

University of California: In Memoriam, 1988

George S. Reynolds, Psychology: San Diego

1936-1987

Professor

George Reynolds received his A.B., majoring in Social Relations, from Harvard in 1956, *summa cum laude*, then took a year off on a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship. He started graduate work at Harvard in the Fall of 1958 and obtained his Ph.D. in the Spring of 1960--a remarkably productive period of his life. Several fellow graduate students to this day describe him as driven, in the best sense of the word. George spent two additional years at Harvard as an Instructor. In 1962, Reynolds went to the University of Chicago as an Associate Professor and chaired the Biopsychology program there. During his four years at Chicago, Reynolds applied the technology of his conditioning laboratory to problems in physiological psychology, pharmacology, and, of course, learning and motivation. It was here that Reynolds wrote most of his *Primer of Operant Conditioning* (1968, 1975) that was to be the introduction to the field for several generations of students. Still widely used, the *Primer* was being updated to its third edition at the time of George's death. Reynolds came to UCSD in 1966. His reputation at this juncture motivated some of the nation's best graduate students of operant behavior to work with him; for several years, none who were accepted by him went elsewhere.

George Reynolds's research career achieved prominence while he was still a graduate student. He was the first to explore systematically the effects of contextual variables on responding. Specifically, he found that the rate of responding in the presence of a target stimulus is a function not only of the sequence of rewards in its presence, but also on the sequence of rewards in the presence of alternating stimuli: the less frequent and contextual rewards the more responding to the target stimulus. Reynolds used the phrase "behavioral contrast" to describe this phenomenon and its empirical and theoretical determinants in a seminal series of a half-dozen papers. Literally hundreds of papers on this topic were inspired by Reynolds' work. Almost three decades later, behavioral contrast remains a hotly researched and discussed phenomenon. More generally, the relativistic view of reward

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generated by Reynolds permeates much of contemporary learning and motivational theory.

Reynolds's achievements were by no means confined to behavioral contrast. He published important papers on choice, punishment, stimulus control and psychophysics and an influential paper on "Attention in the pigeon." His research on "A quantitative analysis of the responding maintained by interval schedules of reinforcement" (with A. Charles Catania) resulted in a major monograph in 1968. At UCSD, his published research took on a more quantitative turn as he explored the relation between responding and reward at a more molecular level.

For reasons he never made clear, Reynolds's interests gradually turned away from research and towards textbook writing and administration. He edited an influential upper-division and graduate text (with J. A. Nevin), *The Study of Behavior* (1973), and an introductory text (with Edmund Fantino) *Introduction to Contemporary Psychology* (1975). But it had been on the way to a Cubs' game in Chicago with graduate student Nick Charney that the idea for a *Scientific American* of psychology was hatched. This idea was nurtured and came to fruition soon after George came to UCSD: *Psychology Today* was born out of a Del Mar office in the Fall of 1966. As the success of this magazine grew, so did the publisher CRM's ("C" for Charney, "R" for Reynolds and "M" for Winslow Marston) collateral enterprises in film, textbooks and television, all of which involved George. CRM was later purchased by Boise Cascade and eventually moved away from Del Mar over a period of a few years beginning in 1969. George declined an offer to move with the company.

George chaired our Department for three terms spanning nine years, which meant that he was instrumental in hiring a considerable proportion of our present faculty. He also chaired the Committee on Academic Personnel and

took great pride in a plaque given to him for outstanding service by his fellow committee members.

George Reynolds was a man of brilliance, outstanding intellectual breadth, finely-honed wit, and great warmth. That he accomplished in one decade of productive research more than most psychologists in a lifetime, provides little solace to those of us who will miss his extraordinary presence. Fortunately, that presence will be felt for decades to come as future generations of psychologists grapple with some of the behavioral questions his research framed.

Vladimir J. Konecni George Mandler Edmund J. Fantino

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