



John S. Harding

March 8, 1919 – June 25, 2013

Professor Emeritus John Snodgrass Harding taught in the Department of Human Development, in its previous identity as “Child Development and Family Relations,” from 1953 to 1989, after graduating with a B.A. *summa cum laude* from the University of Minnesota and then completing both an M.S. and Ph.D. in psychology at Harvard University. Professor Harding, a social psychologist, was an acknowledged scholar in the area of prejudice and social relations. His work was distinguished from the rest of the field at that time by his emphasis on examining how cognitive factors and judgment influence the formation and expression of attitudes and behavior toward others. He authored chapters describing his approach in the first and second Handbooks of Social Psychology, work which anticipated the development of judgment decisionmaking and social cognition perspectives, which dominate the field of social psychology today. His work revolutionized the field of personality studies by showing how stereotypes could provide a cognitive bias in reasoning.

Consistent with his work on prejudice and discrimination, Professor Harding had a life long interest in policy and applied psychology. He edited the Journal of Social Issues from 1956-1959, an interdisciplinary journal concentrating on applications of social psychological theory to addressing social problems such as prejudice and discrimination, addictions and mental illness, and health disparities. He was one of the first American social psychologists to publish a comparative study of how symptoms of mental health and illness may vary across cultures. In the 1980s he developed an interest in the growing field of gerontology. In 1981, he wrote a proposal arguing for the establishment of a department of policy analysis in the College of Human Ecology (a change which eventually came to fruition).

One of his last visits to the College was as an invited guest for the dedication of the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research.

John Harding had a prodigious memory, and it was something that he put to good use. He was always ready to retrieve information about previously published research if it would help a colleague. He was also able to complete superb reviews of a colleague's research by relying on his extraordinary memory to situate the research in a broader historical context and contrast it to, and compare it with, the research of others in the field. John's memory was something that colleagues teased him about. It was also something that he himself made self-deprecating and good-natured comments about, comments that were typically followed by a robust and almost explosive laugh. He long served as the department's unofficial historian. John was always eager to help out younger colleagues, not just by serving as a sounding board for their ideas, but also by supporting them with kind words and the sort of broader perspective that only experience can provide. He was, in addition, always the consummate gentleman, making only positive comments about colleagues themselves, even when being sharply critical of their work.

A substantial collection of Professor Harding's papers and correspondence can be found in Cornell's Rare and Manuscript Collection.

Barbara Lust, Elaine Wethington and Barbara Koslowski