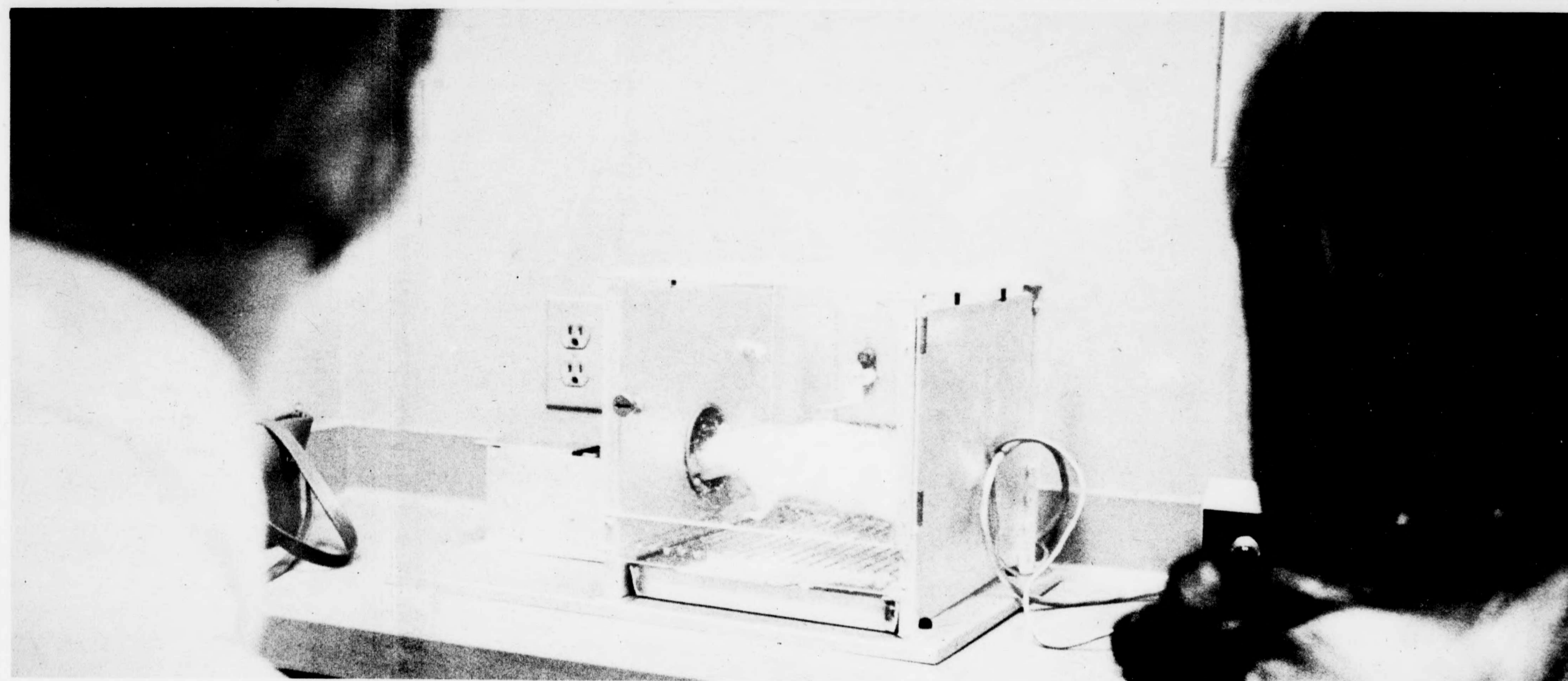


Students of MEN or students of MICE?

This is an abridged transcript of an interview with three students active in the Psychology student association, the Society of Psychology Students.

The society has been organized for two years and distributes a newsletter called "Freudian Slip". Those interviewed were Ron Freedman, F2; Jay Fukakusa, W3, and Henry Grayman, W3.



Excalibur - Tim Clark

EXCALIBUR: What sorts of things have you been trying to organize students around?

GRAYMAN: If nothing else, to become aware that in their courses they are being taught a lot of bullshit — one point of view, that is the behaviouralist point of view.

Further, they are dealing with rats or they're dealing with paradigms applied to rats upon humans.

Essentially, we'd like all of this to stop ... and for the students to become aware of what is going on.

FUKAKUSA: I think that for all of us here now there are different ideas of what we, as a Society, should be doing ...

Essentially, what I see as our purpose this year would be to try and solve any problems that come up in the courses.

In that regard, we've gone into a couple of classes and tried to help improve them by implementing ways of allowing the students more freedom in choosing what they want to learn and trying to get away from the old competitive marking schemes ...

We want students to get the real education they should be getting here.

This means not just sitting through lectures and copying down some notes, then going to the exam and writing a great big bunch of garbage for a prof — playing the marks game.

If we allow more freedom for everything that students do, the thing about behaviouralism comes in too.

If a person wants to be a behaviouralist and run rats through a maze; he should be given the opportunity to do so.

But if a person wants to study sensitivity groups, he should find a place in the department where he can do this.

EXCALIBUR: What is the nature of the behaviouralist approach in psychology?

FREEDMAN: It's a historical trend.

Originally, it followed from the Newtonian physics idea, where everything had a logical sequential cause, and where all behaviour can be traced back to a single paradigm.

In an attempt to make psychology a 'science', which I personally don't believe it can or should ever be, psychologists disregarded human behaviour and started looking at animal behaviour — then they generalized from animal behaviour to human behaviour.

People, in effect, become rats where they just react to stimuli, rather than cause stimuli and effect stimuli.

This is fine if you are doing a study on the effects of a drug on the endocrine system.

Then it's logical that a rat will have some similarities to a person.

But that's not psychology to me — that is veterinary medicine. To me, psychology is the study of the human mind, and not necessarily human 'behaviour'.

Behaviouralism is a technological type of

psychology that we are being taught only for the sake of being 'scientific'.

Somehow, they think that if you can't put it in statistics, it's not valid.

Everything around here is statistics — all of the courses are hung up around them.

EXCALIBUR: Where did the behaviouralist approach come from?

FREEDMAN: Yeh, I think that I should point out that this is almost uniquely the U.S. field of psychology.

The psychology that originated in Europe, around Freud's time and before it, dealt with the psychology of the mind, with human feelings and thoughts, rather than human 'behaviour'.

The United States, with its emphasis on 'progress' and 'efficiency' and 'industry' developed its own psychology — an industrial type of psychology where everybody is a machine.

Behaviouralism fits into their system very well.

FUKAKUSA: The point is that the way the department is set up now, in order to get anything taught that is really away from behaviouralist psychology, we have to go off campus, or we have to find our own people.

Ironically, York is supposed to be one of the 'radical' universities, tending towards a more humanistic psychology ...

EXCALIBUR: I don't know, but it seems from what you are saying that psychologists are being taught to control people.

FREEDMAN: Exactly — Skinner, Watson and Hall were the originators, all Americans, of this type of psychology.

Indeed, Hull says that a genuine theory of human behaviour requires the expulsion of all traces of the presence of a valuing human observer.

That means that the psychologist can do anything he wants as long as it is 'scientific' and not care what the rulers do with his findings.

EXCALIBUR: Can you see how this sort of thinking would plug into how one would work in industry?

GRAYMAN: Sure, its called industrial psychology and industrial sociology.

You manipulate the lighting so that the workers work faster.

You manipulate the pay scale so that they work faster, the pension plan, all that sort of crap.

You're not concerned with the needs of the people; you're concerned with production.

It's the same in the advertising industry too. You manipulate the mass media so that more people will buy your product.

Psychologists go into all sorts of deep studies into what sorts of colours, words, etc., will influence people.

FUKAKUSA: I really think it is significant that Watson, who is the great big grandfather of behaviouralist psychology, got into a little bit of hot water in his academic career and switched into advertising, and is now a big advertising executive.

FREEDMAN: If I can just read you two more things, it will give you the point right off.

Skinner says that the rodent has the advantage

over man of submitting to the experimental control of its drives and routines of living.

Skinner further hazards the guess that "the only differences I expect to see revealed between the behaviour of the rat and man, aside from the enormous differences of complexity, lie in the field of verbal behaviour."

In other words, the only difference between you and I and a rat, is that we can talk.

That's psychology!

Now its very logical if you think that psychology is a science, that it has logical precepts like physics.

It has a balance to it — one motivation here equals one drive there.

It's very logical, but it doesn't work because its inhuman.

In the early 1800s, mental hospitals used what was called 'moral therapy', where the therapist would sit down with the patient and talk to him about his problems and where he was going wrong.

They had a discharge rate of 70 per cent of all their patients.

Today in most state-run mental hospitals it doesn't even approach that figure.

What do they use now? They use 'behaviour modification' and 'adversion therapy', where you shoot somebody with a drug and then expose him to a stimulus that you want to get rid of and he throws up when he sees that stimulus.

It just doesn't work.

GRAYMAN: Further to what Ron was saying about that paradigm where you inject a person with a drug and as soon as he gets a few drops on his lips he throws up.

Well, it didn't work, so what they do now is to take the people and inject them with scoline which has an effect on your nerves so that the impulses your nerves give to your muscles to react is stopped.

So, of course, you can't breathe if you are injected with scoline.

The alcoholic is injected with scoline, which takes about 10 seconds to work, so at the nine second mark a bottle is held to the alcoholic's lip and then he collapses.

For about 40 seconds he can't breathe and this is a profound traumatic experience upon the alcoholic.

This is the technique which they are now using on alcoholics to stop them from drinking.

In this sort of therapy, the therapist is putting himself up as a sort of demi-god by imposing his values on the person who is screwed up.

He's saying: 'I'm going to cure you, put you back on the job. You're going to love your wife, your kids, your dog, etc.'

I am wondering is it right to make people 'love' something that they're so obviously trying to get away from.

It should be the 'something' in the particular person's environment that should be changed and not the person himself.

He should not be fitted back into an environment which is shitty in the first place and screwing him up.

EXCALIBUR: Do you think that any of this fits into EXCALIBUR's analysis of York as a branch plant of U.S. scholarship?

FREEDMAN: It fits in very well. All the teaching psychologists here look to the U.S. scholastic machine as their standard of excellence.

Many come from the United States, or go to U.S. behaviouralist schools where they teach experimental psychology.

Consequently, everyone here is working with rats and applying rat paradigms to people.

None of the courses talk about people.

In the next decades, the big problems we are going to have are those of people getting along with people.

People are going to be crowded into apartment buildings — there is just not going to be enough space.

In order to survive, we are going to have to learn to get along with our neighbours, our wives and our kids.

But they're not researching that because it is not 'scientific'.

You can't get a paradigm which will say that when a man doesn't fuck his wife for three nights in a row, he'll become neurotic.

Because they can't get a paradigm like that, they don't want to study it.

People understanding people is our kind of psychology — not people 'modifying' people.

EXCALIBUR: How successful have you been in reaching students?

FUKAKUSA: I don't think we've been very successful for a number of reasons.

The channels of communication that we have to reach them are very ineffective.

People get our newsletter, The Freudian Slip, but don't read it.

Generally, students don't realize what is going on in the department and they aren't aware of the alternatives which could be offered to them ...

At York there are no alternatives — the emphasis is on behaviouralism and you must 'take it and like it' if you are here.

EXCALIBUR: What do you think are your chances of getting a significant number of humanistic psychology courses at York?

FREEDMAN: Very slim when you've got the departmental professors downstairs doing rat experiments on perception.

In itself, this is fine. Freedom to teach and freedom to learn is what we are for.

But as long as his orientation is towards doing experiments and physiological measurements, what are our chances of his hiring people to teach humanist courses?

The Society of Psychology Students meets today at 1 p.m. in Room 291 in the Behavioural Sciences Building.