

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL B. REINER

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS ALLAN SCOTT

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TS: Well, Michael, why don't we start with a little bit about your background? We've been asking everybody where they were born, when they were born, a little bit about where they went to school and such as that.

MR: Okay. I was born in 1954 in New York City in Manhattan. I was actually raised in Manhattan until I was about four, but I have some very clear memories of that time. We lived on the lower east side, which at the time was sort of a Jewish neighborhood. Across the street from us was this coffee warehouse where they would grind the coffee beans to distribute to all the luncheonettes in New York. I used to walk by that place when I was just, with my parents, you know, two, three or four, and the aroma at that little factory there was just unbelievable. So coffee was ingrained in my neurons from an early age in New York. I still certainly remember that very vividly. I can still smell it. I went to public school—middle school, high school—at Forest Hills High School, which happens to be the high school where Simon and Garfunkel went.

TS: Simon and Garfunkel is a good thing to be associated with, I guess.

MR: They have this thing called the Westinghouse science competition, which is for high school students in math and science. Forest Hills had a very strong program and regularly had winners—and still does have winners, I believe—in that Westinghouse science program. So, besides Simon and Garfunkel, there is some academic claim to fame as well.

TS: Were your parents or grandparents part of the immigrant migration into New York City in the early twentieth century?

MR: My grandparents were. They came over in the early 1900s, one set from Russia and one set from Poland. My parents were born in the United States.

TS: So I guess if you went to Forest Hills High School, you stayed in New York until you were ready to go to college.

MR: That's correct. And when I was going to college, I wanted to go to a small school, in that my Forest Hills High graduating class had 1,200 students. The whole high school had about 5,000 students.

TS: Pretty large high school.

- MR: So I wanted to go to a small school, and this one day I was talking to a friend. She mentioned that her brother went to a school called Haverford College outside Philadelphia.
- TS: Right. Now, I know a little bit about Haverford; I believe that the Quakers began it.
- MR: Correct. It was one of three Quaker schools—Haverford, Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore—established in the Philadelphia suburbs. I knew nothing about it at the time; I'd never heard of the place but began to investigate and was really quite impressed with what I saw. It was very small; at the time it was still a men's school. Bryn Mawr was about a mile down the road, and they were affiliated but still separate. I wanted to go there, particularly because I had been socialized to be a scientist—that was my interest in elementary and high school. I went to the science fairs and so on, and I wanted to be a microbiologist. Haverford, because they're so small, decided years ago to not have general departments where they cover everything, but they specialized, and they actually specialized in cellular and microbiology. So I really went there expecting to be a biologist.
- TS: So what happened when you got there?
- MR: Well, I also wanted to go into the liberal arts and to learn all sorts of things. I actually remember having my dad read over my essay to college where it talked about my desire to learn in all these different areas. My dad was a bit bewildered because, for his generation, college was where you went to become a professional—doctor lawyer, engineer, Indian chief—not just to go and learn. He had a hard time with that perspective. But I went there, and to my great concern—given the rigor of the biology program in my first semester—I had to take calculus and chemistry and this and that. I had less choice than I thought I would get, so in my first semester I was quite disheartened. I mean, I took calculus, chemistry, freshman English and—I don't think I had psychology yet. And I decided, you know, I'm in this track now, and I really want to get out of this track for awhile and just explore various things. So my second semester of my freshman year, I got out of the bio track and took a literature course, a philosophy course and a psychology course. I really just enjoyed doing that and started to spend more time exploring various areas to find out what my interest really was.
- TS: Well, one of the things we've been asking folks about is mentors along the way. Were there any professors that influenced you in the direction that you ultimately went into at Haverford—or maybe even high school teachers that had a particularly strong influence on you?
- MR: Well, yes. The first mentor was my high school biology teacher, whose name was Michael Krutoy. He made biology really exciting. He made the Krebs cycle exciting! I just really enjoyed learning from him and learning biology, and so he clearly was the person who kind of sent me in that direction.
- TS: What was it about him that was so appealing, that made him so exciting?

- MR: I think it was certainly his energy level—he made the classroom very dynamic—but also, he was really concerned about the students. He really was very interested in the students, and that was clear to the students. People enjoyed being with him. This reminds me. I once visited Freud’s house in Vienna, and there were lots of memorabilia and so on. I read this thing on the wall about his high school days where he became a science major. But [in] the letter he wrote, he really wasn’t sure whether it was the interest, the excitement and the knowledge about doing science that got him [going] in this direction—or the enjoyment, pleasure and stimulation from just associating with the science faculty. You know, whether it was the knowledge that attracted him, or the teachers who got him involved. I think he leaned towards the latter, really, and I certainly can relate to that.
- TS: Yes. So actually, this was an influence that you’re going to overcome when you get to college—you know, that direction toward biology. But just associating with a person that you really like on the faculty, I guess, is what attracted you to biology to begin with?
- MR: Again, I can’t say for sure. I mean, I certainly liked biology; but if it was taught by a different teacher in high school—someone who was less dynamic, made it less interesting and really was less motivating—I might have done something else certainly.
- TS: Right. Well, once you were in college, what made you eventually decide that you wanted to focus on psychology?
- MR: Well, in that freshman year, second semester, I took philosophy and really was excited about philosophy. I found the questions asked by philosophers were exciting ones to me—the interesting ones. I liked the dialogue that took place in the classroom, that nature of interaction and so on. And so for awhile, I thought I was going to be a philosophy major. Then in my junior year. . .
- TS: I bet that upset your father.
- MR: Yes, he wasn’t too keen on that.
- TS: I’ll bet not! Sounds like he’d rather you do something really practical that you can make some money on.
- MR: Clearly. But I think that ultimately—I had a fairly good scholarship, so it was really out of his hands, in a sense. He wasn’t paying most of the freight. But actually, in my junior year, in the first semester—sorry, it must have been—let’s go back. After my sophomore year, I was still not sure about what I wanted to do. I actually took a semester off the first semester of my junior year to work for awhile to do some things to see what interested me. When I came back in the springtime, they had hired that year a new faculty member in cognitive psychology, a woman by the name of Mary Naus. I took her class that second semester junior year in cognitive psychology, and I found that it really appealed to me. They were investigating the issues and questions that philosophers focused on—the mind and how we think and reason—but they were doing it using a scientific method,

which went along much more with my prior socialization and interests in science. I found cognitive psych to be kind of a nice combination of my philosophy interests as well as my science interests.

TS: Right. So you graduated from Haverford. Did you decide that immediately you wanted to go to graduate school in psychology at that point?

MR: No, I was still confused after I graduated. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go more for a clinical psychology program, which was my earlier interest, or maybe kind of cognitive or along those lines. So I worked for awhile when I got out. One of my jobs actually was at Haverford; they hired me as a teaching assistant. They were beginning to have students do much more writing in the curriculum—this is back in '77—and they needed someone to review and provide feedback in the student journals they had begun doing. They hired me to work as an assistant, and I worked in the freshman intro psych course. I was also hired by Mary Naus, my mentor, in psychology as her assistant to do some research. Within half a year, I realized I really enjoyed this interaction with students even though it was only [by] paper and pencil right then with the journal. But I really enjoyed the student interaction and the research more than I liked dealing with the crazy people, so I decided that I was really going to pursue a program that was more research-based as opposed to clinical psychology.

TS: Right. So how many years did you do that? Was that a one-year deal?

MR: A year. By mid-year, I decided I wanted to go on, and I applied to graduate school for the following year.

TS: And that's when you went to the University of Minnesota?

MR: Correct.

TS: So you got there, and did you have any bumps in the road or changes of heart on what you really wanted to study after you got there? Or was it just smooth sailing right through?

MR: It was really cold, and that was what I had to work hard to adjust to. I'm an outdoor kind of person, but Minnesota's pretty cold, so there was clearly an adjustment process there. But in terms of my studies, I had been accepted to the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota, since the focus on child psychology was the kind of cognitive psych I was primarily doing—the cognitive development work. So while I was there, that was fine; I continued certainly studying and doing that kind of work. But when I was done, while most of my peers were applying to go to research universities, I came to realize, given my Haverford experience, that I really thought there was much more value in teaching undergraduates than dealing with the dissertations of graduate students. I decided not to pursue a research career but to pursue a teaching career instead.

TS: Yes. How much teaching did you actually do when you were at the University of Minnesota?

MR: One of the reasons I picked that program is that Minnesota believed in trying to train its graduate students in teaching, and a teaching practicum was part of the graduate program. In one's third year, you first took a semester course, actually, in how to teach. Besides going over preparing syllabi and classroom dynamics, you also gave demo lectures that were videotaped. You reviewed them with your peers and with the instructor and so on. Then once you had passed the teaching course, you actually got to teach a section of child psychology with a faculty mentor for a semester. And once you did that, you were able to teach as an adjunct. So I taught, I think, three or four more courses while I was still there before I moved on.

TS: So you had quite a bit of experience then. What about at Minnesota? Are there any mentors that stand out there that you were particularly close to?

MR: Yes, the two faculty whom I worked with and also I was friends with—Fred Morrison and Dan Keating.

TS: And these are both in cognitive psychology?

MR: Yes.

TS: And what was there about them that was particularly memorable, that influenced you, maybe in your own teaching career later on?

MR: Well, I liked working with Fred because he would always emphasize [that] we need clear thinking. He was a very clear thinker, and I liked that cerebral stuff. Dan Keating was just brilliant, a brilliant psychologist. And they were also fairly young; they were probably in their mid-thirties at that point. [They] cared about their students, I will say, in comparison to someone whom I will not mention by name, but a senior faculty member who made it very clear his *modus operandi* was to be caustic, where students would not bother him and waste his time. So clearly, Fred and Dan were much more eager to work with students and help them, besides just being great guys and great psychologists. I guess that was it.

TS: Right. You got your doctorate in '83, and there's an eight-year gap before you actually make it to Kennesaw. What were you doing in those years? Where were you teaching then?

MR: Well, the winter of '82 drove me out of Minneapolis. That was the winter when Lake Michigan froze over—the first time in a hundred years it was so cold. There were two weekends it was like -75 degrees, and I thought to myself, “Why am I doing this? This is just not worth all the energy expended fighting the elements.” So, I was not done with my degree; I hadn't even begun collecting much data. But I began applying for jobs, and

I got a job in Ft. Worth, Texas, at Texas Wesleyan College. It was a Methodist school. I've gone from the Quakers to the Methodists now.

TS: And from a background in a Jewish neighborhood in New York.

MR: I was very multicultural, eh?

TS: I'd say you are, yes.

MR: I went there—this was in '82—and I interviewed. The college itself was not much at the time, but a news story broke while I was there, [about] building an entirely new campus. At the time, the Tandy Corporation [now] Radio Shack in Ft. Worth was a major benefactor—one of our board of trustees was the former CEO. They were doing very well. I told the president of the college during my interview, "Most schools—small colleges—are barely surviving in the '80s, and you guys are going to be building a new campus." And he said, "Well, we're Texas, and Texas is different." I liked the faculty I met when I was there, so I took that job and spent four years there. They were good years. At the time, there was a cadre of new faculty; about seven or eight of us came at the same time. It was a great support group when you're a new professor, a new faculty member in a strange place. I had a great peer group, and that was quite helpful to kind of get through those first few years.

TS: So you stayed there four years, and then why did you leave there?

MR: Well, I realized I wasn't a Texan. I had my boots, you know; I bought my cowboy hat and would occasionally go into the kicker bars. But Texans are a unique breed. They are really proud of being Texans, and they think it's almost a separate country. I realized that I just wouldn't fit into the culture. I wanted to move also further back toward the East coast where my family and friends were—not too far north—and I got a job at Salem College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It was a women's college, so again, I'm going into a very strange new environment to me. Again, a small college—it was founded by the Moravians—and so another kind of church-run institution. The Moravians are interesting. They have, you know, that Love-Fest?

TS: The what?

MR: Love-Fest.

TS: Love-Fest. No, I don't.

MR: The Moravian's worship service is called a Love-Fest. It's not the lovefest of the '60s...

TS: I understand.

MR: Yes. And they had these things called love buns; they baked these little muffins. Salem actually has an historical restoration as part of the college—Old Salem, where they have

a Moravian village still there from the late 1700s to early 1800s. The bakery bakes Love-Fest buns, and again, it was interesting certainly.

TS: Well, there were Moravians in Georgia from very early on. Some of them got out during an early war with the Spanish because, of course, they were pacifists. But they came back with the Cherokees; they were up in north Georgia. There was a Moravian mission, I guess, about fifty miles from our campus.

MR: Oh, really?

TS: Yes.

MR: Well, the Moravians were also in Pennsylvania. The Moravian College is in Pennsylvania.

TS: Well, actually, they've got some things in common with the Quakers, so it'd be very similar, I guess, to what you experienced at Haverford, maybe.

MR: And so I was at Salem College for five years.

TS: So how did you get to Kennesaw?

MR: Well, it was in my tenure review year—my fifth year. It is always wise to look around for other opportunities, and while I was actually going to be given tenure at Salem, I get kind of itchy after five or six years and have moved typically for new experiences. I felt like it was time to look. I interviewed [at Kennesaw] as well as other places, and I was very impressed by the psychology faculty. When I was there, Bill [G. William IV] Hill was the chair. He offered me the job, and I decided to make that move.

TS: Well, that's great. So Bill was the department chair, and I guess [G.] Ruth Hepler was there then?

MR: Yes, Ruth Hepler, Linda [M.] Noble, Grace Galliano; I mean, it was a really solid psychology faculty. Chris [Christine B.] Ziegler was there at the time. Patrick [J.] Devine. I had never really been in a relatively large psych department. I had been at small colleges with two or three psych faculty, so being a part of a psychology department with seven or eight faculty and a number of majors and so on was very appealing to me.

TS: Right. Well, it looks like a different experience, too, in that you're going to a public school, and one that's growing pretty rapidly in that period, after those relatively small private schools.

MR: That's correct. And in terms of my own thoughts about my career, you know, I was looking to expand my experiences and to increase the breadth of my knowledge about higher education. So it appealed to me for that reason as well, yes.



TS: So you came to Kennesaw in '91 and let's see, I guess you stayed.... You got the Distinguished Teaching Award in '98, and it seems like you took a leave of absence after that, didn't you?

MR: Yes. Actually, at the time I was married, and my wife, who got a degree through the University of Georgia—Ph.D. in advertising—got a job in Florida. That was from '98 to '99—well, the year after the award. I was eager and supported her in her career decisions and her move, and I thought I would try commuting. I won the award in the spring of '98, and so for '98 and '99, while I was the distinguished professor, I had this grant from the Board of Regents—\$75,000—and also some course release time.

TS: Wow, that's great.

MR: Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg was very, very supportive and very, very helpful. He certainly could have said to me, you know, "Michael, you really can't fulfill the obligations of the professorship and the award if you're not going to be here on a full-time basis." But he was incredibly helpful, and I was very indebted. In the fall, I wasn't teaching; I had a release of all courses in the fall, and I commuted from Gainesville, Florida. I would drive up or fly up once every week or so, once every other week. Then in the springtime, I think I taught three classes. So I was up there, like, Monday through Thursday and also did the grant-related activities.

TS: Okay, so is that your last year at Kennesaw?

MR: It was. I mean, during the year, I realized it would be incredibly hard to keep up this commuting. It wasn't easy, and if I was teaching full time again, it would be very, very difficult. And I had a young son; he was four. I'm a child psychologist. I had the professional and personal interest in being around him every day, and I just realized I couldn't keep it going. My wife wanted to stay in Florida, and so I decided, well, I'll look around again. To my very good fortune, a job opened up at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville to be a division chair of social and behavioral sciences.

TS: So that's what brought you down to Florida then.

MR: Correct. And so I had to resign. I resigned from Kennesaw after I completed the '98 to '99 year of the Distinguished Teaching professorship.

TS: So you really have eight years at Kennesaw then?

MR: I was at Kennesaw eight years, I believe, yes.

TS: Let's talk a little bit about those years. I want to talk a little bit about what you've done since you've left Kennesaw, too. But while you were at Kennesaw—let me start first of all just asking you about the intellectual climate. You said you liked the people that you were dealing with, but you've also had experiences from a lot of different places. I'd just

like to know what your impression was of the intellectual climate at Kennesaw during those eight years that you were here.

MR: Sure. Well, I will tell you when I first got there, I was very unhappy because at Salem, I had a three-one-three teaching load. That is, I taught three courses in the fall, we had an intercession for one course, and then three hours in the spring.

TS: So that would have been like a January semester, that one?

MR: Exactly. When I got to Kennesaw it was still the quarter system, and my recollection is that I taught five three-hour classes.

TS: That's probably right.

MR: And to go from teaching nine hours to fifteen hours, and doing that for three quarters—I mean, it was a major change. Of course, one needs time to think and be scholarly and be engaged, [but] I found that in my first year, I just had no time to do anything but teach all my classes. It was very time consuming.

TS: Right.

MR: So when I got there, I was unhappy.

TS: I guess so.

MR: There was no research track back then. This was Kennesaw State College. However, things sort of began to change. Soon thereafter, there was a kind of cadre of relatively new and older faculty who began a once-a-month discussion group and, at various times, presented within the School of Arts and Sciences. It really was a move to intellectualize the faculty and academic life, and to have a chance to talk with colleagues in and out of your discipline. So things began to change; but as soon as Kennesaw moved from the college to the university, the teaching load got reduced, and the expectations of scholarship increased. So now, it was not only the faculty setting the tone, but the college institutionally was now demanding that the faculty become more scholarly. And so it began to change in a positive direction in terms of faculty focusing more on their research and scholarship than they were when I first got there.

TS: Right. What about the students? What was your impression of students at Kennesaw?

MR: It was the first time I was at a commuter school. Before, I had always been at a residential liberal arts college. And I heard the phrase *PCP—Parking lot-Car-Parking lot*—when describing our students' lifestyle. You know, college was something that fit within other events of your life, and it was not the highest priority. I was used to people going to college; you know, that's why you go to college. But clearly, [for] the students in a commuter college and in that environment, it's a different perspective. It was the first time I had contact with lots of older non-traditional students coming back to school.

That was kind of a new phenomenon occurring in the late 80's and early 90's. The students were very different from what I had experienced before. Many of them were certainly much better students—we had some brilliant students—but as a whole, it wasn't that they were different in terms of intelligence; they simply had different priorities. College was a smaller part of their life than I was used to.

TS: Well, what about the difference between the non-traditional and the traditional students? Who were the better students?

MR: Well, there was no question that the non-traditional were clearly better. They were more motivated; they achieved more. There were many obsessive-compulsives, and it was important to help to change their perspective. You know, you need not be perfect, and you need not be comprehensive. Of course, a lot of them had real difficulties getting things done with perfectionism. But clearly, the non-traditionals were much better students—more motivated, more focused. [They] had more world knowledge, could apply that knowledge, and were most willing to teach.

TS: Right. Well, did it change your teaching style or teaching methods when you came to Kennesaw? Did the same kind of things that had worked in other places work at Kennesaw, or did you have to change with the students?

MR: Well, I had always been at relatively small schools, so my courses were really never lecture classes. They were always lecture-discussion-seminar format. When I got to Kennesaw, my classes still were small. I mean, I think the largest class was thirty-five students at the time, so there wasn't a great change in my style or approach. Getting the non-traditionals to participate in discussion really made the class dynamic and discussion more enriching, I think, than it might have been with just traditional students in it.

TS: Because they brought different experiences into the classroom?

MR: Exactly.

TS: Well, tell me a little bit about what worked for you as a teacher. You say that you didn't lecture; you like the class discussion. Anything in particular that you think was a very useful teaching technique?

MR: You know, I won the Distinguished Teaching Award, but it certainly was not for teaching techniques. I am not a techniques kind of guy. I have developed some innovative methods—used on-line early on, did this, did that—that were interesting. I actually think I won the teaching award because I was very much involved with the scholarship of teaching. At the time, I was doing lots of research about teaching and learning. [I was] writing and [making] conference presentations and so on. So I believe that's probably why I won the award. I don't think, you know, if you compare people in the classroom alone. . . . I mean, I'm a very good teacher, but I don't think I'm the greatest teacher on earth. I probably won the award because of focusing on—and this was kind of an early notion coming out of the Carnegie Foundation that was materializing in terms of

teaching—but I think what worked well for me was that, you know, I think it's true that students live up to a faculty member's expectations. If you set low expectations, they will gladly meet them.

TS: You're right.

MR: So I have always set very high standards for myself as a role model and for my students. So from the start, I think students knew, you know, you had to work in this class. Expectations were high; you were not going to get good grades without doing excellent work. So, that clearly worked for me in a sense. I would early on establish, I think, high expectations. I think also what worked was students, I believe, think that I listened. We had discussions in class; it wasn't just lecture. And you know, I would listen, and I would try to assimilate the comments they made and kind of put them together into a summary. Various people were saying this and that and so on so; I think they liked the fact that I listened and I took them seriously. I was very explicit in requirements, what was due and when, so they knew what was expected of them. I certainly am dynamic in class; I used a lot of multimedia because I do believe there are various learning styles and not everyone can assimilate just the verbal. So I would use short video clips to illustrate a point, or I would even show a half-hour video but give them in advance a series of questions to answer about the video so that it was a learning experience for them. I did use some PowerPoint at the time that it was beginning to come aboard. I used a lot of writing exercises and so on. I believe in multiple teaching methods, and I used multiple assessment methods as well.

TS: How would you define master teaching?

MR: How would I define master teaching?

TS: Yes. What makes a master teacher, or what is a master teacher?

MR: You know, while I was at Kennesaw, I really began to understand some of the perspectives of Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel. Dr. Siegel was one of the founders of the approach called *invitational learning*. Do you remember that?

TS: Yes.

MR: I don't know whether she made the statement, but it certainly is consistent with that approach; and that is, I don't think a teacher can teach anybody anything unless the learner is ready to learn. So I've always focused my teaching not on transmitting information. I tell students, "That's in the book. Read the book." I really try to motivate, capture their imaginations and inspire them so that they will want to investigate, learn and grow. I think a master teacher is someone who, in their discipline, is able to first motivate students so that they want to assimilate the knowledge, [then] be there as a guide to help them along the way as they have the adventure of learning.

TS: Right. You know, you have some mighty good teachers in the psychology department. I was wondering if any of them were of any assistance to you as you adjusted to Kennesaw and developed your teaching philosophy.

MR: Clearly so. Ruth Hepler was someone who had a very broad grasp of psychology and had been a teacher for many years. I certainly enjoyed talking with her regularly about what she does and how she does it. Bill Hill was a master teacher, I think. He sponsored teacher conferences, was involved in the scholarship of teaching and was willing to share his knowledge. As department chair, certainly, I would often go to him with my problems and concerns and get his opinion. Grace Galliano was also very special. Grace had developed really interesting materials for her courses and was actually extremely well accomplished at test writing and assessing knowledge. Again, Grace was someone who I valued and learned from also.

TS: Right. Well, a fellow New Yorker with Grace.

MR: Yes.

TS: Did Bill Hill's workshops that he was holding—his conferences—did that give you a vehicle for your scholarship of teaching?

MR: Actually, I did present there occasionally, but Bill also really wanted outside people to be coming in. So it was a place where I did some presentations, but really, I focused more on other conferences, trying to submit materials, proposals and so on. But yes, Bill's conferences clearly were focused on the scholarship of teaching and psychology.

TS: Was there any particular focus or conclusions that you'd like to talk about from your scholarship of teaching—contributions that you think your research made to the field? What exactly were you doing with your scholarship of teaching, maybe I should ask? What were you examining?

MR: One topic was trying to apply a theory of intellectual development in adulthood to the college social experience.

TS: The freshman experience?

MR: No, the college experience, the college years. I was impressed by the work of William Perry, Jr. Are you familiar with William Perry?

TS: No, I'm not familiar with him.

MR: Perry was a counselor at Harvard, and he said that students often go through a series of intellectual stages during college and beyond. It's important to understand [these stages] to teach at the right level. He said that when most students come to college, they are what he called *dualists*, or black and white thinkers. They think there's a right answer, and they want the right answer; the professors should give them the right answer. That's

what's involved. [Perry] claims that during college there begins to be a disruption when they realize there are lots of different perspectives; sometimes there isn't even an answer. So he claims they move on to what he calls *multiplicity*, where they begin to realize there are multiple perspectives. But at that point, which is typically in the middle college years—sophomore, junior year—then they have their opinions: You have your opinion; I have my opinion; we all have our opinions, and we're entitled to them. They don't yet realize there are ways of evaluating and assessing the quality of these perspectives. That may come the senior year when they come to what [Perry] calls *relativism*, where they're now beginning to realize within disciplines there are criteria and methodologies to analyze perspectives. So all art is not equal. You have your art that you like; what I like is rarely the same. There are criteria that art historians use to examine art. So Perry talks about this transition. It's also discussed by a woman name [Mary Field] Belenky. Kitchner and King have discussed similar kinds of transitions. They call this critical thinking. So I made presentations at conferences and did some writing about examples of these transitions—what may happen in psychology classes, how one might try to help students move to the next stage and so on. Actually, at Kennesaw—I guess it was back in '98 for the freshman experience course—they were writing a book called *Making Connections*.

TS: Yes. They're still using that. I think they're in the third or fourth edition now.

MR: I wrote, with Beth [Elizabeth E.] Parks and Mike [Michael J.] Firment for the first edition, the chapter on "Critical Thinking and Analysis," where I discussed some of this work. Another thing I did was with Bill Hill. We worked on some instructors' manuals for General Psych that involved cross-cultural applications. He and I worked on a chapter, "Crossing Borders/Contrasting Behaviors," using cross-cultural comparisons to enrich the introductory psychology course. I wrote an instructor's manual for Harcourt-Brace—a number of their intro psych textbooks—where I had to encourage active learning, demonstrations, topics, handouts, surveys and so on to encourage more active learning and critical thinking in the classroom. Also, at one point at Kennesaw when we revived the general education program, we developed a series of freshman seminar-type courses. I'm not sure if you remember that, maybe it's still there, but we taught a course—gee, whiz—I think it was called Contemporary Issues of Psychology. The view was, and I agree with this, that intro psych really is not a freshman course, nor does it really help freshman develop academic skills. Intro psych is really for people going into the major. So I was very active in using the *Taking Sides* book. Do you have *Taking Sides* in history? I guess you do.

TS: Yes, there's a *Taking Sides* in history.

MR: Well, I was instrumental in helping to design that course of contemporary issues and using *Taking Sides* and other resources to focus on critical thinking. I wrote a preface for the *Taking Sides* series called *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom: Methods, Systems and Techniques for the Teaching of Controversial Issues*.

TS: Wow, that sounds great.

MR: But my scholarly work in teaching, [while covering] a lot of different areas, certainly—mostly focuses on critical thinking and cognitive development.

TS: Well, it sounds like you were doing some exciting research. Did any of that carry over into that year after you got the Distinguished Teaching Award when you got the.... What was it called, specifically, that you got from the Regents that year?

MR: Well, I was given the honorary title of Board of Regents Distinguished Professor of Teaching and Learning. With that came a grant for \$75,000, to which I was given great latitude in designing a proposal for the use of the money. Again, I have to thank Ed Rugg. I went to a meeting in the spring of all the Distinguished Teaching Award winners, and some of them really were not given any latitude to design their project; it was pretty much dictated to them. So Dr. Rugg again was instrumental in, I think, making this a valuable thing. And what I decided to do, I called my project *What Higher Education Needs in the 21st Century is TLC: Teaching/Learning Cadres*. Well, I had the good fortune through Bill Hill to attend lots of teaching conferences in psychology, and I also went to some generic teaching conferences—the Lilly Conference was a national one on college teaching. I realized that many faculty that I spoke to had really never been to teaching conferences in their disciplines, let alone higher education in general. What I did was propose using the [grant] funds to promote faculty development and take faculty to various conferences and workshops around the country that focus on teaching. A kind of small cadre would meet on a fairly irregular basis to discuss—before they went—what they were to get out of it while they were there, and when we got back, what kind of things were learned. [This would] hopefully disseminate in a grass-roots way the kind of things they learned. I took faculty to a number of conferences. The highlight was, I took sixteen people in February to San Diego to the AAHE [American Association of Higher Education] Roles and Rewards Conference which focused on teaching and professorial [issues]. We had a great time. The folks who went there were all good teachers. We met while we were there to discuss what we learned; we met with some folks from the [Georgia] Board of Regents about what we were doing. Actually, Dorothy [D.] Zinsmeister at the time was down there at the Regents Office.

TS: Yes. She's still down there.

MR: I'm not sure what her title was at the time. But she brought some other people from her office, and we met with them about the kinds of things we were doing. We came back that spring and met some more times. People were discussing how they were talking to their peers and colleagues about the kinds of things they learned. Again, my hope is that this would be a kind of grass-roots snowball effect—kind of like a cancer growing and without much direct control—a way of disseminating to faculty the value of attending teaching conferences and such interesting ideas.

TS: Well, it sounds like you made good use of your time that year. Have you been able to keep up any of that research now that you've moved into administrative positions?

MR: It's really hard. [chuckle] It's really hard. I'm doing some research, but I've moved in a different direction. As an administrator, I've come to realize if you can take some of the work that you do and make it scholarly, that's valuable. I haven't taught psychology, frankly, in a number of years now, at least full time. I've given guest lectures and so on, but I haven't taught. My scholarly work the past few years at Santa Fe was focusing on issues of faculty workload and workload equity. As I'm sure you're aware, workload equity is always a major problem. I was trying to develop some quantitative models for looking at workload issues, trying to determine an index of load and figure out some alternative ways to look at faculty workload. It's my view that the old "Carnegie unit" of the three-credit hour course as the standard for faculty workload is very much out of line. All three-hour courses are not equal. Some three-hour courses are an incredible amount of work, and some are less so. I want to move away from just credit hours—time in the classroom—and look at a number of other variables that are involved. I've presented some papers on this, and actually, at Santa Fe they were moving toward possibly revising the workload formulas and approach in my last year there, though many people were afraid of the new. I mean, this is a very new, novel and bold approach, and academics are somewhat conservative sometimes.

TS: In some ways. [chuckle]

MR: Some were kind of concerned about making this great leap. And then I left, so the advocate was now gone. I do have colleagues there who are still pushing for this kind of review to take place, but I'm not sure of the status of that.

TS: Right. So you stayed at Santa Fe as a department chair then for . . .

MR: I was there for five years.

TS: Five years. You probably stayed at Kennesaw longer than anywhere.

MR: Yes. Actually Kennesaw is my longest tenure. That's correct.

TS: So you were department chair for five years, or division chair. How did they do it in Florida?

MR: It was called a department chair, but I [oversaw] seven disciplines: psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, poli sci, geography and education. So, really, it's more like a division. I was more a division dean with the work that I did than a department chair, but it was called a chair.

TS: I was going to say, it's almost like our college of humanities and social sciences here now.

MR: Right, right. It's a little smaller scale but somewhat like that, certainly. And so, yes, I was chair for five years there. I had a really great time with my historians; I had a group of four or five historians who were top-notch intellectuals and great people—scholarly



and great teachers—and so I really enjoyed working with them. The department overall was terrific, certainly, but I thought I'd emphasize your area, which was great. We only taught the lower division courses in the two-year community college, so we taught freshman and sophomore level courses.

TS: Well, now you've moved on, and I guess this is your second year at Edison College now.

MR: No, first year.

TS: You're still in your first year.

MR: Maybe I have the dates wrong. I've got to go back and look at my vita, but this is my first year. I arrived July 1<sup>st</sup>. I'm now dean of the Charlotte campus. Edison is a three-campus college: The main college is in Fort Myers, and there are two smaller branches, one in Punta Gorda where I am, and one in Naples. I arrived here July 1<sup>st</sup> to be the academic dean, which has under it all of the departments and areas. I was getting settled and ready to start the fall semester, and then [Hurricane] Charley hit August 13<sup>th</sup>. That was a week before we would open up the doors for students, so it was quite an adventure. The place where I was living was destroyed; I had to move out and find a place to live, another one. There was no place to go because everything was destroyed pretty much. I was commuting, actually, from Sarasota for awhile, which is an hour away. Really, my first job was crisis management and first aid—finding out if people were alive, where they were, if they were okay, what kind of first aid was needed, trying to figure out ways to get food and water to people. I mean, it really was a major disaster.

TS: You weren't expecting that to be the job of a dean when you went there.

MR: Unfortunately, we didn't really have a very good phone list to track people down. We didn't have their cell phone numbers; I was quite surprised by our faculty and staff directory not being as complete as we needed. So now it's very thorough; we have multiple methods of communicating with people, certainly. The one thing I learned in the experience was to make sure you have a very clear plan of communication—what radio station people should turn to to get information, or what TV channel. Try to post things on the Web as soon as you can, although if there's no power, people can't use the Web. I did learn a lot of things about crisis management. So we opened up about a week late, but it's been very difficult. Our enrollment was down about 25 percent.

TS: I bet. And you had several more storms hit after that.

MR: There were three more. The third place I moved into was damaged by Frances—the rain. The roof leaked, and my living room ceiling collapsed. The walls got all moldy, but I had to stay there at this point because there was no place else to go. It was baptism by fire, no doubt. But I did survive, and I'm probably stronger for it.

TS: I imagine so. So you've really gone big time into administration now, I guess.

MR: Yes, but you know, it was my experience with the Distinguished Teacher Award that made me go this direction.

TS: Is that right?

MR: That is, my goal has always been to help students. Well, in the classroom, I helped them on a kind of one-to-one basis. But in my work with faculty development and with the grant, I realized I could have a much broader impact and affect the quality of the education of more and more students by working with faculty to be the best that they can. So that experience, the Distinguished Teaching Award, made me realize I do want to have an impact on higher education in general. I think I have a lot of good ideas, and so administration is something I gravitated to as a result of the award.

TS: Well, what you're saying fits very closely to Bill Hill's definition of master teacher; a master teacher is somebody who really teaches the teachers. It sounds like what you're doing is trying to teach the teachers how to teach better.

MR: I think that's very well said by Bill, which I would expect.

TS: Is Edison College part of the university system? Are they a public college system down in Florida, or is it a private one?

MR: Edison College is undergoing the same kind of transitions that took place at Kennesaw, I think. Edison was a community college, two-year school. The growth in southwest Florida has been so tremendous and the college has grown so much that just this past spring, they began to offer baccalaureates.

TS: Is that right?

MR: Yes. And so it's going through the same transition that Kennesaw went through. I don't foresee us in the near future offering master's degrees like Kennesaw, but I came here because I saw incredible potential. Punta Gorda is really right between Sarasota and Naples-Ft. Myers. Both areas have grown so much that there's nowhere else to go but in the middle. I see a good opportunity here for growth and development, and my hope is that I can be part of that. I may again take some of my lessons learned at Kennesaw about how to grow and change institutionally and apply them here.

TS: Do you foresee yourself maybe becoming a college president some day?

MR: Never in a million years.

TS: Oh, never in a million years?

MR: No. I am an academic person. I hate the politics; I hate the schmoozing. I don't like the hand-shaking stuff. The president's job these days is really not academic; it's much more.

TS: Meeting the public.

MR: Yes. And I'm not good at that kind of stuff, frankly. I don't think of that as my strength. My strength is academic affairs, I believe. So, being a dean or being a vice president of academic affairs, I think, would make me very happy.

TS: Well, I think I'm just about at the end of my list of questions. I've thoroughly enjoyed talking to you, and I've learned a good deal from what you've said. I didn't know that you'd done all these things that you've talked about, particularly in the scholarship of teaching. It sounds like you're still doing some very exciting things.

MR: Well, if it's not exciting, I'll move on. That's what I've tended to do in the past. [laughter] I need to be stimulated. So, yes, if it changes, I'll be somewhere else. This has been very exciting, and I'm looking forward to some good years here at Edison. I've valued all my previous experiences. I've picked up and learned from each and every one of them. And my Kennesaw years were great; that's where I was the longest. I was promoted from associate to full professor, I won the Distinguished Teaching Award, and I got this incredible opportunity with the grant from the Board of Regents. Those are years I can never duplicate, and I'm very thankful.

TS: Well, we miss you around here.

MR: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I miss you guys, too.

TS: Well, thank you very much, Michael, for the interview today.

MR: Thank you very much.

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