
Timothy C. Brock (1935–2009)

Timothy C. Brock, founder and guiding force of Ohio State University's acclaimed doctoral program in social psychology, died at his home in Upper Arlington, Ohio, on December 20, 2009.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the son of Harriet (née Wallschlager) and Joseph Brock, and raised in New York City, Tim attended Regis High School in New York, Fordham University (bachelor of arts, 1955), and Yale University (doctorate in psychology, 1960), where he worked with Carl Hovland. After prodigiously productive junior faculty stints at the University of Pittsburgh (1960–1962) and Iowa State University (1962–1964), Ohio State offered Tim the opportunity to develop a full-fledged social psychology doctoral program in a department that had never had more than one social psychologist at a time. Within four years of his arrival in Columbus, Tim had grown the program to four faculty members (including Tom Ostrom, Tony Greenwald, and Bibb Latané). Within less than another decade, their program had become the leading program for research in the social psychology of attitudes.

In the mid-1980s, Tim and his colleague of more than 20 years, Tom Ostrom, along with their more recent colleague, Gifford Weary, initiated a second surge in the growth of Ohio State's social psychology program, which led to wide international recognition. Among the long line of successful social psychologists produced over the years by Ohio State's program, these identify Tim as their primary supervisor: Sara Kiesler (1965), Howard Fromkin (1968), Jeffrey Goldstein (1969), Lee Becker (1970), John Keating (1972), Deborah Davis (1973), Richard Petty (1977), Vernon Padgett (1984), Mary Canty Hall (1985), Sharon Shavitt (1985), Michael Lynn (1987), Eddie Clark (1988), David Boninger (1991), Anita Bozzolo (1993), Laura Brannon (1993), Melanie Green (2000), and Phil Mazzo (2005). This list does not include many other Ohio State students who had the formative experiences of taking Tim's courses, receiving his advice on research, and participating in frequent entertainments of program visitors hosted by Tim and his amazing wife Sherry at their Upper Arlington home. Many of those students, along with numerous other friends and colleagues, gathered in Columbus in 2006 to celebrate Tim's retirement after 42 years at Ohio State.

A 1967 article by Tim in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* unassumingly started its Method section with these words: "Introductory psychology students were asked to list their thoughts before reading a communication . . ." That mild statement presaged a theoretical revolution in conceiving attitude change, eventually replacing the Yale-developed learning-theory-based analysis with the Ohio State-developed cognitive response approach. The core new principle of the cognitive response approach was that a persuasive message's impact depends more on the thought processes (cognitive responses) it produces than on learning of message content. Even more than Tim's listed thought method, his sustained empirical, collegial, editorial, and advisory collaborations were pivotal to the high points of

this revolution—the 1981 volume *Cognitive Responses in Persuasion* (coedited by Tim, along with Rich Petty and Tom Ostrom) and the 1986 publication of the elaboration likelihood model by two 1977 Ohio State PhDs, Rich Petty and John Cacioppo.

Tim's honors included election as president of the Evaluation Research Society (1985) and of the Society for Consumer Psychology (SCP; 1991). He also received SCP's Distinguished Scientist Award (1997), which in part recognized his series of contributions to understanding the role of unavailability in social influence. Those contributions started with his theoretical creation, commodity theory, published as a key chapter in *Psychological Foundations of Attitudes* (coedited by Tim, along with Tony Greenwald and Tom Ostrom), which was the first of a continuing series of Ohio State volumes on attitudes and persuasion.

Tim is unforgettable to those who knew him well enough to witness (or hear about from friends) acts that only Tim could conceive. One example: In buying a new car, instead of visiting showrooms, Tim invited several dealer representatives to his office—simultaneously—and conducted a reverse auction. He accepted the low bid. Tim also treasured uniqueness in language. A former student recalls being taken aback by Tim's inserting *irrefragable* into a conversation. Another student was delighted to win a bet when Tim insisted that *dissensus* was an English word. Although Tim could not find it in any dictionary at hand, later search showed that it had indeed entered the English language (1962) prior to the bet.

Tim's uniqueness was scientifically evident in his invention of a "pleasure machine," created deliberately as an antithesis to Arnold Buss's aggression machine, which had been most famously used in Stanley Milgram's studies of obedience. In the 1976 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* article that first described the pleasure machine, Debbie Davis, Hal Rainey, and Tim noted in the abstract that "439 undergraduates used the Brock Pleasure Machine to give 30 intensity-graded waves of pleasure to a confederate." Tim was anticipating the positive psychology movement, still 20 years off.

In recent years, Tim was active in scholarly support for the cause of reparations to African Americans. Convinced that America had an unpaid debt to the descendants of slavery, he attributed American Whites' resistance to affirmative action more to their ignorance of the life circumstances of Black Americans than to ill intention.

Tim is survived by Sharon (Sherry), his wife of 50 years; children Lisa, Greg, Valerie, and Ian; his sister Chloe Foote; his brother James; and eight grandchildren. The disease that took Tim was an atypical form of Parkinson's. If there was any blessing in this illness it was that, while gradually diminishing his motor capacities, it left Tim's mind sharp until the end.

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