth Anniversary History: Melbourne School of
Psychological Sciences The University of Melbourne 1946 to 2016

ISBN: 978-0-7340-5307-7

Printed in Melbourne, Australia by Nulab Group

Designed by Christopher Newton

Cover photograph shows the Redmond Barry Building, the home of the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences from 1961 to today.

(Photograph by Lee McRae, August 2016)

Foreword

Professor Nick Haslam, Head of School



In his preface to the 50th anniversary history of psychology at the University of Melbourne, then head of psychology Professor Roger Wales quoted Mark Twain on how Australian history reads “like the most beautiful lies”. Twenty years later another Twain quote seems apt: “If you find you can’t make seventy by any but an uncomfortable road, don’t you go.” Rod Buchanan’s new history provides a splendid chronicle of the often uncomfortable road that psychology has taken at Melbourne since the department was formed in 1946, and indeed since the subject was first taught by the University’s first professor of philosophy in 1886. It is a story of relentless growth, innovation and transformation, but also one of serious challenges and threats from within the University and without. Along the way several larger than life characters are brought vividly to the page. Psychology’s own complexities – its tensions between basic science and applied professional practice, its often fraught intermediate position between bioscience, medicine, social science and the humanities – are very much in evidence.

We should be grateful to Buchanan, an accomplished historian of the behavioural sciences, for his skill in presenting the story of psychology at Melbourne in such a compelling and contextualized way. This history reminds us how far we have come and gives us some inkling of where we are going. The road may continue to be uncomfortable, but we can be sure it will become increasingly fast and wide.

August 2016

Introduction

The story of psychology at Melbourne traverses a period from the late 19th century well into the 21st, from mental philosophy to cognitive neuroscience. It parallels the history of psychology as a separate and autonomous discipline. Nonetheless, there are some distinctly local twists and turns to this tale.

The Department/School I documented in 1996 has changed in some obvious and quite profound ways. Staff turnover and expansion has made for many fresh faces. Few current members of the School date back past 1996. Much of this has simply been a generational phenomenon, as a cohort of senior staff retired or moved on. However, the transformation goes much further than this.

Such a development is hardly surprising, given that change is very much the norm in psychology. As a “hub” discipline, it has always bordered on several related areas. At one level, it resembles a federation of sub-disciplines that encompass both scientific and professional arms. However, it has generally found strength in uniting at more than just an administrative level. As a socially-connected discipline – even in its most abstract and basic forms – it has to be flexible and adaptable. Social relevance necessarily shapes the priorities of basic and applied psychological research, and the shifting methodological priorities and technical requirements that go with them. Likewise, the professional arm of the discipline must be ready to meet expanding service needs and new professional roles. Self-examination has played a key role in guiding renewal and reinvention at Melbourne. The changes that have taken place also reflect the enormous upheavals that have taken place in higher education across the country since the turn of the century. Here in our backyard, the contemporary idea of a university as a multi-function institution for research, teaching and public engagement seems light-years from the elite, insular sensibilities that characterised higher learning a century ago.¹

The last two decades have seen several major reviews of the School, as well as numerous financial audits, research appraisals and teaching accreditation procedures. The School has remade itself in ways that would surprise and please its founding Professor Oscar Oeser. But many of the same themes and issues of Oeser’s day remain: the evolving cycles of psychological research, the politics of funding, the need for new buildings and better equipment, the sense of identity and place within the University and the community.

When I left off in 1996, the School had only recently become part of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. It is now firmly entrenched within the Faculty as the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences. The School hosts world-leading research across a range of dedicated areas, often as part of cross-disciplinary collaborations with other institutions and agencies. The cross-disciplinary impetus of the “neuro-turn” has made for ground-up research in cognitive brain processes, feeding through social and clinical research domains. The School has remodelled its curriculum and the delivery of it in ways that reflect the intellectual shifts of the discipline, as well as increasing student demand and the ever changing budgetary conditions of the Australian tertiary environment. And the School positively exemplifies the new third imperative at Melbourne of public engagement, reaching out into the community with clinical services and in open academic and media forums.

1 For a discussion these changes, see Glyn Davis, “The Australian idea of a university,” *Meanjin*, 72 (2013): 32-48.

The establishment of psychological science at Melbourne

When one considers the early history of psychology at the University of Melbourne the words of Kurt Danziger, a distinguished former staff member, appear rather apt: “[it has a] long past but a short history.”² As an independent department, psychology arrived relatively late at Melbourne – later than at Sydney and Western Australia, later than in the United Kingdom and much later than in the United States. However, the teaching of psychology and psychological research at Melbourne dates back well before the turn of the 20th century, when the University was a comparatively small institution cultivating the state’s intellectual elite.

The early history of psychology at the University of Melbourne speaks to the peculiar history of the social sciences down under. The social sciences faced an uphill battle to consolidate a place in higher education in Australia, not least at Melbourne. Our universities were originally established as secular, mostly non-residential institutions. The teaching focus was largely professional, geared to meeting the young colony’s need for doctors, lawyers and engineers. Even so, the tradition of classical British education still found a place within the sandstone walls of the most venerable institutions in Sydney and Melbourne. In contrast, the social sciences tended to fall between two stools, neither seen as a practical requirement nor as part of



University of Melbourne Medical School in 1890 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences Archive)

the classical humanities tradition. Those at the top – Vice-Chancellors and Professorial Boards, and the like – were reluctant to grant social sciences an institutional niche. Melbourne had a habit of hiring people rather than creating departments and a periodic aversion to public controversy and political radicalism. Psychology was a long time coming as a separate department; sociology has, in this sense, never come at all. A curious irony cannot be left unremarked: the founding members of the Melbourne department were especially noted for doing a kind of *de facto* sociology.

2 Kurt Danziger, “The social origins of modern psychology,” in Buss, A.R., *Psychology in social context* (NY: Irvington, 1979), p.28. A South African born experimentalist and later a noted historian of psychology, Danziger was a staff member at Melbourne in the 1950s.

Those promoting psychology at Australian universities at the turn of the 20th century had to cope with the dismissive attitudes imported by British academics. Those from the classical humanities side of C.P. Snow's famous divide saw something slightly indecent about interrogating the deeper recesses of the human mind. In any case, this upstart discipline was yet to prove its practical value in an Australian context; it remained to be seen whether the mysteries of the mind were amenable to scientific investigation.³



Henry Laurie (1837-1922),
(University of Melbourne Archives)

Academic psychology began in Australia as a less than presupposing offshoot of philosophy, taught as mental philosophy. It first appeared at Australia's two oldest establishments of higher education, the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne, both established in the early 1850s. The slightly younger southern campus got in first, with the appointment of the tall, red-bearded Scot, Henry Laurie, to a lectureship in philosophy in 1881. Sydney University followed suit with Francis Anderson in 1888, and both posts were quickly upgraded to chairs explicitly covering mental philosophy.⁴ Both Laurie and Anderson were educated in Europe, predominantly Scotland, where psychology had gained its strongest institutional foothold in the United Kingdom in the late 19th century. Anderson's Glasgow credentials gave Sydney philosophy and psychology a Scottish common-sense realism it has retained to this day.

At Melbourne, Laurie quickly introduced a subject called "Mental philosophy."⁵ When he became Australia's first Professor of Philosophy in 1886, he added "Psychology" as part of the honours course. Laurie's teaching of psychology emphasised the physiological experimentalism of Alexander Bain, and the expansive social and scientific writings of Herbert Spencer. It took in aspects of British associationism, such as the idea that sensory experience could be broken down to a combination of elements, or "sensuous atoms" as it was termed at the time. Significantly, Laurie looked upon the experimental and mental testing work being done in U.S. and German universities as an intellectual and institutional model. He envisaged a similar research program in experimental psychology that would require a well-equipped laboratory. However, his plans were largely overlooked in the response to a financial disaster that rocked an already cash-strapped university. Early in the new century it was discovered that some 'creative' book-keeping had enabled an accountant to embezzle securities and other funds worth £ 23,839 – a sum exceeding the annual income of the University at the time. The scandal hastened moves to set up a Royal Commission into the finances, management and teaching of the University. All members of staff, especially those in Arts, were under pressure to justify their expenditure. However, they were also offered an opportunity to make suggestions for the expansion and diversification of teaching and research.

In his testimony to the Commission in 1902, Laurie emphasised the need for new equipment in order to carry out experiments "under definite physical and physiological conditions." This was a mode of research of a "different kind" from the reading and thinking to which the philosophy staff and students

3 Philip E. Vernon, M. D, "Review of L. Hearnshaw, *A short history of British psychology, 1840-1940*," *Eugenics Review*, 56 (1965): 212-213.

4 Roderick D. Buchanan, "Psychology in Australia" in *Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology*, David B. Baker, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.18-33.

5 Geoffrey Blainey, *A centenary history of the University of Melbourne* (Melbourne: MUP, 1957), p.102.

were accustomed. Laurie cited the supporting correspondence of one Professor E.B. Titchener of Cornell University as to what such a laboratory would cost. The good Professor estimated it would cost a minimum of 500 pounds to fit with equipment, with an annual maintenance expenditure of up to 150 pounds, plus salary costs for lecturers, demonstrators and trained mechanics. As one might imagine, such extensive outlays were not easy to justify in any Arts program. Laurie maintained that the University needed such laboratory facilities “in order to keep it in the front rank.” However, he candidly admitted that there “were many subjects in connection with the University which ought to take precedence of this.”⁶ He also noted that in the U.S., experimental psychologists “had been pressing [psychology] upon the attention of teachers” but there was “a remarkable difference of opinion” as to its practical value.⁷

The Royal Commission recommended several new Chairs and an increase in outlays from the State government, but none of these proposed measures put psychology on a more independent footing. John Latham took over the teaching of psychology from Laurie in 1904, and the first decade of the new century was marked by cost cutting and poverty across much of the University.⁸ Experimental psychology at Melbourne had to wait for a more solid institutional niche and infrastructure support.⁹ Interestingly, E.F.J. Love of the Physics department *was* able to conduct an experimental program that took up contemporary developments in psycho-physiological research. Love was better positioned to justify equipment expenditure and possessed the necessary technical support. Widely-read and an admirer of Helmholtz, Love published several papers in the 1890s on topics such as the just noticeable difference in brightness and the *phi* phenomenon.

In the early 1910s, William R. Boyce Gibson was appointed as the second Professor of Philosophy, and he immediately instituted “Psychology, logic and ethics” as a first year course. Psychology, albeit of a philosophical bent, retained a primary place in this course. Several notable educationalists cum philosophers taught this course up to 1945, including Ken Cunningham and P.M. Bachelard. The subject “Advanced psychology” also remained part of the final honours syllabus over the same period. Nevertheless, those teaching psychology in the Philosophy department found that little provision could be made for experimental work. In contrast, developments at the adjoining Teacher Training College gave experimental psychology a much firmer footing.

Early work at Melbourne Teachers’ Training College

Victoria was the first state in Australia to make primary education compulsory, secular, and free in 1872, with other states quickly following suit. Not surprisingly, the nation’s first Teacher Training College had been founded in Melbourne in 1890 – although it closed briefly during the depression years of that decade. It reopened in the new century under the direction of Frank Tate. Psychology was taught in the College as a component of the instruction given to teachers; this teaching was based largely on the texts of William James. In 1902, Dr. John Smyth succeeded Tate as Principal and eventually set up a crudely equipped classroom that represented the first experimental psychology laboratory in Australia. Smyth

6 Royal Commission on the University of Melbourne, 1902 (Pres. Theo Fink), Testimony of Professor Laurie, 19 February 1903.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Geoffrey Blainey, *A centenary history of the University of Melbourne* (Melbourne: MUP, 1957), Ch.12.

9 Donald McElwain, “A near century of psychology in Melbourne,” Final lecture Psychology Part III, 1955, Folder – Psychology Department History, Department of Psychology Records, University of Melbourne Archives.

had gained his Ph.D. in Edinburgh. Like many of his generation, he had visited Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig. Enthusiastic about the experimental approach in Germany and its practical applications in the U.S., Smyth put Matthew Sharman in charge of the new laboratory in 1913. As well as doing class experiments, students in the Diploma of Education course were introduced to tests of memory, attention and fatigue, and the new Binet intelligence tests. Vice-Principal James McCrae also took primary and sub-primary teaching students through sessions demonstrating psychological testing of children.¹⁰

When World War I broke out, Australian psychologists were not yet ready to capitalize on the opportunities provided by mobilization – in contrast to their American counterparts who undertook a massive testing program. However, the need for psychological services to deal with the special education requirements of children identified as different – the delinquent, the precocious, and especially the intellectually deficient – would become a more visible feature of state government policy.

In 1917, Smyth appointed Stanley Porteus as a lecturer in the College, the first appointment of a psychologist (albeit self-educated) at the College. Porteus had been the Head of Bell Street Special School for the “mentally deficient” in Fitzroy and had recently developed a maze test of intelligence. Porteus and Richard Berry, the Chair in Anatomy, conducted extensive research that attempted to predict criminal tendencies and mental deficiency on the basis of cranial measurements. Thousands of school children had their skulls carefully measured; the assumption was that those with small brains were more likely to become social misfits as adults. Berry was building on his work on racial differences in cranial capacity, and this research attracted financial support from local media proprietors.

Between 1917 and 1919, Alexander Fitt also brought the methods and focus of continental experimentation and American mental testing to Melbourne. A Ph.D. graduate from Leipzig, Fitt taught three courses relating to experimental education and experimental psychology. The first two courses on experimental education were designed for trainee teachers and university students. Experimental psychology was a non-credit course that Fitt was persuaded by W. Boyce Gibson to teach. Gibson was anxious to acquaint philosophy students with such an approach. For all three courses Fitt used the laboratory facilities of the Physiology department. Fitt was able to do extensive research on work and fatigue, and variations in intelligence according to season of birth.

Psychological laboratory work in the University and the College stalled in the years just after the first war. Sharman had taken up a dual position as Principal of University High School and Vice-Principal (Secondary) at the College during the war.¹¹ Armistice saw Porteus depart for the Vineland Training School in New Jersey and Fitt move on to New Zealand. However, Smyth set about reviving the College laboratory in the early 1920s. In 1923, he chose outstanding student Ken Cunningham to head a more ambitious laboratory program at the College. While Cunningham soon left to do a Ph.D. at Columbia, he returned to the College in 1927, also teaching in Philosophy and Commerce. Working with Len Whiteoak and Chris McCrae, Cunningham's research focussed on identifying and dealing with mental deficiency,

10 Ken Cunningham, “Statement of work done in experimental and applied psychology at the Teachers’ College and in connection with the School of Education at the University of Melbourne,” April 1925, UM 312 1926/444, University of Melbourne Archives; Brian Williams, *Education with its eyes open: A biography of Ken Cunningham*, (Melbourne: ACER, 1994).

11 Don Garden, *The Melbourne Teacher Training Colleges: From training institution to Melbourne State College, 1870–1982* (Heinemann, 1982), pp.95-118.

the measurement of sensation and reaction-times, and on fatigue and learning. He also helped construct new intelligence and performance tests. Special training classes for teachers of the “mentally deficient” were set up, and by 1928 the Special Teacher’s Certificate was introduced.

Unsuccessful attempts to establish a department of psychology in the 1920s

At Sydney, Henry Tasman Lovell had been elected to a newly-created position of McCaughey associate professor in psychology in 1921. Psychology effectively operated independently of philosophy there from that time onwards, before this was made official in 1929 when Lovell was given a full Chair. Those at Melbourne appeared determined to keep pace. By the mid-1920s, moves to put the social sciences on a firmer footing at Melbourne gained some powerful backers. At their 1924 conference, the Australasian Association of Psychology and Philosophy recommended that the status of psychology at Australian universities needed to be raised, with departments of social science established in all such institutions. Professors Alexander Gunn and W. Boyce Gibson strongly supported such moves at Melbourne. In 1925 they formed a professorial committee with Douglas Copland (Commerce), Smyth and Love with a view to drafting a report for the University Council. The following year, Boyce Gibson drew up a proposal for establishing a Chair in Psychology in the Faculty of Science. However, amidst competing claims from other Faculty’s representatives, tightening budgets heading into the depression and other circumstances that remain mysterious, the plan was quietly dropped. Boyce Gibson’s report never saw the light of day. In a letter to the President of the Board, Copland wrote with considerable chagrin: “I did not circulate the report prior to the last meeting because it seemed quite hopeless to expect anything to result from further consideration of the matter at the present time.”¹²

It has been suggested that the committee had distinguished industrial psychologist Elton Mayo in mind for the position of foundation Chair. Mayo had just obtained a position at Harvard and would soon be most famously associated with the Hawthorne studies of worker efficiency. However, communication with Mayo suggested that he would be very reluctant to come back to Australia. The unavailability of the Committee’s chosen candidate, and the absence of alternatives, was apparently enough to scuttle their enthusiasm.¹³ Those supporting these plans would have to wait another decade and for another Boyce Gibson to put them on the agenda again.

In the meantime, another important national initiative linking psychology and education occurred in Melbourne, when the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was set up, with assistance of the Carnegie Corporation, in 1930. Ken Cunningham was made director. As an independent body, ACER’s brief was to study education, to form a central information resource, and to facilitate and support educational reform.¹⁴ One of the first things ACER did was to adapt and standardize intelligence and aptitude tests across the nation.

12 D.B. Copland to President of the Board, 22 May 1926, Central Administration Files, UM 312, 1926/444, University of Melbourne Archives. If these moves had been successful, the development of psychology at Melbourne would have closely followed that at Sydney – where the first full course major in psychology was offered in 1925 and a separate department headed by a full Professor (Henry Tasman Lovell) was established in 1929.

13 I am indebted to Professor Don McElwain for this information; I have been unable to confirm it, however.

14 Buchanan, “Australia.”

Clearing the way in the lead up to World War II.

When William Boyce Gibson was succeeded by his son Alexander in 1935, the teaching of psychology at Melbourne had reached an impasse. The position of psychology in Philosophy at the first and final honours year levels had remained unchanged. Psychology had been taught as part of the Diploma of Psychological Medicine in the Medical school since 1935, and also in Social Studies. Special lectures were also given in the Faculty of Commerce courses, and psychology still occupied an important place in the training of teachers.

However, the position of Dr. Bachelard, teaching psychology in the College and the University, had grown particularly problematic. Bachelard was being pressured to do more secondary school teaching by the Victorian Education Department and to give up his university duties. Both George S. Browne, Principal and Professor of Education at the College, and Alexander Boyce Gibson felt Bachelard should be given a full-time position at the University, with someone else hired to teach psychology to the trainee teachers. The situation could only be redressed in the long term, argued Boyce Gibson to the Vice-Chancellor, by a separate department. This would necessitate the creation of a Chair in Psychology.

In 1938, Bachelard and Boyce Gibson prepared guidelines for a three-year course. However, their plans were interrupted by the outbreak of war. These plans were revived towards the end of the war when attention started to focus on post-war reconstruction.

World War II and disciplinary expansion

The resumption of hostilities in Europe in 1939 did not have an immediate impact on Australian psychology, as it did in the United Kingdom and on the continent. Only when things came closer to home, when the war in the Pacific escalated in 1942, did an urgent need for manpower management come to the fore in Australia. The discipline's de facto leadership pushed psychologists' expertise in personnel selection, job placement, and rehabilitation training to the various branches of the armed forces. All three branches—the army especially—began to rely on psychologists' services in some way during the war, and all three set up psychological organizations to retain them afterward. The war also brought the discipline into contact with allied professional groups, especially psychiatrists, although not always harmoniously.¹⁵

World War II accelerated professional reform partly because it brought Australian psychologists closer together. In a land defined by the cliché "the tyranny of distance," the sheer scale of geographical separation had made it difficult to organize at a basic national level. Eager to establish a united professional front, Australian psychologists began to canvas ideas for a new disciplinary body. A survey in 1943 had revealed a small but growing field badly in need of representation. Over 600 people possessed at least 2 years of psychological study at a tertiary level. They were young, mostly male, but vulnerable to the encroachment of untrained charlatans as well as rival professional groups.¹⁶ But rather than forming a stand-alone national body, leading Australian psychologists opted to create an affiliate body of the British Psychological Society (BPS), hoping to enjoy the prestige and privileges the Society might bestow. Thus

15 Simon Cooke, *A meeting of minds: The Australian Psychological Society and Australian Psychologists, 1944-1994*, (Melbourne: Australian Psychological Society, 2000).

16 Cooke, *A meeting of minds*.

the Australian Branch of the BPS was born in 1945.

In Melbourne, planning for the establishment of a new department recommenced in the last years of the war. In November 1943, the Professorial Board gave it the go-ahead, and Boyce Gibson drew up a detailed memorandum in support. He emphasised the need for psychological services, and outlined how the department could and should feed this need. With Sydney and Western Australia having the only independent departments of psychology at the time, demand for psychologically trained personnel ran well ahead of supply – especially in Victoria. College Principal George Browne wrote to the Registrar in 1943, lending his support for a new department. Browne complained of a shortage of graduates trained in intelligence testing or vocational guidance. Interstate personnel were usually used to fill Army and Air Force vacancies in these fields. The situation was so bad, added Browne, that “yesterday the Education Department were considering an appointment of an assistant to a psychological clinic and were forced to consider, as a qualification, the fact that some of the applicants had actually read a book on psychology.”¹⁷

Boyce Gibson warned that the post-war climate was not one to be marked by funding largesse – thus the time to move was now. Philosophy would be happy to relinquish the teaching of psychology to an independent department – as long as it did not directly or indirectly replace any part of the existing teaching in philosophy. The new department would link up with the teaching of several departments, with the needs of the Medical Faculty requiring special provision. Don Buckle had been appointed lecturer in medical psychology in the Faculty during the war and would take up a dual role in Medicine and Psychology after it.

Boyce Gibson argued that the problems of psychology departments elsewhere related to divided control and narrow specialisation. Thus it would be advantageous to consolidate areas that were usually unconnected and often hostile. He noted that first class research in experimental psychology might not be possible, given the capital expenditure necessary to equip a laboratory. The new department might be better off if it was given a “strong social orientation; and this might be a point to consider when making an appointment [to the Chair].”¹⁸ Boyce Gibson added that “there are many problems (in particular in Social Psychology) which need to be worked out afresh in an Australian setting.”¹⁹ Not only was an emphasis on social psychology seen to have practical social planning value, it also provided an advantageous point of difference for the department. This would distinguish Melbourne from Sydney and Western Australia, avoiding comparisons with established programs in the process.

The war had highlighted the lack of training facilities in psychology and the growing demand for psychologists in the social services of government. Plans were put forward for a separate department in 1944, supported by a range of influential figures within the University including Peter McCallum in Medicine and Roy “Pansy” Wright in Physiology. The State government responded to public support for these plans and contributed 2,000 pounds per annum to cover the professorial salary and expenses. Thus the Professorial Board’s 1925 request of a Chair of Psychology was at last going to become a reality, not in Science but in Arts.

17 G.S. Browne to J.F. Foster, 12 May 1943, Central Administration Files, UM 312, 1945/676, University of Melbourne Archives.

18 A. Boyce Gibson, Memorandum to Professorial Board, 1 November 1943, Council Minutes, 1943, University of Melbourne Archives.

19 Ibid.

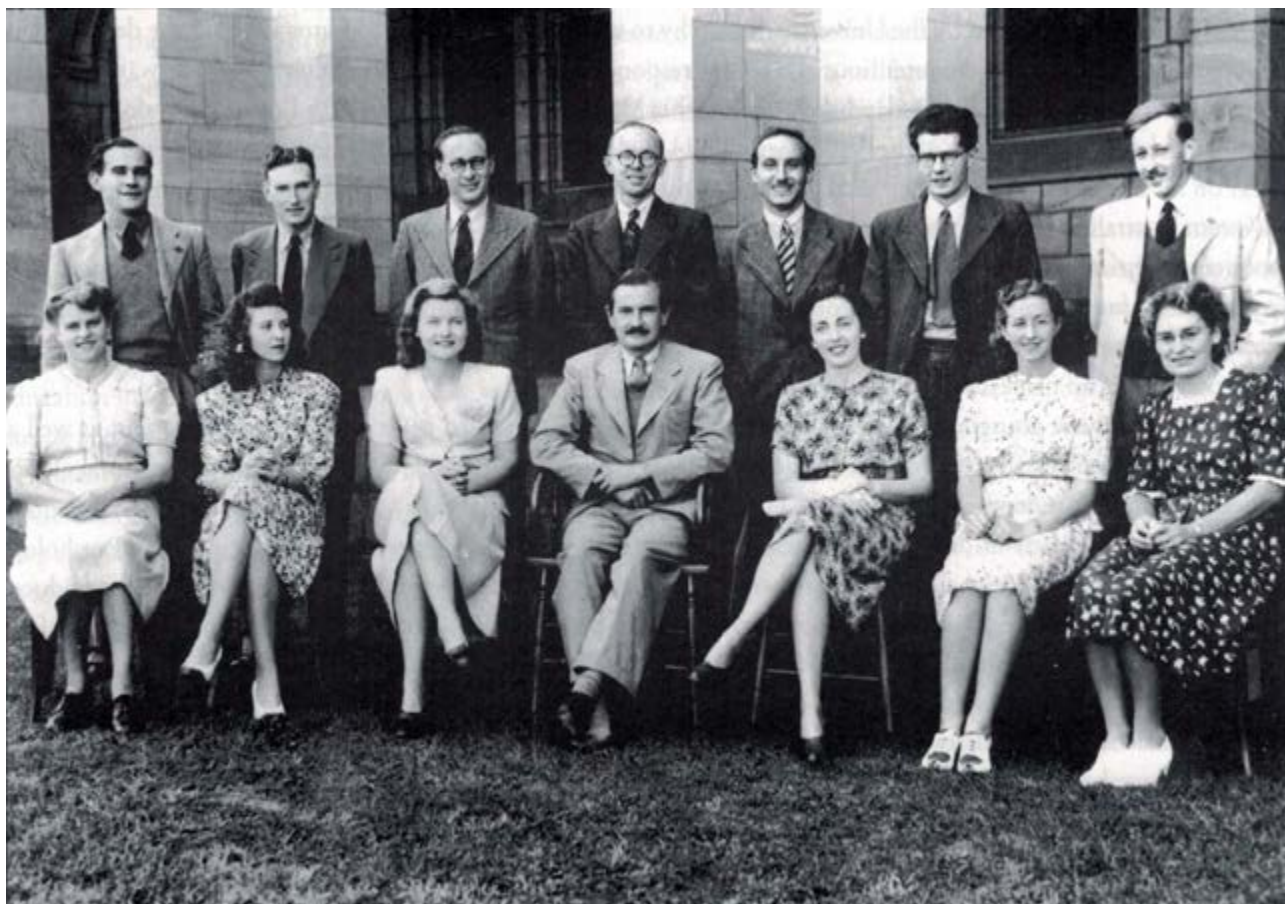
Founding the Psychology department

In 1946 the Department of Psychology was founded, greatly strengthening the social sciences at Melbourne University. Oscar Adolph Oeser was appointed head; at 41 years of age he became Australia's third professor of psychology – after Lovell and Bill O'Neil. Sydney had managed to advertise their Chair just prior to that of their new southern counterparts. O'Neil got the nod at Sydney ahead of Oeser. In Melbourne, though, it was a different story. Urged to apply by his Australian-born wife Drury, whom he had met while at Cambridge, Oeser was judged best qualified of the four short-listed applicants. Not one of these was primarily educated in Australia, several local hopefuls suffering disappointment in the process.²⁰ For example, Ken Cunningham still harboured academic aspirations. He had, for over a decade, headed the Australian Council of Educational Research. However, he was persuaded not to apply by Vice-Chancellor John Medley – they were after a younger man. Instead, Cunningham served as an adviser and panellist on the selection committee.

Oeser had the benefit of administrative experience and the required broad expertise and international reputation. He had a diverse, even exotic, background. South African born, he was educated at Rhodes University, at Marburg in Germany and at Cambridge. After completing his M.Sc. at Rhodes in physics, Oeser had turned his attention in the mid-1920s to psychology. Oeser was also well-versed in the classics and philosophy. His early psychological education in Germany sprang from a close working association with Erich R. Jaensch. Jaensch developed his research on size and colour constancy and Eidetic Imagery into an all-encompassing theory of psycho-physiological development, personality and race psychology. In his later years Jaensch's typological writings came to reflect theories of race current in Germany in the 1930s. Watching in horror as his mentor turned into a Nazi sympathiser, Oeser developed a life-long antipathy to fascism. It was an antipathy that would colour Oeser's research interests in a very tangible manner.

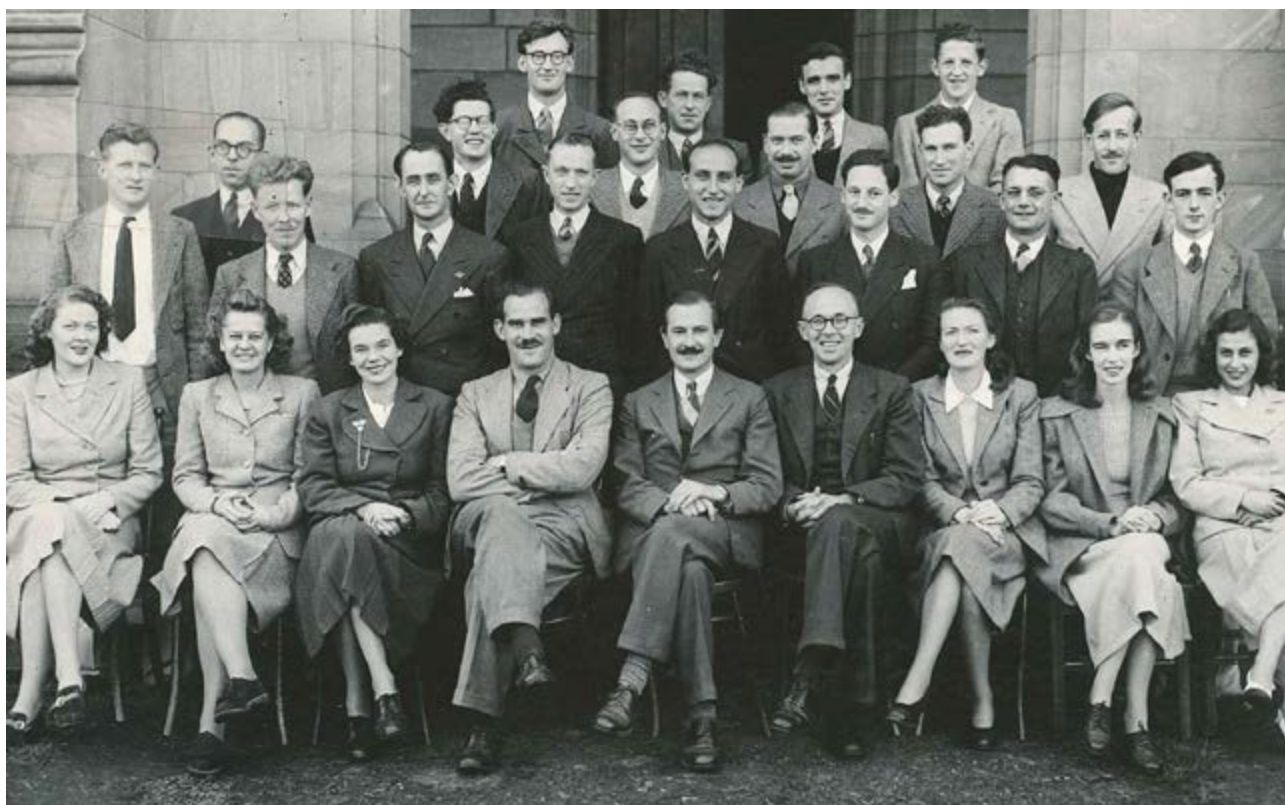
At the time Oeser was appointed, he was in Germany spearheading the Personnel Research Branch of the Allied Control Commission. Oeser's team was helping to screen those with fascist tendencies from positions of power in public life, using a battery of interviews and tests. Oeser had what some at the time might have described as a "good war," playing an important role in Allied code-breaking efforts. He had risen to the position of acting Wing Commander. Oeser was unable to take up the post at Melbourne immediately due to his ongoing commitments to the de-Nazification effort and a later bout of pneumonia. The shape of the department was put in place by acting head Don McElwain, assisted by Len Whiteoak. However, Oeser corresponded extensively with McElwain during this period, mapping out the new department.

20 The other short listed applicants were: Don McElwain (Ph.D., London), E. Beaglehole (Ph.D., Victoria Uni. NZ), and L.S. Hearnshaw (M.A., Victoria Uni. NZ). The large field of applicants also included Stanley Porteus, who was even older than the 55-year-old Cunningham.



University of Melbourne, Department of Psychology 1947

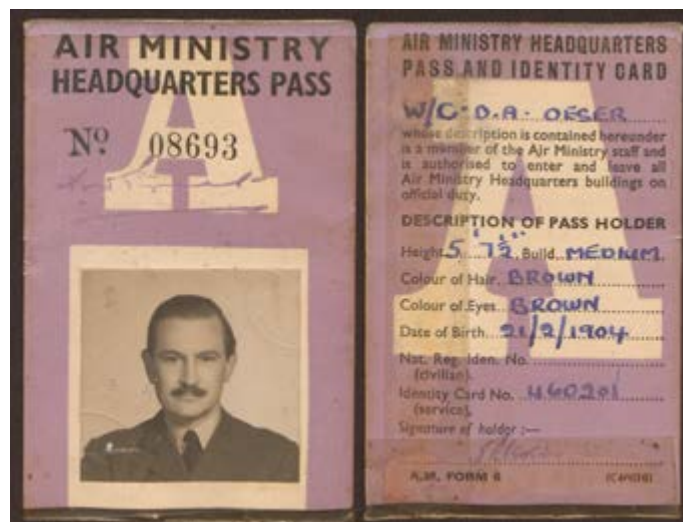
*Back (left to right): Donald McElwain, H. Esson, Don Buckle, Jim Pratt, R.H. Farrant, Sam Hammond, P.M. Whyte.
Front (left to right): E. Simmons, M. de la Laude, Margaret Macken, Oscar Oeser, C. de Monchaux, Hazel Evans.*



University of Melbourne, Department of Psychology 1948

Oscar Adolph Oeser (1904-1983)

Oscar Oeser was an exceptionally bright academic polymath. By age 21, he had degrees in mathematics and physics. While lecturing on physics, he became interested in individual differences in observation, turned to psychology and eventually found his way to Britain. When war broke out he enlisted in the Air Force but was transferred to intelligence work. In September 1940, Oeser was head-hunted by Alastair Denniston to work at what was then a small codebreaking centre set up at Bletchley Park. It was not hard to imagine why: as well as being trained in a range of sciences, Oeser was fluent in German, proficient in several other languages, and familiar with Germanic culture. He rapidly rose to the rank of Wing Commander heading Hut 3 at Bletchley Park. Working with the cipher messages decoded by Alan Turing and his colleagues in Hut 6, Oeser's role was to translate, interpret and prioritize these messages for Allied command. This was enormously time-sensitive and strategically crucial work. Oeser also made two incursions in 1943 and 1945 to recover communication and encryption equipment. During the latter mission undertaken just as the war ended, Oeser's TICOM team raided Hitler's mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden – the "Eagle's Nest." They returned with a huge haul of signals equipment and encoding machines, including an advanced electronic device capable of intercepting Soviet tele-printer messages that Bletchley Park was yet to break. This remained 'live' intelligence in the first years of the Cold War. Oeser never divulged many of the specific details of his war work; they have only fully come to light with the more recent lifting of embargos on classified records.



Oscar Oeser's Air Ministry Headquarters Pass, No. 08693.
(Oscar A. Oeser Records, University of Melbourne Archives,
UK MOD Crown copyright)

British MOST SECRET.
= U.S. SECRET.

Ref: S/6511/Air Int.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.
=====

Subject: WING COMMANDER O.A. OESER.

The above named Officer has been entrusted with the mission of conveying to the United Kingdom certain items of captured enemy equipment of a vital and most secret nature. It is requested that he be given every assistance to ensure that the packages in question be delivered to Bletchley at the earliest possible moment. As it is desirable that the packages should not be out of the sight of Wing Commander Oeser at any time during the journey, it is undesirable that he should travel by train, but should be provided with transport to take him from the airfield of arrival direct to Bletchley.

2. The packages should not be opened other than by the appropriate authorities at Bletchley.

BY COMMAND OF AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR A. TEDDER G.C.B.

F. H. H. H.
Air Commodore,
Chief Intelligence Officer,
Mediterranean Air Command.

Travel authorisation document regarding Oscar Oeser's 1943 raid in North Africa and Sicily, covering the transportation of captured enemy communications equipment to be delivered directly to Bletchley Park. (Oscar A. Oeser Records, University of Melbourne Archives, UK MOD Crown copyright.)

Putting the undergraduate course in place

Don McElwain was a discipline-building figure in more ways than one. He had been instrumental in the founding of the Australian Branch of the BPS and gladly took on the editorship of the Branch's flagship journal, the *Australian Journal of Psychology*. The journal would essentially run out of the Melbourne department in its early years. McElwain was instructed by the University hierarchy to establish an open-ended framework for the department's teaching program and to avoid contentious areas.²¹ He responded with maturity and diplomacy. McElwain had been a precocious student in New Zealand, where he gained his M.A., going on to obtain a Ph.D. from London. Fond of rugby, like another early member of the department, Phil Langley, McElwain brought something of his Army experience to bear on his new post. As caretaker head, he transplanted much of the teaching structure of his former department in Western Australia. His philosophy was straightforward: "psychology as a teaching subject seems to break into two parts: general theory and various applied fields," with general theory instruction preceding that of applications.²² Any departmental program must be able to cope with students wishing to become professional psychologists, students training for other professions that utilise a special branch of psychological knowledge, and students just doing a subset of the course with no professional goal in mind.



Donald McElwain. (Photograph donated by John Keats to the APS, University of Melbourne Archives.)

Since classes were going to be large, McElwain felt that lectures needed to be supported by tutorials, as well as laboratory sessions. The first year course would consist of two lectures per week (for the entire first year intake), one two-hour lab (for 30 students each), and a one-hour tutorial (for 15 students each). Traditionally, honours students at Melbourne were required to do additional work to that of pass students at every stage of the course. Psychology honours students would receive an extra lecture per week, in smaller groups.²³ Descriptive statistics were to be introduced at the earliest possible stage, so as not to "limit reading and lab work." Statistics was also one of the easiest aspects of the course to organise at short notice. Murphy's and Guilford's textbooks in general psychology were used as prescribed reading in the first year, amongst others.

As per instructions, the first year syllabus avoided divisive and more advanced areas like the various schools of psychology, the history of psychology, and comparative and racial psychology. McElwain also commented that lectures on sensation and the nervous system were a particular bugbear, since in his opinion they were "usually overdone" and those lecturing in them "usually don't know much about

21 Memo to John Medley, 26 November 1945, 1945/676, UM 312, University of Melbourne Archives.

22 Donald McElwain, n.d., "Notes on advanced courses," Psychology Course 1947, p.1., Oscar Oeser Papers, Box 4, 1989/27, University of Melbourne Archives.

23 Donald McElwain, n.d., "Notes on advanced courses" and "Projected courses 1946" Psychology Course 1947, Oscar Oeser Papers, Box 4, 1989/27, University of Melbourne Archives.

them.”²⁴ McElwain looked to bring in outside lecturers – possibly Professor Wright in physiology – to teach this component of the course.

There had been some conjecture as to whether the course would actually start in 1946 – given Oeser’s temporary unavailability and the difficulties of getting staff and resources organised quickly. However, the Philosophy department had “in its details, abandoned this field” in the expectation that the course would start as scheduled. Moreover, the students expected the course to start and there would be a “stream of applicants to follow such an initial course.”²⁵ It was too late to turn back. Despite the rush, the department started teaching, albeit a little behind schedule, early in 1946.

Only the first year course was taught in 1946.²⁶ It provided an introduction to social psychology, developmental psychology, measurement statistics and experimental approaches to perception and learning. The department evolved and took shape as a ‘bootstrap operation,’ with specialised subjects added as the staff roster expanded. However, the very need for the department also made appropriately trained personnel hard to come by. In Oeser’s absence, McElwain was the only full-time lecturer on staff in that first year, with the rest of the teaching done by temporary part-time lecturers (e.g., Ken Cunningham and Chris Jorgenson) and tutors (e.g., Roland Farrant and Drury Oeser). In the early years, most of the tutors were part-time with outside jobs as psychologists (e.g., Hans Hoehne and Ron Taft) and/or were doing the undergraduate course at a higher year than they taught (e.g., Hugh Esson, Peter Whyte and Ron Greig). Later, more full-time tutors were employed; these were qualified graduates usually drawn from the department’s program.

Before the course got under way in 1946 it was thought that only a small number (i.e., 40-50) would apply for the first year intake. Instead, over 200 enrolled and 182 sat for the examination – indicative of the pent-up demand for a psychological education. The Commonwealth Rehabilitation scheme encouraged “de-mobbed” personnel to take up tertiary study. Classrooms were filled with a heady and unique mix of hardened ex-servicemen, mature-age and fresh-faced students. Ninety of this initial intake went on to the second year. In a stroke, Melbourne had become a training ground for large numbers of psychologists.

These developments did not go unnoticed elsewhere. Writing of this new department several decades later, Bill O’Neil felt that its staffing levels and equipment budgets were more generous than those of Sydney’s at the time.²⁷ McElwain had secured 1,000 pounds (with more funds to follow) to equip the department with stopwatches, metronomes, mirrors, colour vision tests, *Veeder* counters (for counting timed responses and events), and a kymograph (for charting physiological indices and behavioural responses). He also requested 1,500 books and subscriptions to 28 journals (costing 1,800 pounds), to bolster the library’s meagre resources on psychology.

Teaching and organisational structures

The orientation of the new department at Melbourne was overwhelmingly British, as was characteristic of

24 Donald McElwain, n.d., “Projected courses 1946” Psychology Course 1947, pp.1-2., Oscar Oeser Papers, Box 4, 1989/27, University of Melbourne Archives.

25 Memo to John Medley, 26 November 1945, 1945/676, UM 312, University of Melbourne Archives.

26 Ron Taft, Interview, 9 August 1996.

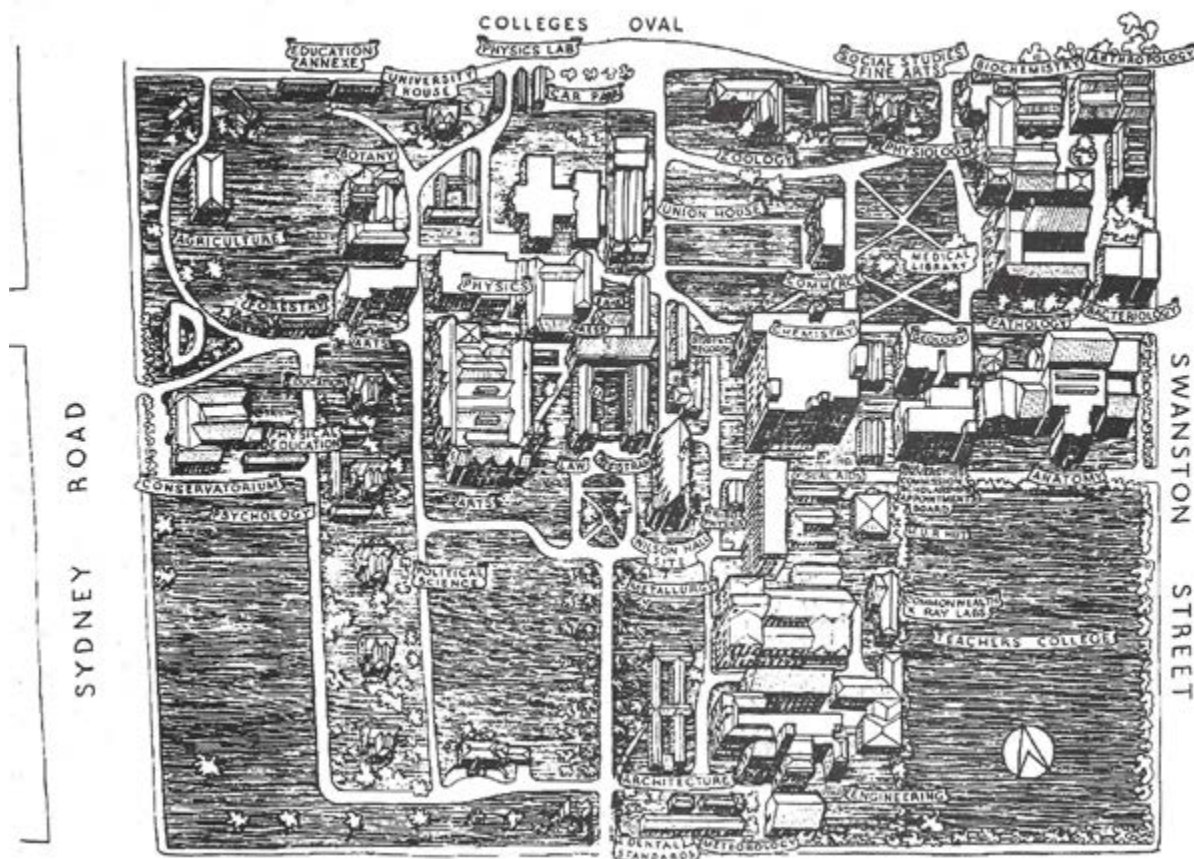
27 W.M. O’Neil, *A century of psychology in Melbourne*, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1987), p.99.



University of Melbourne, Department of Psychology 1951

Back row (left to right): Donald McElwain, Phil Langley, Malcolm Macmillan, Phil Herbst, Sam Hammond, Perc Reynolds, Geoff Sharp, Harry Maddox, Nick Cox, Jim Craig, Edgar Howarth, Margaret Middleton, Donald Buckle, Paul Lafitte, Ron Penney, Fred Katz, Oscar Oeser.

Front row (left to right): Cecily Katz, Helen Pagan, Margaret Gilchrist, Pat Leaper, Kitty Robinson, Ruth Wertheim, Caroline Wightman, Irene Kinsman, Lilian Parker, Cleo Scott.



Map of the University of Melbourne, circa 1954

much of Australian tertiary education at the time. However, departmental structures resembled those of Scottish rather than English universities, with usually one professor per department – the ‘God-professor’ model as it was colloquially known. Professors were left relatively free to mould their department as they saw fit, in their own image so to speak. This was a mandate that appeared to suit Oeser well.

Oeser formally took over from McElwain at the beginning of February 1947. In the latter half of 1946 on his way to Melbourne, Oeser had called in at the University of Western Australia with a view to recruiting young talent. He brought with him, amongst others, a young graduate named Sam Hammond.²⁸ Hammond’s origins were particularly humble. His father was an English stowaway; his mother came from the remote bush settlement of Gingin. He had grown up in a tin shack settlement with no schools on the railway line running from Perth to Geraldton. But young Hammond was bright. Scholarships and bursaries ensured he got an education, and he graduated with honors from the University of Western Australia just before the war. Like McElwain, Hammond had worked in the Australian Army Psychology Service during the war, and like Oeser his interests were largely centred on social psychology. Oeser was able to attract a number of other notable scholars who would make important contributions to social and industrial psychology in Australia – including Fred Emery, Paul Lafitte, Godfrey Gardner and Phil Herbst.

Oeser would remain a relatively remote figure for most undergraduates, in keeping with how he interpreted his role and the hierarchical principles of management he favoured. Oeser would give the introductory lecture to first year students outlining the organisation, teaching personnel and scope of the overall course. He then largely deferred to his staff to teach areas they specialised in, giving them freedom over content. He was a charming and urbane man to those who got to know him well, a stylish dresser with a range of sophisticated tastes in music, art and architecture. But he also tended to hold himself aloof from colleagues, cultivating a sense of authority and mystery. As several veteran staffers would attest, any meeting with Oeser was often a disconcerting experience. Oeser would receive his nervous staff member while seated in the bay window of his upstairs office in Bushey, usually rolling a cigarette. The onus was definitely on those entering to speak first and make whatever case they needed to.

The undergraduate syllabus grew as the first student intakes moved through the course. By 1948, a full major had been established. The second and third years each offered a choice of several elective subjects – at the time a unique feature of Melbourne’s program. Psychology I, II and III were core subject units of the course, and were mostly made up of experimental and psychometric subjects. But at the second year level those doing a major were offered a choice between “Collective behaviour” (social psychology taught by Sam Hammond and Fred Emery), or “Psychopathology” (taught by Don Buckle and later Alan Jeffrey). At the third year level students could again chose between “Psychopathology” (if they had not already done it), or “Industrial psychology” (taught by Paul Lafitte). McElwain handled most of the psychometric and statistical teaching.

There were also the postgraduate subjects “Educational psychology” and “Experimental education” for Diploma of Education and Bachelor of Education students. Selected students were then able to complete an honours component that included specialised study and a supervised research project. Combined honours courses were quickly established with Philosophy, History, Political Science, Economics and

²⁸ See the obituary for Samuel Battle Hammond written by Kim Neubecker, *The Age*, 23 August 23 2010.

Mathematics. For those hoping to be professional psychologists, Psychology I, II and III provided the basic training (a major) to which the specialty courses could be added. A sub-major consisted of Psychology I and II or a specialist course, and was typically undertaken by those doing a combined Arts degree and Diploma of Social Studies. Diploma of Psychological Medicine students were required to do Psychology 1 and Psychopathology.

High student numbers made for high teaching loads from the very beginning. In spite of the difficulties of organising the small staff roster to cover the range of options on offer, teaching was taken very seriously. Oeser and his colleagues always encouraged an egalitarian, cooperative model of education, particularly in the general courses. Students were instructed to work on assignments in groups – “syndicates” as Oeser called them – and these groups were carried through the course. A sense of social responsibility was often not far from the surface. For example, tutors in the Psychology I course were instructed to get students to prepare presentations on such topics as: “War”; “Propaganda and advertising”; “Humour, wit and laughter”; “Race differences”; “Genius and gifted children”; and, “Animal minds.”²⁹

By 1949, the department had grown to comprise one professor and 16 lecturers. Some 52 students had completed the course at the end of the previous year, the first batch of Melbourne psychology graduates and the first psychologists educated in Victoria. Most had no trouble finding positions – academic or applied – after graduating. Victoria was a generation behind NSW in the development of psychological services. The Education Department had only just appointed its first psychologist and its first vocational guidance officer; industry had just appointed two psychologists. It was estimated that “some 100 positions in psychology required filling in the Commonwealth” and that demand would exceed supply for the next ten years.³⁰

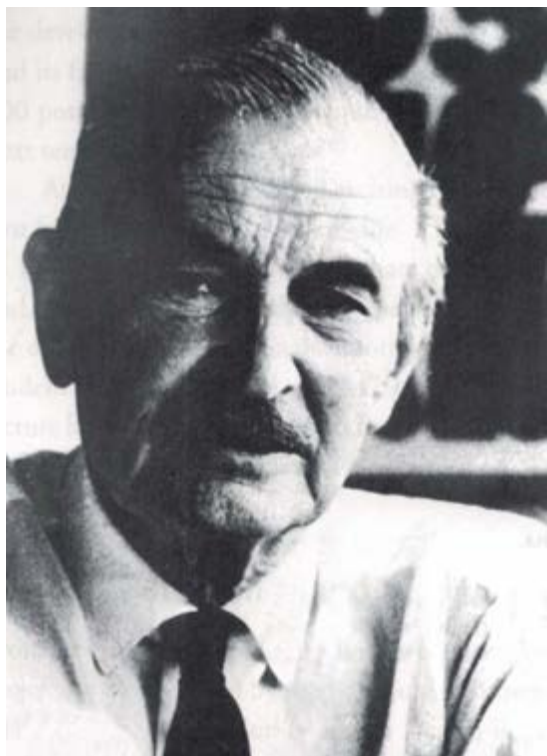
Attracted by this new and exciting subject and good career prospects, student numbers continued to climb in the first few years of the department’s life. Three hundred and sixty-three enrolled in the first year course in 1947 and 375 in 1948. After clearing the immediate post-war backlog, undergraduate numbers declined slightly in the early 1950s and did not rise significantly until the latter part of that decade. Despite the headaches they caused, high numbers put the department on a reasonable footing financially, since a significant proportion of staffing costs could be covered by student fees. For example, in 1947 salaries amounted to 9,000 pounds while students contributed 5,300 pounds in lecture fees. While start-up grants for equipment and the like may have been relatively generous initially, these did not continue to keep pace. By necessity, the department remained committed to teaching large numbers for many years to come.

The early years in Bushey and the prefab huts

From its inception, the department was essentially located along what was called Professor’s Row, a set of houses for professors now occupied by the Baillieu and Brownless libraries, Arts West and the Babel and Biosciences buildings. The main administrative and senior staff were located in one of the professorial houses known as “Bushey” – previously inhabited by various professorial luminaries such

29 Psychology course 1947, Oscar Oeser Papers, Box 4, 1989/27, University of Melbourne Archives.

30 Oscar Oeser, “Interim Report to the Dean, Faculty of Arts, 1946-47,” p.2, Psychology Department Records, 1981.00017, University of Melbourne Archives.



Oscar Oeser. (Photograph donated by John Keats to the APS, University of Melbourne Archives.)

as engineering's Henry Payne. Henry Laurie had lived next door in "Vectis." Other staff offices and classrooms were shared with other departments (i.e., Law, Philosophy and Education) or were located in several adjoining Army huts. With the huge influx of students immediately after the war – a common feature of all Australian campuses – space was at a premium. The Melbourne campus was sprinkled with cheap, metal clad huts as temporary accommodation.

While first year lectures were typically held in the Arts Hall, most of the later year teaching was done in these huts. Laboratory sessions were generally held in huts on Tin Alley. Until a workroom was procured, the department's technical staffers, such as Perc Reynolds, used the equipment and facilities of the Physics, Engineering and Maintenance departments. It was a situation that rankled the senior staff of the department – Oeser and McElwain in particular – and did not compare favourably with other Australian psychology departments.

Oeser complained that poor facilities made good experimental work difficult. He pointed out that unlike those of the natural sciences, psychological materials could not be crowded onto a bench. Moreover, "noise may not affect a salt, or Young's modulus; but it does seriously interfere with psychological testing and even more with psychological experiments."³¹ Nevertheless, for sixteen years Bushey and an assortment of huts remained the main accommodation of the department.

Stories of the crudeness of these conditions abounded. The Army huts were boiling in summer, freezing in winter. While the comparatively plush Bushey had bar heaters, the only heating for the huts was antiquated and dangerous kerosene heaters. They were foul smelling at the best of times and prone to catch fire. Given the fact that many staffers smoked and the huts had poor ventilation, air quality and even visibility were often at a minimum. All those who worked there acquired a certain 'psych department' aroma. Good furniture was also uncommon. Few staff had adequate bookshelves, for example. While Bushey had a bathroom and toilet, this was for the women; the men's lavatories were outside.

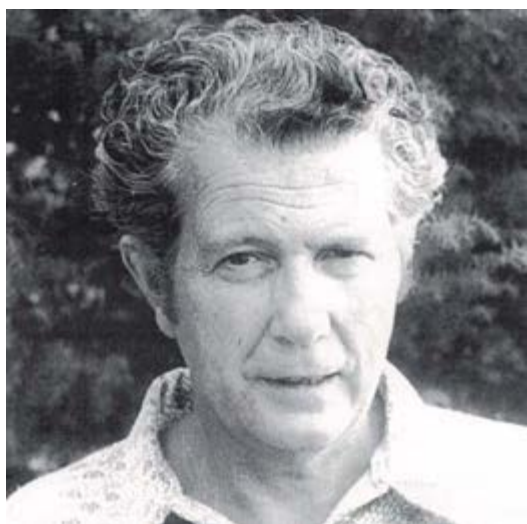
But just as adversity has a way of bonding people together, the very makeshift and informal nature of this accommodation appeared to unite the department's staff and students. Former and long-time staffers speak of it as a different era. A sense of hierarchy and bureaucracy was perhaps less apparent than today, with students less likely to be intimidated by their teachers in such modest dwellings. Since there was no such thing as working from home, all staff came to work regularly. They met and discussed their work activities, which could also be said to overlap more than they do today. Not only was there a cross-fertilisation at an intellectual level, there was a commonality of social activities and interests. Everyone knew each other – such confined quarters probably gave one little choice. In a department still relatively

31 Oscar Oeser, "Interim Report to the Dean, Faculty of Arts, 1946-47," p.10, Psychology Department Records, 1981.00017, University of Melbourne Archives.

small, in a university context that could afford to be more inward looking, informal gatherings of staff at their various homes or one of the huts were both possible and customary.³²

Oeser and the 'Melbourne School' of social psychology

At the time of the Melbourne department's founding in 1946, there were only two other independent psychology departments in Australia – at the University of Sydney and the University of Western Australia. Psychology would remain part of mental and moral philosophy at Queensland and Adelaide well into the 1950s. Sydney psychology had emphasized theoretical and experimental approaches, while Western Australia was particularly strong in developmental psychology. Melbourne would be very different, however. The intellectual thrust of the department in the early years was inevitably a function of Oeser's interests and expertise. The research profile came to be dominated by a particular form of social psychology. While social psychology had been researched and taught at Sydney and Western Australia to some extent, the foundation of the Melbourne department provided a huge boost for the field in Australia.



Sam Hammond

The Melbourne department became a centre for research and teaching in social structure, attitudes and prejudices – capitalizing on opportunities created by the optimistic social reconstructionism that characterized the priorities of government and philanthropic bodies in the immediate post-war era. Significant longitudinal survey work was also started in this early period. Oeser drew upon his experience on a project undertaken under the aegis of Dundee Training College, which was affiliated with St. Andrews University where he had been Head of Department. Backed by the Pilgrim Trust, Oeser had led a multidisciplinary team studying the effects of unemployment, individual aspirations and class structure. This work had drawn inspiration from a little known but innovative investigation by a group of young, but soon-to-be-

famous sociologists, Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld and Hans Zeisel. It was undertaken in Marienthal, a small Austrian village twenty-five kilometres south of Vienna, where the closure of the only factory in 1932 put most of the population out of work. The study provided a stark illustration of the destructive effects of prolonged unemployment; how it led to a shrinking of expectations and increasing apathy, so much so that individuals were unable to take advantage of the meagre opportunities still open to them. Only after an English translation appeared in 1971 did the study gain worldwide recognition.³³ However, Oeser read German fluently and was abreast of many Continental research trends, including class-based social theory, functional sociology and psychoanalysis.

As one former tutor in the Melbourne department, Alan Kennedy, observed, Oeser could have hardly

32 Irene Kinsman, Interview, 14 August 1996; Norma Grieve, Interview, 16 August 1996; Lyn Graham (nee Weller), Interview, 13 September 1996.

33 Marie Jahoda, Paul E. Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel, *Marienthal: the sociology of an unemployed community*, (Chicago: Aldine, 1971), first published as *Die arbeitslosen von Marienthal*, 1933. The Marienthal study was famous for its utilisation of multiple methods (for example, apple consumption, newspaper circulation, theatrical performances, and housekeeping statistics), and for its close-up, personal life histories.

have picked a better place to study social despair; conditions in depression-era Dundee were particularly wretched and soul-destroying. The Dundee project blended functional sociology, anthropology and psychological measurement; the goal was to understand and improve the lives of those being studied. In the public reports to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1936, Oeser labelled the approach as “functional penetration” (while apologising for the unfortunate connotations such a term conveyed.)³⁴ This involved a deeply immersive approach. The idea was that the research group took on a legitimate social role in the community they were studying to gain acceptance and close the “ethnographic distance” that their outsider status might otherwise carry.³⁵

Oeser was able to pick up this strand of his research where he left off before the war, transplanting and augmenting the approach he used in his Dundee study to an Australian setting. Grants from the Espada Trust (formerly the Dyason Education Trust) and UNESCO put in train field-based research on personality structure and social attitudes of city and rural individuals. Much of this work was groundbreaking in terms of its scope and the multi-pronged methodology that Oeser’s team employed. These studies had a stronger emphasis on standardised psychological assessment than his pre-war work with its Continental inspirations. Not only were tests and scales used, questionnaires were purpose-designed, and combined with in-depth interviews and participant observation. Taking in the ideas of Herbert Mead and Kurt Lewin, as well as Jahoda and Lazarsfeld, these studies attempted to connect sociology and anthropology with role theory and social attitudes.

The UNESCO studies had laudable social aims, attempting to locate and alleviate social tensions crucial to a harmonious society; they were underpinned by the now seemingly quaint assumption that “wars start in the minds of men.” These studies targeted Woomelang in the Mallee and Hawthorn and Kew in Melbourne, with Emery, Hammond, Geoff Sharp and Phillip Herbst employed as full-time researchers. Both Emery and Hammond had journeyed to the Institute of Psychology in Paris in May 1949 to do a short spell of intensive training, and in turn trained graduates and undergraduates in fieldwork.³⁶ The volumes resulting from this work were edited by Oeser, Hammond and Emery, and were reprinted many times.³⁷ They covered attitudes to immigration, the assimilation of migrants (e.g., Jewish groups), the role of the family in child development and the place of work in the community. Ronald Taft took much of what he learnt as a tutor in the early years of the department to do similar research on migrant assimilation in Western Australia in the late 1950s. He later returned briefly to Melbourne before moving on to a chair at Monash University.³⁸

Both Hammond and Emery were able to use the UNESCO studies for their Ph.D.s – the first of the department and among the first psychology doctorates in Australia. Paul Lafitte also published several books at this time on personality assessment and industrial psychology. Graduate students contributed to

34 See Oscar Oeser, “Methods and assumptions of field work in social psychology,” *British Journal of Psychology*, 27 (1937): 343-363. See also Richard Trahair, *Behavior, technology, and organizational development: Eric Trist and the Tavistock Institute*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2015).

35 *Ibid*

36 Stuart Macintyre, *The poor relation: A history of social sciences in Australia*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

37 Oscar Oeser and Fred Emery eds, *Social structure and personality in a rural community*, (London: Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1954); Oscar Oeser and Sam Hammond eds, *Social structure and personality in a city community*, (London: Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1954).

38 Buchanan, “Australia.”



University of Melbourne, Department of Psychology 1956



Department photo 1959 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences archive)

Back Row (right to left): John Williams, Dick Rsalain, Phil Langley, Sam Hammond, Perc Reynolds, Cliff Goodwin, (), (), Godfrey Gardner, Frank Knöpfelmacher, (), Oscar Oeser, Paul Lafitte, ().

Front Row (right to left): Norma Grieve, (), Heather Andrew, (), (), Pat Leaper, Margaret Gilchrist, (), Irene Kinsman.

many articles – reflecting an active postgraduate research programme overseen by these staff members.³⁹ In those days, the publish or perish dictum had not attained the force it has today. Quality rather than quantity was emphasised. Garnering higher degree qualifications was not seen as an ultimate intellectual imperative; they were not an absolute professional prerequisite, even for a career in academia. However, they certainly helped, and staff were often not so subtly encouraged to complete their M.A.s or Ph.D.s.⁴⁰

Oeser had an internationalist perspective, unique amongst leaders of Australian psychology at the time. The links he developed were not so much with other departments, but with broader social science bodies at home and abroad. Oeser maintained a strong involvement with the Australian Branch of the BPS, sitting on its membership grading panel and serving as President in 1955–56. Oeser also became a significant player in the Social Science Research Committee, a body instituted in 1943 as part of the Australian National Research Council. When this Committee became Australian Social Science Research Council in 1952, Oeser took on the role of convenor of its research committee, and helped bring Emery and Hammond on board as members. In the absence of a national sociology association, the Council served as the *de facto* Australian branch of the International Sociological Association, whose biennial meetings Oeser regularly attended. After the UNESCO projects were completed, Oeser obtained Carnegie funding through the Council's aegis to extend his work on role theory in the late 1950s. Thereafter his engagement in the Social Science Research Council waned. In 1971, the Council would become what is now the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

From 1961 until his retirement in 1970, Oeser elaborated his approach to social roles in a series of papers which progressively outlined a formal mathematical model for structural role theory. In contrast to the research activities of several members of his own department, Oeser saw experimental behaviourism as an inherently limited approach, dismissively labelling it “rodentology.” Instead he retained a certain affection for psychoanalysis. Oeser's wartime experiences had convinced him that that only the analytic approach could truly capture the human condition, however imperfectly. It was an affinity that stayed with him all his life, as illustrated by the links he maintained. Oeser's pre-war Dundee project had set Eric Trist's early career in motion, with Oeser recruiting him as key researcher. Trist would become a founding figure in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations established in London after the war. Like the Tavistock Clinic, the Institute was dominated by psychoanalytically-oriented thinkers. In 1958 Emery joined the Tavistock Institute, after a Damascus-like conversion to analysis, and become a hugely influential figure in organisational psychology. Emery and Trist developed “open socio-technical systems theory” as a new paradigm for organisational design — field-tested on a national scale in Norway, in collaboration with Einar Thorsrud.

The Melbourne department enjoyed good relations with local external agencies in these early years. The Education Department allowed testing work to be done at schools; likewise, the Lady Gowrie Kindergarten. Hospitals such as the Royal Children's, the Alfred, Prince Henry's, Royal Melbourne and Royal Park allowed students to attend psychiatric outpatient clinics and provided supervised instruction in Binet testing. The department also developed strong ties with industry, virtually from the outset, for

39 Paul Lafitte, *The person in psychology: Reality or abstraction*, (London: Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1957); Paul Lafitte, *Social structure and personality in the factory*, (London: Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1958). See also Ronald Taft, “The origins and nature of social psychology in Australia,” in Keats, J.A., Taft, R., Heath, R.A. and Lovibond, S.H., eds *Mathematical and theoretical systems*, (North Holland: Elsevier, 1989), 325-331.

40 Norma Grieve, Interview, 16 August 1996; Pat Leaper, Interview, 20 September 1996.

instructional purposes in occupational psychology and as venues for research in psychological aspects of workplace structure and functions. One major undertaking resulting from these links was an extended study by Oeser, Gardner, Richard Trahair and Herbert Cubbon on work practices and management-union relations for the Broken Hill South mining company. This study began in the late 1950s and ran for several years; it was done on-site and involved the difficult task of interviewing workers in the mine itself.⁴¹

Most of the large early studies involved gathering data ‘in the field,’ at schools, in industry and businesses, and in private homes. One member of staff was designated as research officer responsible for field work organisation, coordinating complicated testing and interviewing schedules and overseeing the participation of staff and students. The department had purchased a surplus Army truck for this purpose – a huge and noisy beast that the women staff members complained was difficult to get into. It was the cheapest available transport. The truck was sometimes used to transport students to classes at Royal Park and other hospitals, with those who could not fit up front standing in the tray at the back.



Rat cages for lab work, circa 1952.

41 Herbert Cubbon, Godfrey Gardner, Oscar Oeser and Richard Trahair, *Work and negotiation in the Broken Hill mining industry*, (Melbourne: Department of Psychology, University of Melbourne, 1966).



Laboratory set up in one of the huts, dated 1952. The department's experimental program was established by Kurt Danziger, who arrived in August 1951. The photo middle bottom depicts an "open field" for mapping the movement of hooded rats. The photo middle top is possibly Danziger. (Donated by Lionel Sharpe to the APS, University of Melbourne Archives.)

The 1950s and Cold War politics

Following the election of the Menzies government in 1949, the level of political pressure and intrigue on Australian campuses had progressively escalated. The conflicts generated would frequently put Oeser in an invidious position. Oeser himself had, if anything, independent, centrist political inclinations. Like many academics, he cherished the ideals of academic freedom of speech and political association. So it was no surprise that in 1951 he joined “Pansy” Wright and Macmahon Ball as high-profile campus critics of the Menzies’ government’s attempts to officially ban the Communist Party of Australia. While a ban was averted, the surveillance and suspicion would only increase.

We now know that the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and their informers began vetting Australian universities at this time. They soon identified a handful of notorious ‘red’ academics at Sydney, Adelaide, Western Australia and the ANU. But the Melbourne campus was, in comparison, a hotbed of communist activity, with no fewer than 63 screened as suspect. The Psychology department came in for special of attention. ASIO dossiers apparently compiled in the early 1950s rated psychology staff members from A (Communist Party member), B (probable member), C (known sympathiser), through to D (insufficient information). Oeser was one of the few in the department given the provisional clearance rating of D.⁴² Such attention was not without substance. The department *did* employ staff with leftist leanings at this time. For example, both Geoff Sharp and “Red” Fred Emery were acknowledged Communist Party members. But as a distinctly provincial version of McCarthyism washed across Australia in the 1950s, such affiliations would help turn relatively mundane academic disputes and staffing issues into ugly public controversies.



Frank Knöpfelmacher circa 1980

In 1955, McElwain left to become the first Professor of Psychology at the University of Queensland. That year Frank Knöpfelmacher was appointed. It was the start of an enigmatic but compelling career as one of the most prominent public intellectuals in Australian life, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Knöpfelmacher had his own particularly troubling war experience. He was born into an ethnically Czech Jewish family living in Vienna, but grew up in Czechoslovakia. After the German annexation of Austria in 1938, he fled to Palestine. He fought with the Free Czech Forces attached to the British Army during the latter stages of the war, and settled in Britain afterward. But his family back in Czechoslovakia all perished tragically.

Knöpfelmacher had done a double major undergraduate degree in philosophy and psychology at Bristol, and a Ph.D. at University College, London, and also worked in Hans Eysenck’s Psychology department in the Institute of Psychiatry.⁴³ On the strength of this research in a classical behaviourist paradigm, Knöpfelmacher was recruited to teach

⁴² ASIO file, series A6122 XRI, item 268, Australian Archives. Thanks go to Malcolm Macmillan for supplying a copy of this document.

⁴³ Knöpfelmacher did not speak particularly highly of Eysenck, however. As a student I recall him suggesting that one could tell if a particular research question had passed its use-by date if Eysenck became interested in it. For more on Eysenck, see Roderick D. Buchanan, *Playing with Fire: The Controversial Career of Hans J. Eysenck*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

experimental psychology.⁴⁴ However, he would quickly give up his psychological research – prompted in part by the death of many of his rats one cold night. Instead, Knöpfelmacher came to be far more interested in philosophical approaches to psychology and socio-political theory. His cynical attitude to the discipline that accommodated him was occasionally breath-taking: “there are two kinds of statistics in psychology: the useless, and the absolutely useless.” Knöpfelmacher could simultaneously entertain and aggravate his colleagues, whilst avoiding many of the usual demands of academia. As a teacher, he could be both provocative and engaging. His caustically dry wit was legendary.

Cued by his wartime experience, Knöpfelmacher staunchly opposed anything that reminded him of the murderous totalitarianism he had encountered – which made for some strident but often seemingly contradictory public positions. While Knöpfelmacher would teach and defend Marx (and even Freud for that matter) through much of his career, he was unimpressed by his colleagues’ often romantic attachment to left-wing ideals. Party members were especially beyond the pale; in his eyes, they were foreign-controlled puppets with a covertly seditious agenda. Knöpfelmacher made himself a player in the political life on campus at every level, and would spar with high-profile left-wing student political figures with an unusual directness.⁴⁵

Oeser may well have been under pressure to cap or cleanse his more left-wing staff. Many of them did move on in the mid-1950s, but whether their political affiliations had anything to do with it is not clear. While all this made very little difference to the department’s teaching and research, political differences did colour personal relationships – especially once Knöpfelmacher arrived – and not generally for the better. Former staffers give varying accounts as to how these political tensions played out in terms of staff relationships and hiring practices.

Most of Knöpfelmacher’s more rancorous confrontations occurred outside the department. A particularly acrimonious affair centred on the Social Studies department at the beginning of the 1960s. Geoff Sharp had moved there from psychology a few years prior. Sharp and several departmental colleagues had reached an impasse with the department’s Director Ruth Hoban, wife of Melbourne’s Professor of History, Max Crawford. Early in 1961, a series of alarming reports relating to this dispute appeared in *The Bulletin*. They had been prompted by Knöpfelmacher’s inflammatory article, “The new scare campaign,” in the periodical *The Observer*. Knöpfelmacher’s allegations were given credence by a letter Crawford subsequently wrote to *The Bulletin*, and they were backed up by editor Donald Horne. Collectively these reports suggested a subversive takeover of the Social Studies department was afoot, along with sinister interference in the Criminology department. Behind the scenes, it appears ASIO operatives had selectively circulated information to Knöpfelmacher and others that fuelled these fears. A protracted University investigation overseen by Vice Chancellor George Paton poured cold water on these accusations. Sharp and Hoban retained their jobs but were moved to other positions. Their personal bitterness lingered, and the collateral damage was extensive. Crawford was almost crushed by the fallout, while Horne would

44 See Frank Knöpfelmacher, “Some effects of reward on the strength and position stereotypes of the white rat,” *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 5 (1953): 108-12; and, “Fixations, position stereotypes and their relation to the degree and pattern of stress Part II,” *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 5 (1953): 150-158.

45 Stuart Macintyre, Interview, 10 August 2016.

come to regret his zeal and partially apologise. Knöpfelmacher did no such thing.⁴⁶

Knöpfelmacher would soon find the boot on the other foot when he attempted to take up a post in political philosophy at the University of Sydney in 1965. His appointment was controversially blocked by the University Senate, who took a dim view of his reputation for confrontational *agitprop*. The ensuing brouhaha brought him to national attention; he became something of a *cause celebre* for academic freedom. Despite the fact that leftist academics publicly deplored such political interference in university appointments, Knöpfelmacher would interpret his thwarted Sydney move as some kind of payback.⁴⁷

Thus in Melbourne “Franta” remained. Oeser had his work cut out maintaining a rein on Knöpfelmacher, and Knöpfelmacher in turn suspected Oeser was far too indulgent with left-wing staffers. Their tense correspondence attests to their difficult relationship, Oeser keeping a watchful eye over the man who was a lightning rod for controversy.⁴⁸ Their sparring did come with grudging respect, however. When student unrest came to the Melbourne campus in the 1960s, Knöpfelmacher was able observe how cool Oeser was in explosive situations. He would always concede that Oeser did not lack for courage. In his later years in the department, Knöpfelmacher became something of an eccentric holdover from another era, especially so for those who knew little of his previous history. He taught “Theories in Psychology” and “Classical Social Theory” at an advanced undergraduate level and maintained a somewhat waning role as a political polemicist. Comically paranoid, Knöpfelmacher would often ask trusted staffers to guard his office whenever he went to relieve himself.

Hits and misses

Not all projects were to achieve what initially was planned, especially given that Oeser was an ambitious visionary of sorts. One such project in the mid-1950s was a Child Study Centre – modelled in part on such agencies set up in the U.S. in the interwar years. Research in child psychology and cognitive development had already been introduced with the appointment of Harry Maddox in 1950, and would be continued by Nic Cox, Patricia Leaper and Elwyn Morey. The Child Study Centre was envisaged as a research installation and clinic. The long weatherboard building itself was completed in the mid-1950s with help from private benefactors such as Malcolm Moore. Since funds were tight, the surveying work of architectural school students was used for the plans. Unfortunately, these guidelines were not up-to-date and accurate when the Centre came to be built. This necessitated some adjustments – a novel split-level design that was not in the original plans. Nevertheless, the Centre’s ambience and appointments far exceeded those most of the staff were used to – good furniture and attractive colours were combined with testing rooms, one-way mirrors etc. Unfortunately, there were never enough funds to staff the Centre fully and implement the treatment programs for children with behavioural problems. Some research was performed, but less than was originally envisaged.

The University administration was deeply ambivalent in their attitude toward the Centre – worried by

46 Philip Mendes, “Public attacks on social work in Australia: The two *Bulletin* affairs,” *Australian Social Work*, 54 (2001): 55-62; Fay Anderson, *An historian’s life: Max Crawford and the politics of academic freedom*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005); Fiona Capp, *Writers defiled: Security surveillance of Australian authors and intellectuals 1920-1960*, (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1993).

47 Anderson, *An historian’s life*.

48 Oscar A. Oeser Records, 1993.0151, Unit 18, University of Melbourne Archives.



Department photo 1963 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences archive)



Department photo 1969 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences archive)



Department photo 1970 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences archive)

Left to right: Loren Borland, Phil Langley, Geoff de Jonge, Paul Lafitte, Ian Campbell, Doug Miller, John Oakman, Sue Schutz, Bob Garton, Max Rademacher, Margaret Moon, Frank Tolkmitt, Frank Knöpfelmacher, Ron Greig, David Watkins, Norma Grieve, Bob Moore, Kevin Walsh, Tamara Kotler, Godfrey Gardner, Virginia Holmes, Gordon Stanley, Irene Kinsman, Jill Rolfe, Daryl Owen, Jack Shimoon, Alastair Heron, Robyn Robinson, Sally Tootell, Warren Bartlett, Di Brett, Pam Whitehead, Sam Hammond, (), Trish Saxby.



Department photo 1979 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences archive)

possible legal ramifications of clinical work under Melbourne's auspices. In view of this lack of support, Oeser had tried unsuccessfully to obtain support from major philanthropic foundations in the U.S. – Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford – who had sponsored psychological agencies and research there. At one stage the department engaged the services of an American fundraising company to try to alleviate these problems. Fundraising was a novel but much ballyhooed growth industry at the time, used mostly by churches. However, this entrepreneurial venture was not conspicuously successful.⁴⁹ The Child Study Centre continued to be used for teaching courses, especially those related to child development, education and counselling, and for departmental functions. When the department moved, the Centre was carefully shifted across Tin Alley to become the Alice Paton Memorial Kindergarten.

There were some other more successful, if somewhat incidental, ventures undertaken by psychology staffers in this period. For example, in the early 1950s Oeser appeared on ABC radio in a segment called "Psychology mailbag." In a sly allusion to his wartime work at Bletchley Park, the program opened with Elgar's "Enigma variations." Oeser gave answers prepared by departmental members to listeners' questions.⁵⁰ The 1956 Melbourne Olympics provided another opportunity for psychology department staff to exhibit their expertise. Olympic organisers chose to consult Sam Hammond on the question of accurate mechanical timing – although the system Hammond and Perc Reynolds eventually came up with was not considered practical.⁵¹

The brave new world of the Redmond Barry building

Student numbers had risen alarmingly in the late 1950s – straining the department's resources to breaking point. The University was embarking on a construction program to alleviate overcrowding, helped by the injection of much needed Commonwealth funds. Set up in 1957, the Murray Committee inquiry and its aftermath were to change the face of tertiary education in Australia. Its first two recommendations were aimed at producing more graduates and greater support for research. Its third recommendation was more intangible but arguably still resonant today: universities should strive to become "the guardians of intellectual standards and intellectual integrity within the community."⁵²

The Murray report signalled the beginning of a more active role for the Federal government in higher education, a 'post-Sputnik' attempt to open universities up to a wider section of the population. In the early 1960s the Commonwealth would plough far more money into tertiary education than before, and set up a competitive, peer-reviewed grant scheme run by the Australian Research Grants Committee (later the Australian Research Council) to fund basic and applied research. New universities and Adult Education centres would take up some of the expanding demand for tertiary places. Even so, Melbourne psychology's first year intakes grew exponentially, such that by the mid-1960s first year enrolments had topped the 500 mark. For the first time quotas were applied to the first year intake, with only 440 allowed entry in 1968.

49 Irene Kinsman, Text of speech for Sam Hammond's farewell, 24 February 1984.

50 Oscar A. Oeser Records, Staff Planning Committee, Box 6, 1989/27, University of Melbourne Archives.

51 Sam Hammond, Interview, 30 September 1996. Hammond had an intuitive flair for number patterns and statistical analysis. In the course of his pioneering social research with Oeser, he developed the "Hammond Matrix Comparator" – a device resembling a mechanical version of an Excel spreadsheet. Malcolm Macmillan, Interview, 28 July 2016.

52 Poynter, J. R. and Rasmussen, Carolyn. *A place apart: The University of Melbourne - Decades of challenge*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996) p.183.



*Excavations commencing in
November 1959
(Melbourne School of
Psychological Sciences archive)*



*The welded steel frame in July 1960
(Melbourne School of Psychological
Sciences archive)*



*Brickwork in progress, 1960
(Melbourne School of Psychological
Sciences archive)*



Completed Redmond Barry Building, 1961 (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences archive)

In 1961 the homely surrounds of Bushey and the Army huts were replaced by the austere modernism of the Redmond Barry building. It was built relatively quickly and cheaply, with State funds boosted by a Commonwealth outlay of 750,000 pounds. The University's Building Appeal made up the rest. The Barry building was opened on 22 November that year by the then Victorian Premier Henry Bolte. With characteristic bluntness Bolte apparently told this gathering of Melbourne's academic community: "Right, you've got your new building, now do something about your failure rate."⁵³



Alastair Heron

Bolte was a man who liked to see bricks and mortar for his money, and in a sense the Barry building exemplified this. It was the most bricks and mortar, the most space that could be obtained with a finite set of funds. Based on standard office-style block architecture, it was one of the few high rise buildings in Melbourne, the tallest building on campus. However, its overall design left something to be desired in terms of purpose-built considerations, not to mention aesthetics. Difficulties of sound-proofing and inflexible constraints on the use of space made it difficult to adapt to experimental testing and teaching work. Sam Hammond worked hard with builders and architects to do just that. The lift system was touted as the fastest and most reliable available. The "electronic brain" at the top of the tower would make sure that "no professor would be taken for a ride, first up and then down until finally the lift condescended to stop at the floor of his choice."⁵⁴ Over the following years some may have had reason to demur on this point. The phone system was also very difficult to use initially and the bare bricks gave off dust.

Yet compared with the 'slums' of the early years it was the lap of luxury. In any case, the Professor's Row area had been turned into a construction site for the Baillieu Library and the other buildings that now stand there, making it a relief to vacate.

Moving the site of the department subtly affected its operations and social characteristics. It symbolised a shift toward a more complex bureaucratic structure, tangibly reflected in the location of staff and functions. Senior staff occupied the top floor, while more junior staff were located on the 11th and 10th floors, along with classrooms and laboratories. The 11th floor also had testing cubicles, darkrooms, facilities for animal maintenance and a small workroom.

Expansion of the department's staff roster meant that not all could be accommodated in the Barry building. Incoming departmental head Alastair Heron was able to acquire space in the Old Pathology building in the early 1970s. The rooms were gutted and the old formalin-soaked brains were discarded. In their place Heron set up multi-purpose laboratories – which included a very long and very dark Visual Tunnel. Other space in Old Pathology was used for workrooms and offices. Frank Knöpfelmacher suggested,

⁵³ Richard Trahair, Interview, 3 September 1996.

⁵⁴ *The Redmond Barry Building*, (Brochure accompanying opening ceremony), University of Melbourne, 1961, p.4.

with typically deadpan delivery, that it should be renamed the “New Pathology” building. The Old Commerce building was also later acquired as office space, which again scattered the department across a section of the campus.

The transition toward pluralism in the late 1960s

The end of the 1960s proved to be a watershed period for the department. Perceptions of a stagnation in the teaching quality and research output needed to be addressed. Most of the talented core of social psychologists that Oscar Oeser had assembled twenty years previously had retired, left or moved on to other things. Sam Hammond had been given a personal Chair; for the first time the department had more than one professor. Early in 1970, Oeser retired and was replaced as head by Alastair Heron. Hammond had become heavily involved in the administration of the Arts Faculty, and was instrumental in the selection process for this appointment.

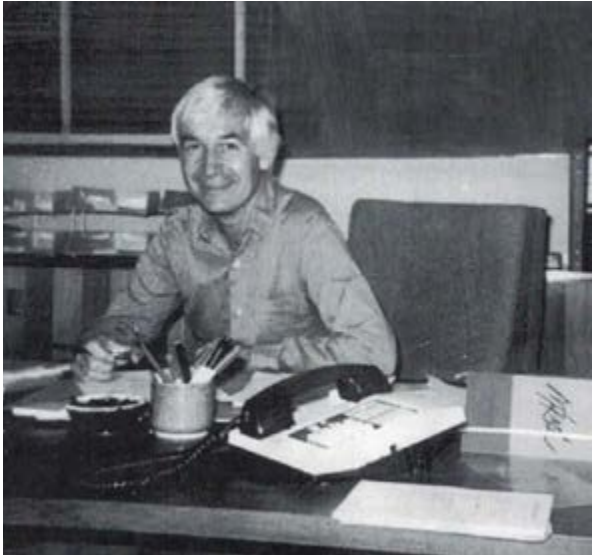
Heron was a British import with an M.Sc. from Manchester and a Ph.D. from the University of London. An upright and affable Quaker, Heron was extremely well-travelled. He was born in Scotland but spent much of his pre-war youth in Canada, toured the Continent in adulthood, and had done a stint in Zambia for a number of years, with the Order of Distinguished Service to show for it. Heron had been enjoying a sabbatical at the ANU and wondering what to do next, when he got a call from Hammond late in 1969 telling him he had been chosen to head the department at Melbourne.

Heron’s brief from the University was to broaden the department’s focus while not erasing what was already established. Heron’s conditions of acceptance included upgrades to research and teaching facilities, and several new lectureships. As soon as Heron arrived a change in leadership style was immediately apparent. Oeser had interpreted his role as one of singular executive authority: he made the decisions about how the department was run in order to leave his staff free to perform their teaching and research roles. Heron adopted a more inclusive, consultative approach. He had been warned that as a “Pommie” outsider he would do well not to throw his weight around. Before arriving, Heron canvassed all 35 staff members about “their hopes for the department and themselves.”⁵⁵ The monthly staff meetings continued as usual, but Heron allowed for a vote on issues where there was significant disagreement. He also stepped down from chairing these meetings to allow for a more robust exchange of viewpoints.

Heron presided over major changes to the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. In the early years of the department, there had been no separate honours degree. A formal honours year was not introduced till 1958. The structure of the honours year was changed by Heron in the early 1970s. Honours selection was instigated after first year, with students entering a two year honours program after the successful completion of the honours and pass component of second year. In principle at least, this meant students needed to perform at a high level from the beginning of their course, and it ruled out a combined honours degree. Ultimately this structure reverted back to the more typical three-year undergraduate course with honours selection after third year. Honours and graduate student numbers began to rise appreciably, putting a strain on supervision requirements that was hard to ease.

The early 1970s also saw significant staff expansion and a change in research direction. A greater proportion

⁵⁵ Alastair Heron, *Only one life: A Quaker’s voyage*, (Kelso, Scotland: Curlew, 1998), p.119.



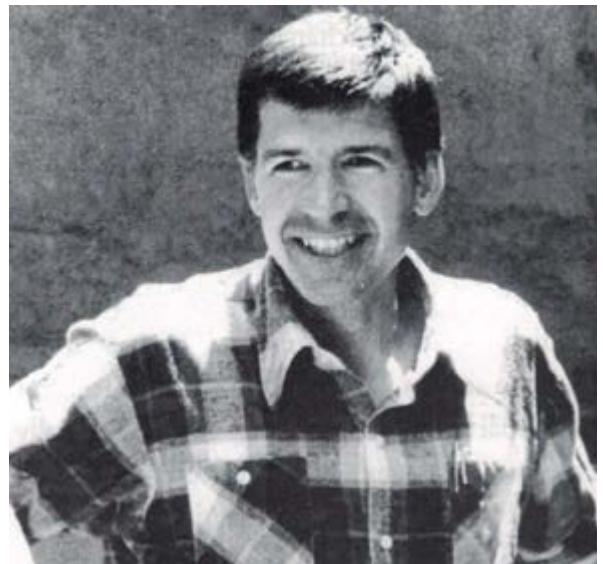
Roger Wales



Gordon Stanley



Warren Bartlett



Alex Wearing

of new appointees were educated in the North American tradition – having either travelled to the U.S. to gather higher degrees (e.g., Leon Mann, Ken Forster, Alex Wearing, Charles Langley) or being recruited from there (e.g., Loren Borland, Nancy McMurray). The department ceased to be dominated by social psychology – despite persistent external perceptions to that effect. As higher education policy changes put pressure on departments to hire or retain the most productive staffers, irrespective of area, tensions developed between the idea of a coherent research identity and a kind of elite pluralism. This tension introduced an element of uncertainty as to the direction the department took. Psycholinguistics became an important area of teaching and research, pioneered at Melbourne by Ken Forster who later became one of the most influential of the department's exports. This tradition was continued by his student Virginia Holmes, and by Pat Brotherton and UK-import Roger Wales. Tragically, Brotherton was killed in a car accident in July 1979. The bequest she left the department would be honoured by a memorial public lecture. Research in perception, motor performance and physiological functioning, neuropsychology and information processing was introduced in this period. Work in cognitive development was also extended in this period – largely by Norma Grieve, along with Heron (when not busy with other duties) and Susan Somerville.⁵⁶

Student activism and the Vietnam War also made an impact on the department in the early 1970s. Many students disappeared to avoid conscription, queued for signatures on deferment papers or otherwise made the journey north to fight the Asian war. Keith Taylor recalled how some of the professional training courses were scrutinised for their 'capitalistic' or 'authoritarian' orientation, despite the fact that the department still had a reputation as more progressive than most.⁵⁷ Heron worked with student representatives and key members of the University's hierarchy in the "Group of 11" to review all aspects of the institution's life and administration.

In 1972 Alex Wearing was appointed to a newly established Chair, as was Gordon Stanley in 1975. Heron was to depart suddenly late in 1974 after his wife returned to England to be with family who had taken severely ill. Leaving was a wrench. Heron achieved much in a short time and had just been elected the next President of the now fully-independent Australian Psychological Society (APS). When he left, he was assured the department had ascended to the "top of the list for a new building."⁵⁸ Following Heron's departure, the department moved to democratically elected heads. Most Arts and Science departments at Melbourne self-consciously opted for this kind of sharing of administrative responsibilities. Gordon Stanley, Alex Wearing, Warren Bartlett and Roger Wales all did their stints at the top.

Upgrading professional training in the early 1970s

Postgraduate professional training at Melbourne can be traced back to 1961, when a two-year part-time Diploma of Psychology was instigated. The course was directed toward training students in counselling and negotiation skills. It was headed by Ron Greig. Greig was interested in Freud but particularly influenced by Carl Rogers. Greig helped pioneer consultative clinical psychology in Victoria; he recalled that he encountered the first documented case of Multiple Personality in the state. Apart from the core syllabus centred on counselling, students had a choice between educational or occupational subjects.

56 Keith Taylor, Interview, 30 August 1996; Virginia Holmes, Interview, 24 September 1996.

57 Keith Taylor, Interview, 30 August 1996; Pat Leaper, Interview, 20 September 1996.

58 Alastair Heron, Personal communication, September 1996.

Alastair Heron deserves much credit for upgrading post-graduate training at Melbourne. During Heron's reign as Head of Department in the early 1970s, three important Masters-level professional training programs were initiated. They were developed as two-year full-time programs, comprising coursework and a minor thesis. Before Heron, the department was at the crossroads as far as professional training went. The pressure to upgrade postgraduate training was coming from several different directions. An expanding demand for psychological expertise in the public health and industrial sectors had occurred in the absence of adequate training opportunities. But this demand should be met, if possible, by well-trained individuals – psychology as a discipline would suffer otherwise. Other interstate departments were making moves in this direction, prompted by a general push to stake out and professionalise the applied fields. Moreover, diploma courses had become the province of the Adult Education centres. Courses such as the Diploma of Psychology needed to be stepped up to Masters level or scrapped. A Masters program in Occupational Psychology was developed in 1971, and later would become the Applied Masters course. Applications for this program fluctuated; most students taking the course did it on a part-time basis. Student demand and completion times reflected employers' willingness to release their employees for study.

The Clinical Masters program was also organised soon after Heron assumed the Chair. He was instrumental in getting University authorities on-side and liaising with the Health Department to fund positions in the public health system. Some attempts had been made in the late 1960s to set up clinical placements as part of the fourth year honours course. Ambivalence within the department and a lack of clinical staff were hurdles that took some time to overcome – in a practical sense at least. The fact that the department did not enjoy a particularly close relationship with the Medical school at this time did not help either. Psychiatry and psychology had drifted apart in the 1950s, as psychiatry upgraded its training beyond the Diploma of Psychological Medicine and Don Buckle took up a position with the World Health Organisation in Europe. Heron was instrumental in healing this inherited rift with Medicine.

In the late 1970s, the Neuropsychology program was also developed, resulting not only in a third Masters by Coursework program but also a significant area of research. Both these Masters programs would always enjoy an abundance of applicants. The Clinical course was soon divided into two separate streams, regarded as a strength in many respects since it represented the intellectual spectrum of the field. The Cognitive-Behavioural stream, with Ian Campbell and Nancy McMurray, provided a counterpoint to the Psychodynamic stream run by Loren Borland and Charles Langley. Campbell had moved to Melbourne from Christchurch, New Zealand in 1970. He would pioneer the Australian uptake of rational-emotive therapy through his teaching and practice. He passed away in December 1987, aged 46, while still a member of the department. His legacy was subsequently honoured by the APS with the Ian M. Campbell Memorial Prize in clinical psychology.⁵⁹

Despite its advantages, the two stream model of clinical training was somewhat draining on resources and it also introduced an overt sense of rivalry. For example, at one time badges to the effect "Behaviourist and proud of it" were sported by one stream. Students were given the choice between the streams after the first year. Later, separate intakes were undertaken, making parity in student numbers and resource allocation easier to achieve.

59 See Philip Burgess, "Obituary to Ian Matthew Campbell," *Behaviour Change*, 5 (1988): 93-95.



*Departmental revue, circa early 1980s.
From left: Maggie Kirkman, Doreen Rosenthal and Virginia Holmes.*



Norma Grieve, circa 1980



*First student intake into the Neuropsychology Masters, 1978
Back row (left-right): Tom, Diana, Michael.
Second row (left-right): Dorothy, Gemma, (), Jennie, Fiona.
Front row (left-right): Sandy (secretary), Prof. Bailuiget (visiting), Dr. Walsh, Geyuda, Maureen.*

From a student's point of view, the Clinical Masters course was famously hard to get into – one needed social maturity (assessed by interview), high marks and then some. It was also very demanding. Those chosen usually enjoyed excellent career prospects when they graduated. The Clinical Masters course had been hampered by the lack of a dedicated department related clinic – whether on or off campus. A major obstacle was again the attitude of the University and (non-)co-operating departments. Some patient consultation and clinical supervision was done in the department, but apart from insurance for students it could not be said to be fully supported by the University.

The Neuropsychology program was initially funded entirely through a New Development grant from central University funds. It was headed by long-time staffer Kevin Walsh, who had qualifications in medicine and psychology. Support from the Vice-Chancellor David Derham and key medical personnel was crucial to obtaining these finances, although the course was initially envisaged as a costlier doctoral level program. When this funding source terminated in the early 1980s, staffing levels had to be cut and intakes became biennial. It was the first such neuropsychology course in Australia, setting a pattern for other departments to follow. The neuropsychological textbook written by Walsh went through many editions and his Austin Maze test of visuospatial learning remained an important diagnostic instrument in Australian neuropsychological clinics. As well, Walsh and Gordon Stanley helped organise the now flourishing Australian Society for the Study of Brain Impairment. Despite organisational headaches, the staff of the Neuropsychology course enjoyed the support of clinical medical personnel within the University and associated hospitals. However, the administrations of the various teaching hospitals were not as helpful as was hoped. For instance, the Austin Hospital offered staff and students access to patients over the years, in return for the service provided, but could not offer commensurate financial support.

The evolution of administrative and technical needs

The late 1970s saw the number of graduate research students continue to rise, boosted by Commonwealth provision for postgraduate scholarships. Animal research was formally phased out by 1976, although some work continued to the end of the decade. Animal rights activists targeted the work of Richard Gates in this latter period, since it involved inducing seizures in rats. However, quite apart from this flurry, the department felt that such areas were being covered adequately at Monash and La Trobe and took a conscious decision to close the “rat rooms” – to the rats at least – and an era came to a close.

As the new millennium approached, technological developments and the growth of administrative needs had radically altered the work processes in universities – not least in the Psychology department. For instance, in the days of Bushey and the huts, all data analysis had to be done by hand, supplemented by mathematical tables and noisy calculating machines. While this made even the simplest analysis of variance a laborious task, it also discouraged the speculative and badly-thought-out data analysis sometimes associated with computer-based applications. Tape and punch card data entry became a thing of the past as well, with Fortran and mainframes replaced by icons and stand-alone PCs. Computer costs for teaching and research occupied an increasing proportion of the department's overheads, and had done so since the late 1970s.

In the department's early years, the administrative staff were a small group of secretaries. Irene Kinsman was the longest serving of this group. She became Oeser's personal secretary in the early 1950s and served on the department's staff for 28 years, a longevity exceeded by few. Secretarial work was dominated

by typing and course note reproduction. The latter was a particularly onerous task with the primitive technology available, such as Gestetner and mimeograph machines. It required the rostered participation of most of the academic staff. Reproduction moved on to semi-automated photocopiers, and administrative work seldom involved the typing up of research manuscripts or lectures. While administrative staff did not lament the laborious task of taking dictation or typing up screeds of complex notes, Irene Kinsman and her contemporaries attested to how much they learnt about psychology and those teaching it in this process.⁶⁰

Administrative requirements have grown since the 1960s, as universities have been forced to be more accountable to their Federal backers. Democratisation of the department's decision-making processes in the mid-1970s also necessitated a commensurate expansion in the documentation and distribution of information. A large administrative contingent was seen as indispensable to the running of the department's complex and diverse teaching and research programs. By 1996, the department employed 11 administrative staff, along with seven technical support officers.

Merging and moving into Medicine

In 1991, the department merged with the staff of the Melbourne College of Advanced Education psychology department, a result of Federal education minister John Dawkins' drive for amalgamations at an institutional level. The amalgamation drew together two disparate institutional threads in the annals of psychology at Melbourne. These new staffers made significant contributions to the life of the department.

Late in 1991, the decision to shift the department into the Faculty of Medicine was also made. Difficulties in obtaining adequate funding in the Faculty of Arts had eventually proved insurmountable. The department had always been in Arts but had also been a teaching department in the Faculty of Science. It was located in the Faculty of Arts in the first instance because most students were likely to be drawn from this Faculty – the Science Faculty was strict about its prerequisites and had not been particularly accommodating. Moreover, most of the founding members of the new department had stronger links with arts rather than science. However, the proportion of science students taking psychology increased slowly over the years to roughly half the first year intake by the early 1990s.

The Arts Faculty always comprised a wide variety of departments with very different resourcing needs. Perennial funding problems stemmed from psychology's distinctively manifold role as a teaching department, research discipline and professional training school. The limitations the Arts Faculty imposed on staff-student ratios – higher than the Arts Faculty average and much higher than those of Science – made the labour intensive teaching programs much harder to implement and sustain. For example, retention of the Neuropsychology course had required a diversion of resources from the undergraduate pass curriculum. Similarly, difficulties in obtaining adequate laboratory facilities had made high quality experimental research problematic.

In 1986, an exhaustive external review of the department had been conducted.⁶¹ Nevertheless, budgetary issues related to the department's faculty home were explicitly excluded from its terms of reference. With

⁶⁰ Irene Kinsman, Text of speech for Sam Hammond's farewell, 24 February 1984.

⁶¹ "Report to the Review Committee," Department of Psychology, University of Melbourne, 1986.

the support of Vice-Chancellor David Penington, incoming head Roger Wales pushed for a more active consideration of these issues from the University. It was concluded that the narrowness of the terms of reference of the 1986 review had undermined the department's capacity to implement its recommendations. The Science Faculty was touted as a more favourable environment and was duly approached. Oeser and some of his successors had tried unsuccessfully over the years to move the department into Science. As the new decade began, however, the Faculty of Science was still unwilling to take in such a large, human science-oriented department. Differences in intellectual culture and central funding shortfalls were cited as reasons for this rejection.

Late in the process this disappointment opened up a third possibility: Medicine. The Medical Faculty had already broadened its designation and outlook, which was an important factor in the acceptance of the shift on both sides. A vote was taken and the newly christened School of Behavioural Science took its place amongst the Schools of Medicine, Dental Science and Physiotherapy in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.⁶²

The shift also involved a merger with the psychologists previously employed in the Department of Psychiatry. A link forged with psychiatry at the department's inception has been remade. The move to Medicine enabled several new academic positions to be created. Well-equipped, customised laboratories were established for research in vision, psycholinguistics and psychophysiology; other laboratories were upgraded. The 1986 review had suggested that – apart from perennial funding problems – the department was attempting to cover too much of the psychological purview. Continual creation of undergraduate course options could not be sustained; more importantly, research in particular areas needed to be consolidated over a longer time-frame. In part, this could be seen as an historical legacy of the department's position as the sole provider of psychological research and professional training in the state for so long, and the incumbent sense of responsibility that went with it.

By 1996, at the time of the 50th anniversary, virtually all staff were located in the Redmond Barry building from the 5th to the 13th floors. While the promise of a new building evaporated, this centralisation helped lend a sense of coherence to what was still a broadly-based but productive department. The department's academic staff numbered 42 (full and part-time), teaching approximately 1,500 undergraduates in years one to three and 70 in the honours or postgraduate diploma years. At one stage in the early 1990s, first year lectures grew so large that a video-linked "overflow" lecture room was used. The number of postgraduate students had swelled to 120, with around half that in the Masters by coursework programs. A specialist Master's program in Clinical Child Psychology was added to the graduate offerings. The decision was made to concentrate research in several key areas, largely following the 1986 review's recommendations. Cognitive neuroscience was to be especially strengthened, along with clinical, mathematical, social and developmental psychology.

This was where I left off in 1996. The School would continue to evolve and adapt to a changing tertiary environment. It would come to accommodate many new faces – many brilliant, some quirky. But much of this story takes place at a broader, macro level, shaped by political and economic forces larger than the School itself.

62 Roger Wales, Personal communication, 3 October 1996.

The end of the century and beginnings of a new era

The three years either side of the millennium were marked by a steady-as-she-goes approach. Roger Wales had handed over to John Trinder as Head of School, and left at the end of 1999 to become Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University. As well as steering the School to its new Faculty home, Wales had played a key role in the development of psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology at Melbourne.⁶³

One major development at the end of the century was a significant expansion of the professional programs, including coursework doctorates with a reduced research component, the Doctor of Psychology (D.Psych). This kind of professionally-oriented program had been first introduced in the US in the 1970s as a modification of the scientist-practitioner model enshrined at Boulder in 1949. Other competing Australian institutions, La Trobe University and the University of Queensland for example, were doing likewise. The new D.Psych. meant there were three possible pathways for those pursuing a practice-oriented careers at Melbourne: a Masters, a Masters with a conversion to a research-based doctorate (Masters/Ph.D.), and a D.Psych. The number of areas that graduates could choose between was also increased substantially. The School added Forensic and Health programs to the existing Clinical, Clinical Child, Clinical Neuropsychology and Industrial/Organisational programs. Getting such an ambitiously extensive set of offerings up and running was not without teething issues, however. Late in 2001, it was apparent that the low numbers of students in each stream across all the programs would stretch the necessary joint teaching resources.⁶⁴

As the new millennium arrived without the dreaded y2k glitch, the University was in a state of considerable flux. Vice-Chancellor Alan Gilbert's controversial vision for a new private arm of the University quickly ran into financial trouble. In 2001, Gilbert introduced a new funding model that placed far greater emphasis on research income from external sources, as well as from research student numbers and completions. This left the School a little vulnerable, especially given that the Howard government had just effectively slashed university funding by a quarter.⁶⁵ Many universities across Australia would respond by chasing more fee-paying local and overseas students for their postgraduate courses.

Federal funding for the teaching of psychology had generally been set at the lower band of social science rather than laboratory science – despite the fact that it routinely involved experimental lab classes with expensive computing facilities. Nonetheless, the School's large undergraduate enrolments remained a key source of income. Enrolments had been relatively stable up to 2002, largely because overall enrolments in both Arts and Science were equally stable. Significant budget deficits were forecast for 2003 and 2004. Cost saving measures, such as the culling of periodical subscriptions, had to be implemented.

In April 2002, School staff were shocked by the sudden death of Jeff Pressing. Born in San Diego, Pressing was a gifted polymath whose interests spanned the physical and social sciences, music, and computer modelling. He had been admitted to Cal Tech at the age of 15, and had headed the Music department

63 See Janet Fletcher, Lesley Stirling, and John Hajek, "Tribute to Roger Wales," *Australian Speech Science and Technology Association Newsletter*, 30 (2012): 5.

64 Special Planning Departmental Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 13 November 2001.

65 Departmental Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 28 September 2000.



Jeff Pressing, 1998

at Trobe University before joining the School in 1993. The significant impact he made on the intellectual and social life of the School would make him sorely missed.⁶⁶ On a more positive note, the School webpage was developed and went online in 2002.

In this straitened context, the School leadership felt they were not in a strong position to push their financial interests at a Faculty level. Head of School Alex Wearing worried that special pleading might jeopardize their position in relation to other Faculty departments. And while the School was teaching many Science and Arts students, it had little connection with those Faculties either. Wearing and long-time staff member Pip Pattison had managed the claw back a little more money, but the School's ongoing financial position remained uncertain.⁶⁷

The shifting funding environment put a premium on obtaining external grant money. The School's collective capacity to procure research funds from a diverse range of

sources had been reasonable. But circumstances would make obtaining larger collaborative funding a new priority, especially the prestigious linkage grants offered by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC).

The year 2003 was a pivotal one. When Pip Pattison took over from Alex Wearing as Head, there were a number of developments that would help boost engagement at a Faculty level. That year, Jim Angus took over as the new Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. A number of new administrative appointments were also made as Cyril Yarden in the Finance Office moved on. The administrative shakeup at the top gave everyone an opportunity to make something of a fresh start. The new Dean proved sympathetic, promptly visiting the School and urging them to become more visible at Faculty forums and not to be shy about trumpeting their successes.⁶⁸

Closing the disconnect at a Faculty level would help address longstanding budgetary issues.⁶⁹ A more formalized approach to accounting would make outlays more transparent, as opposed to being reversed-engineered according to desired outcomes and the "grace and favour" that went with that. But successive Heads of School would find it a *perennial* challenge to avoid any form of Faculty 'taxation,' wherein money earned in the form of Commonwealth funded places was funnelled elsewhere across the Faculty. It was the key to ensuring the School got full value for the high numbers of undergraduate students it attracted and the teaching load this entailed. When undergraduate numbers began to increase, these

66 There were many tributes and obituaries to Pressing. See for example, Ben Williams, "Encomium for Jeff Pressing," *Music Perception*, 20 (2003): 315-321.

67 Departmental Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 23 July 2002.

68 "Notes from Special Department Committee Meeting with Professor Jim Angus, Dean Elect, MDHS Faculty," *School of Behavioural Science*, 24 June 2003.

69 Pip Pattison, Telephone Interview, 5 August 2016.

funds could be channelled into the many dedicated research streams, and help lure more Ph.D. students.

The School also went through several different review processes in 2003. The lengthy course accreditation process – still at this point overseen by the APS – started at the beginning of the year, in preparation for site visits mid-year. In addition, the School underwent one of the University's rolling audits that identified several key areas for improvement. While the School's research performance was strong in comparison with other leading GO7 (now GO8) Australian universities, output indices could be enhanced, especially by building links with other universities and agencies locally and overseas. Galvanized by these new imperatives, the School collectively pushed upwards and looked outwards to systematically pursue external research funding, especially the Federal grants that could support ongoing collaborative work. Special training presentations were arranged to develop strategies to do this.⁷⁰

Stepping up in a changing research game

From the later 1990s, there had been a clear commitment to dedicated research streams in the School. With this had come a renewed determination to attract more students for doctoral research degrees. Each research domain within the School was encouraged to develop their own strategies to market themselves to potential postgraduates.⁷¹ Even so, the staff's research interests remained relatively diverse. For example, the annual research report for 2002 report named eight different areas of coverage.⁷² But policy shifts at the Federal level would accelerate the trend toward consolidation and collaborative outreach markedly.⁷³

In 2004, the Howard government announced the Research Quality Framework (RQF). It signalled Canberra's determination to play a more active role in directing the national research effort by providing incentives for particular kinds of research in particular areas. The RQF linked funding to the quality and impact of research across strategic areas that would, as the Federal government put, "deliver real benefits to the wider community." The framework would be taken up and reworked in 2008 by the Rudd government as the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative.

The introduction of the RQF in 2006 and full implementation of the ERA in 2010 brought with it an unprecedented emphasis on bibliometric assessment. It would, in the words of Henry Jackson, "completely change the game."⁷⁴ Coupled with the specific reforms presaging the introduction of a radical new curriculum structure (the "Melbourne Model"), the pressure was on to consolidate groupings so that they were seen to have "critical mass" and programmatic purpose. "Lone ranger" research was out. In a context that favoured a more focused approach, it became an unaffordable luxury.

In 2006, the University hierarchy set out the new imperatives: there should be "concentrated pockets" of research, supported by world-leading cross-disciplinary linkages, and high levels of knowledge transfer

70 "Operational Plan 2003," School of Behavioural Science, 24 March 2003; "Notes from Department Research Meeting," School of Behavioural Science, 29 July 2003.

71 "Talkfest 1999: Summary," School of Behavioural Science, 5 February 1999.

72 These were: Clinical, Behavioural Neuroscience, Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Health, Social and Organisational Psychology, Quantitative Psychology. See "Research Report 2002," School of Behavioural Science, August 2003.

73 Jen Kwok, "Impact of ERA research assessment on university behavior and their staff," NTEU National Policy and Research Unit, April 2013.

74 Henry Jackson, Interview, 29 June 2016.



Redmond Barry Building, January 2005



Redmond Barry Building Courtyard, January 2005

to go with it. All Schools/Departments should aim to be number one in Australia. The School's research standing was quite commendable at the time, ranking second nationally but a long way behind the University of Queensland.⁷⁵ In September 2006, the School's leadership resolved to focus on three broad groupings: Cognitive, Clinical and Social. One looming issue was the School's ageing staff profile. Given that the School was top-heavy with senior staff, retirements and regeneration would need to be carefully managed.

The changing rates and composition of the School's research output speak of the bibliometric forces shaping it. As the School's research reports indicate, there was a steep rise in the total number of publications in the early years of the century, reflecting evaluation yardsticks that emphasized publication rates. For example, total publications increased from 116 to 136 from 2001 to 2002.⁷⁶ Total publications (including refereed articles) went on increasing for the next three years, levelling off after 2005, before beginning to climb steeply again after 2010 even though inclusion criteria tightened. In contrast, staffing levels were decreasing during this period, if anything. With the increasing emphasis on impact and quality, the new metrics would tend to discourage the long form manuscript. Books by staff members became rare, and book chapters a little less common, as the high-ranking fully-refereed journal became *the* outlet of choice. For example, the 2010 research report listed 151 publications in total under the new, tighter ERA guidelines; all but eight were in fully-refereed journals.⁷⁷ Single authorship also became less common, as multiple authorship became the norm.



Pip Pattison, 2005

The increasingly calibrated output framework put more pressure on staff to perform. However, one of the unintended consequences of the rising metric tide was the advent of aggressive recruitment practices across institutions. Academics had always enjoyed free-agency for their services. But this was something new. "Research stars" that could strategically lift ranking in key areas were proactively head-hunted, or "poached," depending on which end of the deal you were describing it from. This led to several high-profile departures, with the School raided by institutions to the north. Jason Mattingley, for example, received an offer far too generous to refuse. Other rising staffers such as Anne Castles and Nick Allen have also moved on, although Allen still maintains close collaborative links with the School.

Uncertainty ahead

When Glynn Davis took over as Vice-Chancellor of the University in 2005, he brought with him a reform agenda that was arguably the most radical in the University's history. The changes encompassed by the new Melbourne Model were unusual. These reforms were in one sense a customary adaptation to the ever-shrinking but highly-regulated Federal funding of undergraduate education. But in a more unusual,

⁷⁵ Special School Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 18 July 2006.

⁷⁶ "Research Report 2002," School of Behavioural Science, August 2003.

⁷⁷ Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences – Research and Research Training Summary Data, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, 2015.

preemptive sense, they were designed to insulate the University from a possible future shock, particularly any downturn in the more open, internationalist market of postgraduate education.

The Melbourne Model shifted undergraduate education in a generalist direction, consolidating degrees while freeing up students' choices. The emphasis was on "depth" within six broadly defined areas, with a sampling of "breadth" across areas. Even more significantly, the Melbourne Model aimed to shift all professional training to the postgraduate level, roughly in line with the graduate professional training schools of the US system and the Bologna Model that was being phased in across the Europe Union from the turn of the 21st century.

The introduction of the Melbourne Model came on top of policy shifts at a Federal level. The result would be one of the most challenging periods in the School's history. Henry Jackson had taken over as Head of School in 2005, the first clinical specialist to be given the honour. In 2007, the School was due for another rolling review to be overseen by acting Dean Bruce Singh. But these plans were overtaken by the broader agenda sweeping across Melbourne. The impending introduction of the new model gave the University the chance to overhaul its entire structure, with the School location very much an issue under consideration. In the machinations over the Faculty appointment of Philip Smith as Henry Jackson's successor as Head of School for 2008, a review of the School and its location was put in motion.⁷⁸ It was to be overseen by Peter McPhee, the University's newly-created Provost liaising between faculty Deans and the Vice-Chancellor.

Staff at the School didn't need reminding that negative reviews had consequences. The International Conflict Resolution Centre, located in the School and directed by Di Bretherton, was reviewed and then suspended in 2005, and eventually disbanded. The issue of location had the unfortunate effect of reviving one of the perennial tensions in the history of the modern discipline: the basic science versus applied professional divide. Those on the science side of the divide had dominated the early history of modern psychology, when it was still a predominantly academic discipline across the Western world. However, the professional arm grew significantly in the aftermath of World War II, particularly in the US. The end of World War II marked the moment when US psychology began to dominate internationally, setting standards and precedents that were increasingly difficult for other nations to ignore. Although the discipline generally elected to remain united, the complex and sometimes competing interests of each side of psychology's basic science versus applied professional divide has seen some notable bust-ups and breakaways around the world.

The School revised its organizational structure in 2005, creating an Executive Committee to replace the Departmental Committee meeting. The Executive would meet as needed, the better to anticipate and respond to changing circumstances. But in the lead up to the introduction of the Melbourne Model, the School's resources were in danger of being spread too thinly. It was proving difficult to sustain all six professional programs. Organising placements and supervision was a challenge and particularly labour-intensive, usually depending one or two key staffers. Commonwealth funding for postgraduate places – set at 2.3 times that of undergraduate level – was never enough to cover the expense, and would somewhat mysteriously drop further after 2003.⁷⁹ The professional programs generally ran at a loss,

⁷⁸ School Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 31 July 2007.

⁷⁹ Henry Jackson, Personal communication, 24 August 2016.



Philip Smith, 2003



Sarah Wilson, 2011



University of Melbourne Psychology Clinic, 2006

effectively propped up by money from Commonwealth-supported undergraduate places. Of course, the counter argument was that such prestigious, highly selective courses were a key selling point for the School, the aspirational goal of perhaps the majority of undergraduate enrolees. Adding to the uncertain mix, overall enrolments dropped in 2006 and 2007 – partly it seems as a result of the suspension of intakes into some of the professional programs.

The 2008 review of the School was to be conducted by an outside review panel appointed by the Provost; its composition was non-negotiable. The panel would make its own judgement, after taking the views of School staff into account. McPhee perceived significant rifts within the School and did little to play them down. Thus three options were entertained: moving to Science, staying within Medicine, or splitting the School between the two along undergraduate versus postgraduate lines, roughly amounting to a basic science versus applied professional division.

During the process, the Science Faculty expressed a desire to accommodate the School for the first time. Successive Deans of Science had taken a greater interest in the School, anticipating that the “neuro-turn” would bring its research in line with that of the Faculty. The School’s large undergraduate intakes provided another incentive. Restructuring and disciplinary migration had given the Science Faculty a license to grow, whereas the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Science remained a huge conglomeration. The new Dean of Science Peter Rathjen made a late, informal bid for the School, one that was potentially attractive. When it emerged that Rathjen would soon be moving on, it remained to be seen if the new Dean could deliver on these promises.

The academic staff was somewhat split on the issue of location.⁸⁰ Those with strong clinical links – such as those involved in the collaboration with Orygen Youth Health in Parkville – wanted to remain. Others working in social and cognitive areas were agnostic or mildly in favour of a shift. The whole process was not remembered fondly by those who went through it. Much of the unhappiness revolved around the lack of control, the fear that an unsympathetic judgement based on inappropriate benchmarks would be imposed on the School. In the end, the School Executive expressed a wish to remain together and stay with Medicine, and the review panel’s final report reflected this.⁸¹

Adapting teaching to the Melbourne Model

In many respects it is still too early to assess the broader legacy of the Melbourne Model (or “Melbourne Curriculum” as it is now called). However, its impact on teaching throughout the University was immediate. Paradoxically perhaps, the School did not have to change their curriculum a great deal to fit in with the stipulation that vocational training had to be taken at the postgraduate level only. The School had always essentially followed this division.⁸²

As incoming Head of School, Philip Smith was briefed on a response to the Melbourne model. Accommodating Davis’ vision at an undergraduate level meant balancing any curriculum changes

80 School Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 25 September 2007.

81 Ron Slocombe and Joy Damousi, “Review of the location of the School of Behavioural Science: Final report,” University of Melbourne, July/August 2008.

82 John Trinder, Interview, 4 April 2016.

with Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) accreditation requirements and the School's own ideals. One immediate issue was the status and viability of 4th year honours, which was at odds with the 3+2 Melbourne model that envisaged three year undergraduate degrees leading into two-year postgraduate professional courses. But the value of the Honours year had not been well understood overseas, and APAC required a 4+2 model (four years of undergraduate training plus at least two years professional training.) The School leadership had to argue for maintaining 4th year Honours, especially once it became clear the Federal government would not step in to help boost funding for Master's level training. Dean of Faculty Jim Angus was always supportive, and the University came to agree. Otherwise significant course restructuring was generally avoided. As for the breadth requirement of the Melbourne Model, the School Executive favoured an in-house rather than cross-disciplinary approach, adapting existing subjects that could be taught by staff members. That way these subjects would be under the School's control and they would receive full credit for teaching them.

A comprehensive external review of the School's curriculum in 2008 suggested that tutorial delivery was an area that could be improved, particularly given the need to overcome the impersonality that inevitably goes with teaching large groups. Sarah Wilson, Director of Teaching and Learning in this period, recalled that it enabled the School to revitalize the way the undergraduate curriculum was delivered, especially the tutorials.⁸³ Tutor training was upgraded with the appointment of a tutor coordinator, along with new formalized tutor leadership roles (principal tutor, senior tutor etc.). Administrative arrangements were standardized to cope with increasing student numbers. Tutorials now run from eight in the morning to eight at night. The sheer magnitude of the task demanded streamlined processes.

Several teaching innovations would come out of the process of adapting to the Melbourne Model. One was the development of new discipline-defining Capstone subject, "Psychological Science: Theory and Practice." Following Melbourne's accent on collaborative research, the subject simulated the research process from start to finish. Working in small teams – reminiscent of Oeser's syndicates – students were required to develop a research proposal, critically evaluate the literature, define a set of questions to explore, ascertain a methodology for doing so and write a discussion based on an analysis of pilot data. The results were presented at a poster session and awards night at the end of the subject. Taught at third year level from 2010 onwards, this Capstone subject was a huge undertaking that mobilised almost all members of staff, with no excuses! It has been particularly successful. Not only has the feedback from students been extremely positive, it has been hailed at inter-faculty level for the way it brought the diverse elements of students' prior learning together.⁸⁴

Some of the changes that went with the introduction of the Melbourne Model were more ambiguous. Due to some of the constraints of the new broader model – especially on the first and second year curriculums – the psychology major had to be redesigned. For example, the second-year statistics subject had to be broken up and re-distributed across other subjects. The Melbourne Model tended to reduce the amount of undergraduate course work that could be completed in a given field, yet School staff had to be mindful of the being compliant with APAC standards for accreditation.⁸⁵ In the past, students had also been allowed to overload their degree with psychology and other subjects. But there was less scope to do that under the new model, and special dispensation had to be sought for a 125-point (10 subject) psychology major – the

⁸³ Sarah Wilson, Interview, 19 July 2016.

⁸⁴ "Psychological Sciences: Report to the Dean, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences," September 2011.

⁸⁵ Philip Smith, Interview, 22 June 2016.

minimum allowable by APAC – at a time when most majors were 100 points only. The overall result was that students tended to do less psychology at an undergraduate level than they had before.

One of the more positive effects of this radical shake-up, however, was the way it freed-up students' subject choices. The Melbourne Model opened the way for students from a diverse array of faculties and courses to take psychology for the first time. The School was able to capitalize on the discipline's broad appeal to increase undergraduate numbers whilst maintaining stipulated intake standards. The multiple entry points that went with the breadth requirement meant that all students who had wanted to do at least a little psychology could now do so. Enrolments went up appreciably from 2008 onwards, further boosted by the Gillard government's reforms that expanded university entry across the country. The School has enjoyed steady annual increases in enrolments over the best part of decade, a trend projected to continue next year. These increases have been well ahead of most of the psychology departments in Australia. This unexpected bonus of greater student numbers has enabled a greater cross-subsidy of research.

In the lead up to the introduction of the Melbourne Model, it was decided that the Graduate and Postgraduate Diplomas of Psychology should both be converted to one-year courses. These hitherto part-time courses were designed for graduates from other areas looking for a dedicated pathway into psychological careers. The Graduate Diploma was a 10-subject APAC accredited undergraduate subject sequence amounting to a 125-point psychology major, that provided an entry point into Commonwealth supported 4th year places, with the Postgraduate Diploma course a 4th year equivalent. Making the Diplomas intensive one-year full-time courses made them even more attractive to fee-paying overseas and local applicants. This proved a boon for the School's bottom line, for these courses were hugely popular and successful. By 2010, 20% of the 3rd year cohort were Graduate Diploma students, rising to 28% four years later. The uptake was even more pronounced at the 4th year level; by 2014 a majority of 4th year students (i.e., 52%) had chosen this pathway as a potential lead-in to postgraduate professional training or a research doctorate.⁸⁶

Professional Training

The School has maintained its "loss-leading" professional courses, but not without some cut backs. The ambitiously diverse array of professional programs of the early 'noughties' had to be rationalised. Funding and operational issues were always a challenge, as was maintaining key staff members to cover them. The increasing premium on clustered research productivity would only make this balance harder. The intakes for the Health program run with the Austin Hospital were suspended for 2006 and the program was abandoned the following year. The innovative Forensic course was a trickier proposition, given that it was run jointly between the School and the Criminology department. It too would fall by the wayside, with Tony Ward departing for a position in New Zealand. Even the in-house Industrial/Organisational program proved difficult to sustain in the lead up to the Melbourne Model. The Industrial/Organisational program competed with other similar courses elsewhere at the University, and was especially dogged by student "overruns." Students would complete the coursework, (re-)join the workforce, and drag their heels in completing the final research component.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ "Enrolments 2014," Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, 3 March 2014.

⁸⁷ Henry Jackson, Interview, 29 June 2016.



Max Rademacher circa 1990



Henry Jackson, 2006



Michael Saling and neuropsychology students, 2007

The long-running Clinical and Clinical Neuropsychology programs were more robust, however. These two programs formed the core of the School's professional offerings, with a number of first year units from them common to both programs. The D.Psych. pathway evaporated, reflecting the inherent difficulties of running such programs. Despite the School's commitment to high-level programs, external forces would also work against such lengthy and demanding training models.

Staff at the School had to balance the priorities of both the University and outside accreditation bodies. The APS passed the accreditation baton to APAC in 2008. But both tended to focus on the professional requirements of undergraduate and graduate programs, stipulating such things as course content, staff contact hours and qualification levels. Conversely, the University was more committed to a broader education across the discipline, including scientific research methods.

There were other stakeholders involved in professional training as well, notably State and Federal governments. In the late 1980s, the Victorian government had ascertained that more clinical programs were required to meet service needs. However, Canberra had been reluctant to include psychological services under Medicare, fearing it would do little to serve rural areas, and encourage an exodus from the public to the private sector. But with the rise of mental health awareness in the early 'noughties,' the Howard government took this momentous step in 2006. Psychological services were included within a Medicare rebate scheme for the first time. This was a boon for those seeking help, but it does appear that some of these historic fears have come to pass, with many clinicians opting for city-based private practice. Both government and the APS have pressed universities for more trainees to meet outstanding service needs. The knock-on effects saw intakes for professional courses swelling across the country. Abbreviated training models were also proposed – for example, the 5+1 model (three years undergraduate, two years professional training and one year of supervised experience). Those at Melbourne have generally opposed such moves as a watering down of standards.

While agreeing to disagree on some issues, the School has accommodated the APAC review process as a necessary and constructive exercise. The first iteration of the APAC process in 2009 was perhaps the most crucial. The School's undergraduate programs were deemed to meet APAC standards, a tribute to the way those at the School were able to accommodate the Melbourne Model. It is interesting to note that the Academic organisational component of the School received only a conditional accreditation, purely due to deteriorating staff student ratios. Enrolments were increasing while staff levels remained fairly static. But the School's ability to deliver its academic programs was not seen to be compromised by this. APAC did point to other issues in relation to professional programs. Some of the content areas in the Neuropsychology program needed to be reworked, and there needed to be more adult placements in the child program and significantly more child placements in the adult program.⁸⁸ As a result, the Clinical Child program run with the Royal Children's Hospital was rolled into the Clinical course in 2010. Since 2015, the School has also overseen the administration of a Master of Educational Psychology program, but this program continues to be run and taught exclusively by staff in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

⁸⁸ School Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, Minutes, 23 February 2010.

Staffing, laboratory work and technical services

A workforce plan was put in place during Henry Jackson's tenure as Head in 2005-2007; this was the first in the Faculty, offering generous voluntary redundancies. It helped deal with the School's top-heavy profile. But unexpected departures and "poaching" added to losses at the upper levels. As a result, a significant number of junior staff were hired in 2010 to 2012. For example, the beginning of 2012 saw seven new full-time academic appointments, a handful of fractional appointments, and two administrative newcomers.⁸⁹ While this injection of youth was a positive initiative, it also reflected the constraints imposed by finances and the administrative hurdles that go with senior appointments. It has up-ended the School's age/level profile; it became a little bottom-heavy, if anything, with these new staff now bunching at academic level C (Senior Lecturer).⁹⁰ Nevertheless, overall staffing levels have not changed much since the early years of the new century, even though student numbers have risen by over 40%. The School remains lean in this sense compared to other Australian departments, especially in terms of senior staff.

In 2012 the School's Technical Services group was dissolved and merged with the technical staff south of Grattan Street in the then School of Population Health. Max Rademacher, of one of the School's longest serving staffers, retired in December that year. He had been constant since 1969, providing customized laboratory equipment to suit all manner of changing technical research needs. One of his last and most ingenious innovations was a non-electrical (and thus non-interfering) means of recording subject responses during neuroimaging experiments.⁹¹

The dissolution of technical services marked the end of an era. Specific technical needs of the School had declined over the years. Laboratory work was now performed with increasingly sophisticated and expensive psychophysiology and neuroimaging set ups – often as part of collaborative ventures. Computer software needs could now generally be handled by off-the-shelf programs. But while the technical overheads associated with the School's many laboratories have gone up, dedicated administrative staff have gone down. They have been pared down to just 8.33 staff members under the University's new services model.

The rise of the internet has both given and taken away. It has enabled an efficient virtual environment for teaching and administration. Lecture and tutorial materials can now be circulated on the University's Learning Management System, administrative tasks done on specialized online systems – Themis and Isis. But it has also meant that much of the collective labour that went with these tasks has necessarily devolved down to individual academics, removing the human contact that went with it. High workloads and semi-independent research groupings also made informal social gatherings of the School less frequent, even if a sense of collective identity remains.

Outreach, engagement and the future

Philip Smith handed over as Head of School to Nick Haslam in 2014, after doing a six-year stint during a particularly trying period. Haslam has ensured the School has been adept at reaching out beyond it

⁸⁹ School Committee Meeting, Minutes, Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, 24 April 2012.

⁹⁰ Nick Haslam, Personal communication, 24 August 2016.

⁹¹ Philip Smith, Interview, 22 June 2016; Max Rademacher, Farewell address, December 2012.

institutional confines. The shopfront work, the community engagement and the service outreach has come in many forms. The School regularly hosts public lectures from high-profile visitors in the form of the Alice Barber and Brotherton lectures. Many School staffers have been prominent contributors to open academic forums such as *The Conversation*.

The School had operated a clinical service in some form since the 1970s. Plans for a new dedicated fee-paying clinic at the Royal Melbourne Hospital were put in place soon after the turn of the century. However, renovations to the hospital in 2004 forced it to move. Finding a new location was something of a saga until the current premises in Blackwood Street in North Melbourne were secured. The clinic offers low-cost clinical services and serves as a first point of call placement for postgraduate clinical psychology trainees.

Another key outreach initiative, of which the School is justifiably proud, was the clinical training program developed in conjunction with the National University of Singapore (NUS). Late in 2001, Henry Jackson, Di Bretherton and Prasuna Reddy variously toured Singapore and India. These visits highlighted the lack of clinical services and expertise in these regions.⁹² Out of this came Jackson's proposal for a joint training course in clinical psychology. Students would do the first year of the Clinical Masters programme in Melbourne, and then return to Singapore to undertake their second-year studies and placements. Full APAC accreditation for the joint program was achieved in 2014. Developing the program involved a considerable investment of resources with relatively little expected financial return to the School, an outreach initiative that would delight Oscar Oeser. While the joint program has recently been closed down, it helped the NUS develop its own independent clinical psychology training program.

In 2015, the faculty location issue was revisited. The ensuing review led to the same outcome as the 2008 review. However, the process unfolded far more positively. The strong performance appraisals the School had received saw two faculties eagerly competing for the School's favour. Science made a particularly attractive pitch – suggesting the School would be at least 1 million dollars better off there, and the final report from the external reviewers recommended a move.⁹³ However, the democratic will of staff, although again somewhat split, was to remain within Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. Those with strong medical-clinical commitments and collaborations feared a move might damage them. Those without such links were again less moved either way. Several positive things came out of this competitive courtship. The School obtained substantial Faculty funding for a new Complex Human Data Research Hub, capitalising on its strength in mathematical psychology. It will look to set up several more such inter-disciplinary “hubs” in decision neuro-science and moral psychology. A new Masters course in applied psychology is in the offing, linking up with the Business School and the broader workforce. Online course delivery is also an option that is likely to be taken up more strongly in future. The School aims to repay the favour to Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences by remaining a responsible, self-sustaining unit – a “good faculty citizen.”⁹⁴ In a tertiary landscape of shrinking government outlays and increasing student demand, new ways of generating income are always on the agenda, whether through fee-paying courses, alumni, external research grants or philanthropy.

In the wake of the Melbourne Model, the School had become the Psychological Sciences Academic Centre

⁹² Departmental Committee Meeting, Minutes, School of Behavioural Science, 28 March 2002.

⁹³ “Psychological Sciences at the University of Melbourne,” Panel Report, Strategic Review, July 2015.

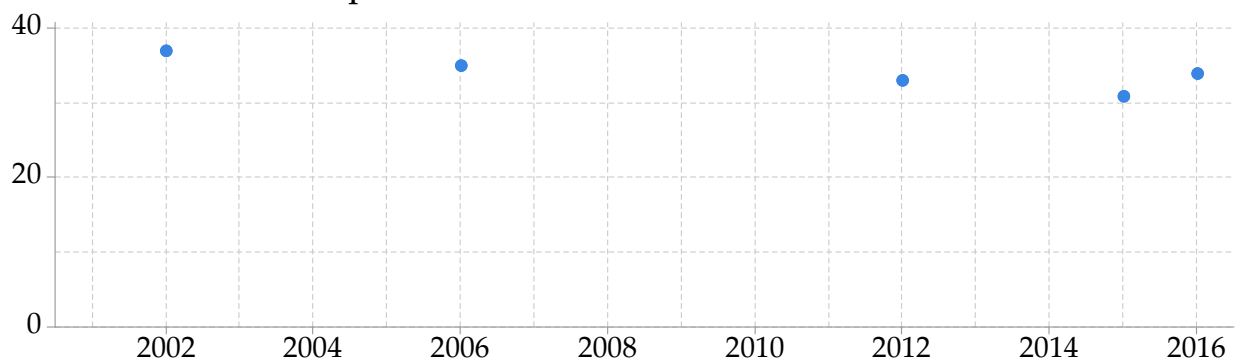
⁹⁴ Sarah Wilson, Interview, 19 July 2016.

within the Melbourne Medical School in 2009. But the sharing arrangements this entailed were not financially advantageous. Guided by Philip Smith, the Centre reverted back to independent School status in 2012, which meant it would be able to manage its own bottom line. But some things never change, as the Final Report from 2015 review wryly observed:

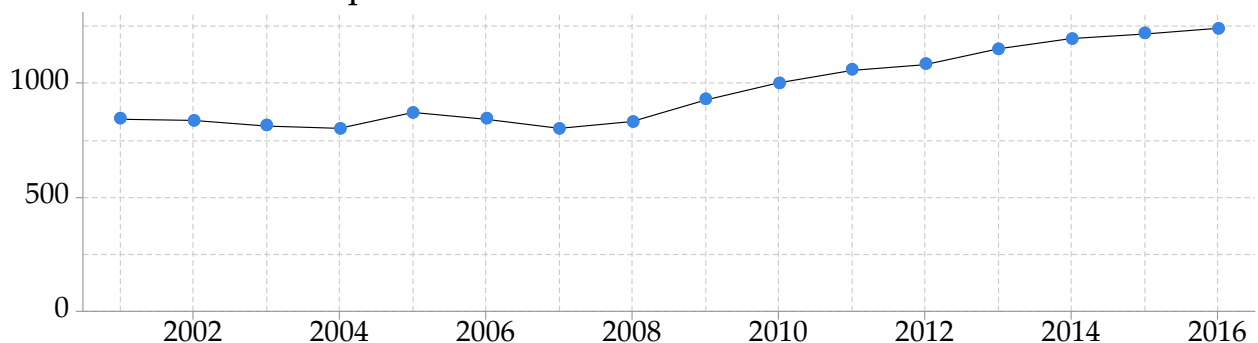
the School manages its finances well, despite a somewhat opaque and unpredictable annual budgeting process that returns what may appear to be a surprisingly low proportion of income earned by the School to the School.⁹⁵

Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences: Academic staff levels, student enrolment numbers, research performance

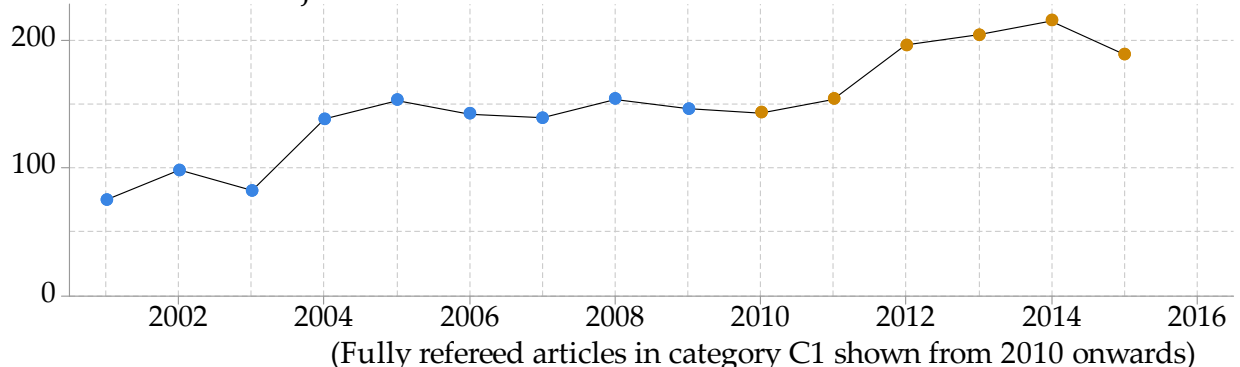
Number of Full-time equivalent staff



Number of Full-time equivalent student enrolments



Number of refereed journal articles



95 "Psychological Sciences at the University of Melbourne," Panel Report, Strategic Review, July 2015, p. 5.

The School has made good on its three broad areas of strength – social, cognitive and clinical psychology – building up an impressive portfolio of laboratory-based research. The School attracted well over 4 million dollars in external grant money in the 2010-2011 period, mainly from the ARC, NH&MRC and other government sources, plus smaller university grants.⁹⁶ External grant money would continue to increase sharply in the following years, with income from competitive grants doubling from 2011 to 2014.⁹⁷ Social psychology grew to encompass a broad suite of investigations relating to perceptions and individual differences, moral judgement, self-regulation and social network modelling. Cognitive and clinical neuroscience would evolve and cross over in various collaborative ways, some very extensive interdisciplinary undertakings, focusing on affective development, psychopathology through the life-span, auditory and visual neuroscience, sleep disorders and computational learning models.

The School did well in successive ERA exercises, achieving maximum scores of 5 in Psychology in 2010 and 2012, and scoring a 4 last year. Its Field Weighted Citation Impact (1.72) was the highest in Australia. It has been repeatedly ranked at the top, or near the top, in Australia, and close to the top 10 globally. In the process of the 2015 review, those at Melbourne found themselves compared with world-leading benchmarks like Harvard, Princeton, Yale and Cambridge. In their enthusiastic 2015 review submission, the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences urged the School to further emulate the heavy concentration on biomedical research of first-ranked Harvard.⁹⁸ That may well be the way to go, but there are several interesting historical points to note here. Unlike Melbourne, the storied Harvard department did split – and rather unhappily at that – in 1946. E.G. Boring, S.S. Stevens and company stayed put with experimental psychology, while Gordon Allport, Henry Murray and colleagues moved personality and social psychology to the Social Relations department.⁹⁹ One underlying factor in this bust-up was that senior psychologists at Ivy League institutions tended to look down on the social side of psychology, especially the applied service aspects of the discipline. They saw professional training as the province of other universities, perhaps those of the state system. While the Harvard department would come back together in 1972, the ‘purist’ inflection remained. Harvard psychologists have come to embrace the clinical fields in a big way, but their clinical program puts an almost exclusive emphasis on the science half of the scientist/practitioner model.¹⁰⁰ The fact that research output at Melbourne can be (not unfavourably) compared with that of Harvard speaks volumes for the lean, mean productivity that the School has achieved. While maintaining its complement of expensive professional training courses, Melbourne can still mix it with such richly-endowed private institutions that have *always* made scientific research the dominant aim.

96 “Psychological Sciences” Report to the Dean, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, September 2011.

97 Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences – Research and Research Training Summary Data, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, 2015.

98 “Review of Psychological Sciences,” Submission by the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, Office of the Dean, June 2015.

99 James H. Capshew, *Psychology on the march: Science, practice, and professional identity in America, 1929-1969*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

100 See: <http://psychology.fas.harvard.edu/clinical-psychology>.

Oral sources and acknowledgments:

Many thanks to those for doing interviews and for providing valuable source material and constructive suggestions for the 50th and 70th anniversary versions of the story: Jenny Boldero, Philip Burgess, Godfrey Gardner, Lyn Graham, Norma Grieve, Ron Greig, Sam Hammond, Nick Haslam, Virginia Holmes, Henry Jackson, Irene Kinsman, Charles Langley, Pat Leaper, Don McElwain, Cleo Macmillan, Malcolm Macmillan, Stuart Macintyre, Leon Mann, Nancy McMurray, Pip Pattison, Doreen Rosenthal, Geoff Sharp, Philip Smith, Ron Taft, Keith Taylor, Richard Trahair, John Trinder, Roger Wales, Kevin Walsh, Alex Wearing and Sarah Wilson.

Apologies to anyone I was unable to interview due to a lack of time or logistical difficulties. Sophie Garrett and Georgina Ward at the University of Melbourne Archives were particularly helpful in providing photographic material. Support and all manner of information from the School's administrative staff – Patricia Murray, Lizz Sayers, Pras Rasiah and Chris Newton – was also greatly appreciated. Last, but by no means least, special thanks go to Nick Haslam for the many helpful suggestions in reviewing drafts of this history. Biographical research on Oscar Oeser was supported by the Hugh Williamson Foundation

Archival sources

University of Melbourne Archives
Department of Psychology Records
Oscar A. Oeser Records

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MELBOURNE

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences

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ISBN 978-0-7340-5307-7



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