

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on October 16, 2007,
the following tribute to the life and service of the late David Clarence
McClelland was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

DAVID CLARENCE McCLELLAND

BORN: May 20, 1917

DIED: March 27, 1998

David Clarence McClelland was a distinguished member of a small cohort of twentieth-century psychologists who brought the objective procedures of empirical inquiry to the complex domain of human personality and motivation. He is best known for his creative use of content analysis of text—especially the interpretations of pictures—to develop quantified measures of the motives for achievement, power, and affiliation, and his application of these variables to the analysis of major social phenomena, including economic development, leadership, and war and peace, and in later years to different aspects of physiological functioning and to the study of health and illness. In this work, he made systematic use of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), a set of images developed at Harvard by Henry Murray in 1935. The interdisciplinary dimension of McClelland's work was enhanced during his sabbatical year in Harvard's Department of Social Relations in 1949–50, which had a decisive effect on his later research interests and the course of his career.

McClelland is also known for his critique of the unitary concept of “intelligence” and intelligence tests, and his efforts to identify other forms of competence. This work motivated him to found McBer and Company (currently a part of Hay Associates), a management research, training and consulting enterprise, focused on the development and utilization of such competencies.

Born in 1917 to a father who was a college president and a Methodist minister, McClelland chose Yale for his doctoral studies following graduation from Wesleyan University in 1938 and a master's degree from the University of Missouri in 1939. McClelland had broad interests. He had studied several languages and had planned to be a language teacher. He wrote a play in Latin, translated Emily Dickinson's poems into German, and later, at Wesleyan, taught in the all-university humanities program organized by Nathan Pusey.

After receiving his Ph.D. in psychology at Yale in 1941, and spending a year as an instructor of psychology at Connecticut College, McClelland joined the faculty at Wesleyan in 1942. During the Second World War he took a position in Philadelphia with the American Friends Service

Committee, which was heavily engaged in work with conscientious objectors and refugees. While working with the AFSC, he also served as a part-time lecturer in psychology at Bryn Mawr College (1944–45). The course in personality that he was asked to teach on short notice appears to have had a significant influence on the direction of his scholarly interests.

McClelland returned to Wesleyan in 1945 and remained there until 1956. During these years, he became more deeply invested in research on motivation and developed an experimentally based method for scoring TAT responses as a measure of the strength of the achievement motive. Later research used this method to derive measures of a variety of other motives and personality variables. In 1951 he published an empirically based landmark text called *Personality*. A number of the BA and MA students that McClelland mentored during those early years at Wesleyan became leading figures in the field themselves and many of the doctoral students whom he supervised during his subsequent years at Harvard became intellectual leaders of the next generation of psychologists.

McClelland came to Harvard in 1956 as professor of psychology and director of the doctoral program in clinical psychology. Under his leadership, the Psychological Clinic, in which the clinical program was based, was renamed the Center for Research in Personality to reflect the wider scope of his and his students' interests and activities. McClelland served as chair of the Department of Social Relations between 1962 and 1967. After assuming emeritus status at Harvard in 1987, he became distinguished research professor at Boston University.

Over the course of his long career, McClelland wrote or edited 16 books and over 185 papers or chapters. Perhaps his most widely cited work is his 1961 book, *The Achieving Society*, in which he analyzed the role of achievement motivation and other psychological factors in economic development. In keeping with his desire to apply psychology to the resolution of real-world problems, he developed training courses in India designed to increase the achievement motive as a way of fostering economic development.

McClelland's extensive travels often generated new research interests and theoretical perspectives. His frequent trips to India, beginning with his achievement training program there in the early 1960s, led to a deep curiosity about Eastern thought and meditation practices, which he came to view as a useful supplement to Western medicine. After a sabbatical year in Tunisia, where he read the works of Ibn Khaldun (a fourteenth-century Arab historian and philosopher), he presented a paper proposing a "Khaldun index," based on Khaldun's writings about the nature and functions of government, to measure governmental effectiveness.

McClelland's courses were unusually popular. One of us (D.W.) recalls McClelland's first lecture in a course in human motivation, in which he provided an alternative to one of Freud's interpretations, quoted from the Hindu sacred text, *Bhagavad Gita*, and Plato's *Republic*, discussed a German philosopher's distinction among knowledge, desire, and action, and outlined an analysis of the biblical story of Jonah and the whale.

Throughout his adult years, David was involved in the religious Society of Friends as an active member of the Cambridge Friends Meeting and a board member of the Cambridge Friends School. He honored his Quaker principles in interactions with students and colleagues, often providing psychological support for students and on occasion, financial help. One former student remembers sharing an elevator ride with McClelland from his office on the top floor of William James Hall to the Kirkland Street level. Upon hearing of the student's financial difficulties, he asked how much money it would take to keep the student in school. McClelland then opened his checkbook and before the elevator reached the first floor had written a personal check for the amount needed.

McClelland received many professional honors during his 81 years: the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association, the Bruno Klopfer Award from the Society for Personality Assessment, the Henry Murray Award from Division 8 of the American Psychological Association, the Baldwin Medal from Wesleyan, and the Wilbur Cross Medal from Yale, as well as honorary degrees from several colleges and universities.

McClelland's first wife, Mary (Sharpless) McClelland, an accomplished artist, died in 1980. David McClelland died in 1998 and is survived by his second wife, Marian, seven children, and nine grandchildren.

Respectfully submitted,

Herbert Kelman

Ellen Langer

David G. Winter (University of Michigan)

Jerome Kagan, Chair