

FINAL  
DRAFT

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Professor of Anthropology

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SM: This interview is with Professor Kim Romney of the Anthropology Department, and this is Friday, May 5, 1989, and it's 10:30 a.m. in the Humanities Office Building 360.

And starting off, Kim, what did you know about our Social Science Program before you came?

KR: Well, I have to reconstruct that, but I heard about Irvine because I was on some kind of committee--I think it was the National Research Council Committee--with Roger Russell, and so I'd become acquainted with him in Washington. And that's actually the first I'd heard about it when he told me about it, and then . . .

SM: You were at Harvard then?

KR: I was at Harvard at that time. And then later I met Jim March. We'd been on some kind of committee together, but it was just a one-shot deal, and he told me more about it and filled in. And then I recall that Jim March and I met at the Dulles Airport in Washington, had a couple hours before catching flights, and he said, "Look, we've talked about Irvine a lot. Why don't we start doing something about it?" I said, "Okay, invite me out or give me an offer."  
(laughter)

And so then I came out and visited the place. I made two visits before I was hired, and the . . . But my memory is that within . . . So, I probably knew about what the School of Social Science was about, and on the visit learned as much as one can learn about on those kinds of visits.

SM: Do you consider yourself to be a mathematical anthropologist? What do you call yourself? I say this because March was looking for a particular person.

KR: (laughter) Right, right. Well, yes, I'm very much a mathematical anthropologist and, in fact, currently, I'm in Duncan Luce's new Irvine research unit on mathematical behavioral science.

SM: Very good, very good.

KR: And so, I'm not only on the statistical science-mathematical side, but I'm also strongly interdisciplinary. And I got my Ph.D. at Harvard in social relations, which was a combination of sociology, psychology, and anthropology. And following that, I'd had a year at Chicago and then ten years at Stanford, and then two years at Harvard, before coming here.

Now, the Stanford experience was very nice, for two reasons. One was that I'd had a joint appointment in the Psychology Department during that time, and the other is that it was during the most explosive growth period of Stanford, and I really enjoyed that growth period. It was very exciting to hire people and, you know, see things grow.

SM: Yes, you bet.

KR: And when I got to Harvard, it was clear that it was (chuckle) maintaining tradition and not growing or rocking the boat.

SM: Yes.

KR: And that's actually what attracted me to Irvine, was the notion that they were growing and the notion that they were interdisciplinary, and the fact that they were advertised to be mathematical. Now, that was what Jim pushed at the rhetorical level, and actually made several appointments in that direction. But it was not consistent all the way through. That is, he hired a lot of people who were not mathematical, and that's had repercussions since that time.

SM: Well, that's very interesting. I say interesting because we were very excited when you came. And I was Dean and we were pretty much party to what each was doing in the way of recruiting. And I got very excited when you agreed to come. We are not mathematical over in the Humanities, but we sort of try to be just interdisciplinary. I think that's one of my . . . I won't say failures, but I didn't get enough of a core of interdisciplinary work. Now, Hazard Adams worked pretty hard on that, and it's very hard to move a person out of a department. Now, you're going the other way now. You're giving up the organization that Jim had and you're going into departments. I think yours is already formed, isn't it?

KR: That's right.

SM: Is Mike Burton your Chair?

KR: Yes. The Department of . . . Well, the School of Social Sciences just officially got approval of their application to form departments, and, so, they have one in Political Science, Cognitive Sciences, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, and I may have missed one.

SM: Well, in question two, I'm interested in the changes in the Anthropology curriculum. And when you came, I take it, it was pretty much down your alley. Have you found that some of the . . . much of the interdisciplinary work is lost now that you're departmentalized?

KR: Well, I think that the departmentalization clearly is a step away from being interdisciplinary, and it was a disappointment to me to see us go that way. But, on the other hand, it's enormously difficult to have an interdisciplinary program that does not fit the standard model.

SM: Yes, (inaudible).

KR: You're pressured from both inside and outside to get a more traditional view and, for many people, it bothers them greatly, say, to have a degree called Social Science, rather than one called Psychology or Anthropology. Now, in reality, I don't think it makes any difference whatsoever, because once you have a Ph.D. you're not . . . the exact title of it isn't . . . And furthermore, in the

Administration, their computer programs that come down from Berkeley always have what department? (laughter) So, there's always pressure, psychological pressure, to go toward a departmental organization. And that pressure was there from the very beginning. For example, your questions three and four have to do with being dean. Let me go back and review some of that.

SM: Yes, please do.

KR: Well, first, I'll talk about your question two, what changes did I made in the Anthropology curriculum. Actually, what we did was throw ourselves into the process of inventing a new school as a group activity. That is, I was here, I came the third year. And, at that time, it's hard to believe, but I was the oldest person in the school. And I was about forty-three, I guess. (laughter)

Now, what that meant is that the vast majority of faculty, this was their first job, and it meant that they had not been socialized in other schools and had not seen the inner workings of an ordinary university. And, so, in some kind of sense, they were trying to invent a structure. And, remember that we had very radical innovations in those days, in that the faculty arrangements could change each year. And there were groups--they called them Group A and Group B.

SM: (inaudible)

KR: They weren't even labeled by disciplinary labels.

SM: Yes.

KR: Now, March had built the department to that point almost singlehandedly. Now, clearly, he'd gotten . . . he'd talked with other people and gotten their counsel and he'd discussed with them, but those first few years he virtually had the de facto power to go out and hire people or do what he wanted. And he clearly started both an interdisciplinary and a mathematically oriented program.

Now, when he resigned as Dean, there was a big conflict within the school about who ought to be Dean, and we searched for outside people unsuccessfully. And it was partly that, clearly, nobody was going to fill March's shoes very successfully and they didn't want to bring a conservative person in from the outside. It was really rather a young, radical faculty.

But, even in those days, there were those who wanted departments and those who didn't. And there was a fellow named Sharp, an economist, and some of the psychologists wanted departments. And March, at the very end of his tenure as Dean, had started doing things that smelled like departments. That is, he'd given the groups a little bit of allotment of discretionary money. And those . . . that meant that they would fight to increase that and, in order to increase it, they'd look more and more legitimate by having better and better departments.

Well, there was actually a fight. There was rather a big fight, actually. I mean, I remember in those days one was young, but I remember one midnight crisis meeting with Roger Russell, (laughter) in which in particular Arnie Binder and I were discussing it. And Arnie wanted the Department of Psychology and Sharp wanted the Department of Economics. Well, when it was all said and done, I became Dean and Sharp went to Stanford and Arnie Binder established Social Ecology.

SM: Social Ecology.

KR: And Arnie and I had fought real hard, but we had respect for each other, and when it was clear that he was going to form Social Ecology and leave the school, I voluntarily volunteered to give him funds for a secretary and a little bit of sustaining stuff to get started. And, as you know, he's gone and built a very successful school.

SM: Yes, sure, program.

KR: I was skeptical about that kind of bifurcation in the beginning but, in fact, they filled a niche that no other school would have filled. So, it's like a federation, in which in some sense they may be competing for overall funds, but they've basically built a new niche, which I think, from the point of view of the campus, probably strengthens it. Now, it looks funny organizationally again because they have Sociologists and Psychologists and they have many of the same kinds of specialties that, say, Social Science has.

SM: The way I felt about it, Kim--I think I spoke to Arnie at the time. I said, "Gee, your program of Social Ecology . . . ."--it wasn't called that then.

KR: Right.

SM: ". . . really belongs in a School of Social Sciences. It ought not to be outside here.

KR: Yes, right.

SM: And you were stressing interdisciplinary work and, certainly, Jim March and you people were stressing interdisciplinary work, but you really belonged within. Now, he just felt that he wouldn't be comfortable with Jim.

KR: Right. Well, I think that things got a little bit polarized because people were disorganized by Jim. They were used to Jim as a leader and they were trying to transfer to how to make decisions as a group and they really didn't know how to do that very well. But, in any event, Arnie went on to establish that.

And the first thing I did as Dean, I recall, is that I said, "All groups are voluntary and henceforth no group will have a budget." So, that I kept absolute centralized . . . . That is, we had one advisor, staff advisor, for the whole school, one budget for secretaries and so forth, and that I wasn't going to duplicate . . . . I felt that it would be wasteful to duplicate that by departments--we were small. So that . . . and then for a period of time, I think, the interdisciplinary nature . . . that internally the school



was at least happy with it. That is, we didn't have the same difficulty with subsequent deans that we'd had when I became Dean. But, from the very beginning, the Economists wanted a department and, finally, the last few years it was more and more inevitable, and then we did departmentalize on it. Now, you have a question about Dean's meetings?

SM: I wanted . . . Yes, you were Dean. You've answered partly, but I'd like you to note what the particular problems were that finally caused you to retire.

KR: Well, I think that there were several factors. I think one factor is that I discovered that I didn't want to be a dean and I didn't enjoy that kind of activity.

SM: Yes.

KR: But, at the same time, as you recall, it was a very unusual time and situation, filled with various kinds of problems. For one thing, the Cambodia episode happened during that time, and I think that the politicization of the American university, not only throughout the United States but worldwide, has had profound impacts on the universities, from which they haven't even begun to recover. And one of the things was is that we were spending a lot of time worrying about the political situation and the students.

SM: Oh, they were weird.

KR: You will recall that the Bank of America across the street got burned.

SM: Yes.

KR: But you'll also recall that two years earlier that <sup>Encino</sup> (inaudible) Hall at <sup>Stanford</sup> Berkeley had been burned down and that's where I'd had my office.

SM: Oh, gee!

KR: My office was gutted. The building wasn't burned to the ground because it was a stone building, but the inside was burned. And at Harvard, that I had just left, they had kidnapped the Dean and held him. (laughter) And at San Francisco, there was rioting in the streets under [S. I.] Hayakawa. And you probably recall, at that time, there was a Sunday night meeting held in the Science Lecture Hall of both students and faculty.

SM: I think I was down in Australia, thank God.

KR: Well, that was very tense, because it was about two weeks before the end of the quarter and the students wanted to be relieved to go do their politicking.

SM: Yes.

KR: And they sort of quietly threatened, "or else." But I think we were very lucky: we missed any kind of physical violence. But we didn't miss the psychological thing. Now, I think that, as Dean, the wounds of the fight for Dean and the inability to make any decisions in a reasonable way . . . We were . . . I was experimenting consciously as dean with a faculty democracy. Well, in fact, at the time the students had these riots, we let them in on all meetings, you will recall.

SM: Right.

KR: And the fact that the students and everything, and I was trying very sincerely, consciously, to say what would happen if we let there be democratic . . .

SM: Governance.

KR: Governance of the university, because I had come from what were basically authoritarian universities, from Stanford and Harvard. But that meant that if any decision was to be made, because it was very, very, very frustrating because there was not consensus about what to do. And, in particular, the thing that in the long run had the biggest impact, was that we were going against the mathematics. Now, no one ever argued very much about that, except that they started hiring people who were not mathematical, and that eventually led . . . Well, nationwide the same trend was going, because after the sixties and seventies, the students didn't take as much science. My interpretation of what happened--we'll use Cambodia as a metaphor or a symbol of the turning point--is that the Social Scientists and the Humanists sort of were sympathetic with the students. And that they themselves became politicized a little bit.

SM: Right you are.

KR: And the Natural Scientists said, "This has no place in a university. We're going to go back to our labs and, when the fighting is over, we can talk reasonably and get back together." Well, they never got back together. That is,

prior to Cambodia, a university was a place where all people had respect for each other and talked to each, crossed disciplinary lines. And what Cambodia did nationwide was polarize the students and the Humanists, the Humanities and the Social Scientists, against Science.

And then the great universities of the country, like Harvard and Chicago, voted in core curriculums that only included two classes in all of math and sciences, over a four-year period. Now, that was radical at Harvard because, prior to that time, you had two courses a year. So, they cut the requirement at the same time we were making enormous strides in Genetics, Biochemistry, Physics, and the whole . . . all of the Natural Sciences were exploding with knowledge. We agreed to make scientific illiterates out of our core curriculums. (laughter)

And we haven't recovered from that and we may never recover from it. It may mean that the Social Scientists will become purely Humanists and will not study human behavior. That's happened 99 percent in my field of Social Anthropology. There are almost no scientists left. I feel very much like an unwanted pariah, because I'm a mere empiricist and I believe that there are some answers that are better than others, where the majority of my field are relativists and think that culture is like a poem and that it has many correct interpretations. But, what that means in reality is that the . . . When we study human behavior,

that it will be studied by people like McGaugh over in Psychobiology, and it'll be studied by the Neurologists, and that the Psychologists will either be fraudulent therapists or write poems and essays. (laughter) Now, this isn't just Irvine. This is countrywide.

SM: Nationwide, yes.

KR: Nationwide.

SM: Right.

KR: And probably even worldwide because, remember, they had . . . I don't know how it is in the rest of the world, but certainly for . . .

SM: Well, Australia is that way.

KR: Certainly, in the Western world, the polarization of--and rejection of the Natural Sciences . . . I mean, we've encapsulated them and the people that we're training don't understand anything. They take things as magic. They'll use a computer and they have no understanding of the science and technology involved, or appreciation of it, or all of the things going on in Biotechnology.

I mean, just consider the explosion of knowledge. It's just staggering. That is, in 1943, Avery, <sup>and</sup> McClellan, ~~McCarthy~~ discovered that DNA was the carrier of the genetic code. That's where the information was. Ten years later in 1953, Watson and Crick discovered that the structure of that DNA molecule was a double helix, and about fifteen years later--and Crick was in on this--they discovered the code.

And they discovered the exact code it was written in and they proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that every living thing on earth, from a blade of grass to me, is written in the same genetic code. And they also discovered how to take advantage of it. In the last ten years, the people that formed Genentech, for example, synthesized--that is, made from chemicals--a gene to produce human insulin. And they injected it into a bacteria and turned it on and the bacteria now produce human insulin. Now, the marvel of that, the knowledge involved in that is magnificent. At the same time, we don't study human behavior at all because, just to find things out . . . Well, we don't believe in it yet. And, anyway, I think that this kind of development in the whole nation has been dramatic. I mean . . . But anyway, let me get back to this. I'm getting carried away.

SM: No, I love it, I love it, I love it.

KR: There is a question here why I retired as Dean.

SM: Yes.

KR: I wanted, I think, to do the research. Now, remember that all of this is rationalization, because my own personal belief is that we don't have any concrete memories that go back that far and that what we do is make up reasons at this point. (laughter) But I have vague recollections of frustration that . . .

SM: You don't keep a diary?

KR: . . . of bringing in figures to show that the teaching load of the School of Social Science was twice Physical and Biological Sciences and showing that on other campuses that big a discrepancy didn't exist and asking for money. It turns out just last year, when Peltason came over and talked to the faculty, that Christian Werner brought in the same figures--and it's gotten worse instead of better. (laughter) We have four times the mean teaching load that other campuses have, and four times what Physics has.

SM: Oh, gee.

KR: But the other thing was the internal problem about consensus and decision making.

SM: And also polarization.

KR: And polarization, and that we . . . And I figured that I couldn't get consensus--and that it's just like beating one's head against the wall--both within the school and with the Administration. And I didn't like administration, so I got out and went more or less into research.

SM: Well, the next question leads you into the seventies and your teaching. And you're telling me that your teaching load was too heavy.

KR: Well, there are funny ways the university handles the teaching load. My personal teaching load is not too heavy. I've got the same set of courses since I quit being Dean. I teach a two-quarter sequence on Data Collection and Analysis and a two-quarter sequence on Experimental Anthropology and

a Cognitive Anthropology, and the Analysis of Relational Data.

SM: What about graduate work?

KR: Well, the seminars are graduate, and then I also carry on . . . turn out Ph.Ds. So, I have . . . four of those courses are undergraduate, but relative small. They have never been over about thirty. And then the two graduate seminars, the Experimental Anthropology graduate seminars.

SM: That's a graduate seminar.

KR: Right.

SM: Do you get, what, about four or five students in that?

KR: Yes, it varies, and the . . . But I aim for six and it averages between four and eight.

SM: You aim for six? That's a good number.

KR: But the way that's solved in our school, and I don't know about other schools, is that we have an enormous number of temporary people who are hired specifically to teach large classes. So, that I'd say that half of the times that, say, Anthropology I, which is, say, you have 300 or 400 students, half the time that's been taught, we've hired either recent graduates or people . . . professionals in the area. They're qualified people but they're . . . I mean, they have their Ph.D. in the field, but they're not people who are research people that we'd put on the staff.

SM: Yes.



KR: Now, Economics, Statistics, the others, that's Psychology. That's been a common, common practice, and it has both advantages and disadvantages but, anyway, that's what's been done.

SM: What about your research? I'm interested. I know you basically write a lot of articles, don't you?

KR: Well, my style and my belief is modeled on the Natural Sciences, where one tries to make a research discovery or breakthrough or improvement.

SM: Yes, right.

KR: And those are published in professional referee<sup>d</sup> journals.

SM: Journals.

KR: And those are the only counters. That's what I've tried to do, is to turn out (chuckle) classic articles. Now, my research has had its ups and downs, but the last five years has probably been the most productive. I've had good support from the National Science Foundation and Bill Batchelder and I--he's a Mathematical Psychologist--have developed a new theory of measuring the degree of consensus, say, for culture patterns, so that you can actually measure the degree to which something is normative or culturally accepted. And it works on small samples and it works . . . It's particularly designed where you go in a foreign culture, where you don't know the answers to any of the questions, and you ask a small number of people the same questions and you can figure out which people know the most

and what the culturally accepted answer is, and you can do that objectively. And we have a complete mathematical theory and maybe a dozen articles written, all the way from highly technical in Psychometrika to moderately technical in American Anthropologist, to didactic type articles, how to use it or implement it.

SM: Preaching.

KR: Well, it was meant, if anyone wanted to try to learn something about human behavior, that they could use these methods. (laughter)

SM: Yes, it's instructive. Yes, that's very interesting. I'm glad you found someone you can work with. All right. Question, eight, here we are in 1989.

KR: Right.

SM: And I wonder what your comments were, in retrospect, how did Jim March's program succeed and what's left of it?

KR: Well, I have done a lot of thinking about what was Jim March's program. (laughter) And I'm not sure that Jim March fully articulated that to himself. (laughter) I think that he did a lot of things in a moderately quixotic manner, and I think that he definitely believed in science and the use of objective, quantifiable methods.

SM: Yes.

KR: And I think that he genuinely believed in interdisciplinary stuff, but those were very generalized goals. And, when you asked the question, what were the plans for implementing a

specific program and realistic goals and plans. I'm not sure they were totally thought out. I think Jim was experimenting. And my final hypothesis was that he was an experimenter but he finally quit. (laughter) And maybe at a good time, and left, and that the school inherited certain kinds of aftereffects.

Well, one is he'd been a charismatic leader and he left it with no decision-making process. But he also left it without any specific goals, other than the value of interdisciplinary work and the value of quantitative work. At the same time, he hired people like Harvey Sachs, who unfortunately died early in an accident, but was 180 degrees opposite and was a charismatic leader of anti-science. I mean, that's not a single example. There are others, so that there were plenty of things that sowed seeds of not having value or a consensus among the faculty.

SM: You might be interested, Kim. I interviewed Jim. This was way back in 1973, I guess, because I did the whole, the first twenty-nine people I interviewed on tape, and they're in the library, starting with Clark Kerr, Dean McHenry who was Dean of Campus Planning, Dan Aldrich and he was Vice Chancellor then, and (inaudible) and so on.

KR: Right.

SM: But only those that had been right here at the beginning. And I asked . . . I went up to Stanford--let's say it's 1971 or so--and I said, "Jim, you're an organizational man.

It seems to me, the way it went, that you really were trying to create a completely unworkable organization. It was chaotic." And he just laughed. He didn't say yes and he didn't say no, he just laughed. (laughter) Which is like Jim.

KR: Right.

SM: So, anyhow, I'm interested in what you've said. I think you've thought that through quite a bit. I go to the catalogues--I've got all the catalogues from the beginning all the way through--and I look. Now, what was Social Science doing in terms of it's . . . for it's office. That doesn't tell you the complete story at all.

KR: No.

SM: And you can't quite tell. You know what Jim . . . I've got some memos that Jim sent out and those, but as you said, he's quixotic. Now . . .

KR: Well, let me go back to one point about graduate training over the years.

SM: Yes, please do. Please do. <sup>KR:</sup> I really enjoyed teaching. And

KR: <sup>the original</sup> the original way the School of Social Science worked was on an explicit white ball system, that if three faculty members wanted to admit and train a student, basically they could. And, during that time, I think that there may have been a small amount of misuse and abuse of that privilege. But I think we turned out our best and most creative students under that system, and that the new departmental system

erases all of those advantages and puts people into lock-step and, I think, promotes mediocrity. Now, Roy D'Andrade and Gene Hammel once made an analysis of all the departments of Anthropology in the country and their production of Ph.Ds. and they found that Yale was . . .

SM: How do you spell D'Andrade?

KR: D, apostrophe, capital A-N-D-R-A-D-E.

SM: And who was the other one?

KR: Eugene Hammel, H-A-M-M-E-L.

SM: (inaudible)

KR: He's at Berkeley. He's on the National Academy.

SM: Yes, right, right.

KR: Now, they looked at the number of faculty, the number of graduate admissions, and the number produced per year, on the average. And Yale let in about one person per year and turned out .75 Ph.Ds. per faculty, and they were at the top. And it dribbled down to Columbia. Well, I always put that .75 as a reasonable figure, and I think that over the years, under the committee system, I turned out about one Ph.D. a year. And that meant that I always had a cohort of around a half a dozen. And that was very good during those years. Now, empirical research has become so unpopular in the soft side of Behavioral Science, like Anthropology, that I no longer have any students and cannot have students through the Anthropology Department because they simply can't get enough quantitative training to become interesting.

SM: Gee!

KR: Because there's only one course required to get a Ph.D. And, remember, two years of math and stat[istics] were required at the undergraduate level under March. (laughter)

SM: Right, right.

KR: And where the majority of the students only have one course, they can't talk about it because they don't yet have a repertoire of knowledge. And that means that people that try to learn it are discouraged by both the remainder of the faculty and their cohort of students. So, it makes it very difficult to train graduate students. Now, I'm near retirement, so that isn't very important from my personal point of view.

SM: Are you going to go to seventy?

KR: Well, I don't know yet.

SM: I went to seventy.

KR: I don't know. I probably will. I mean, I have fantasies about being more mellow about it, but anyway . . .

SM: I liked teaching so much . . .

KR: Well, I like teaching. If I could get out of going to the meetings, it would be all right.

SM: Well, now I'm Emeritus, so I get to teach one course. And you get paid a little and I don't go to any meetings. (laughter)

KR: Right. Well, I view that as ideal.

SM: It is ideal.

KR: What I do now is go to meetings in three different departments, which is ridiculous, but I don't know how to avoid it. It seems a little awkward to resign from Anthropology, but that's where I have the least intellectual kinship left. And then Linton [Freeman] has a networks thing, which is really the level of research that I do.

SM: Is he Sociology?

KR: Yes. And I have the most . . . And then I collaborate with Batchelder and I'm in the Research Unit and I go to Cognitive Science meetings. But my notion of nirvana would be to just teach and do research and maybe partial retirement. (laughter)

SM: You ought to look into this "phased retirement," whatever that means. I never took it. I wanted to go on teaching and I enjoyed teaching different course, in British History, that is. But you might find it of value to look into "phased retirement." And, hopefully, of course, asking them, "Can I please teach at least one course after I'm retired?" They have to find (inaudible) money, you see.

KR: Right.

SM: Well, this is all really extremely helpful to me. When did Easton and Eckstein were appointed, around 1980 or something like that, they wanted to get two very important people to help the department. Now, Eckstein is Economics, Easton's Poli Sci, right?

KR: Right.

SM: Did they . . .

KR: Well, no, they're both Poli Sci.

SM: Oh, they're both.

KR: Right.

SM: Did they make a difference?

KR: Well, see, that's not in my area, so I wouldn't . . .  
School-wide, I don't think that there was any impact. I  
think it would be in their field.

SM: Yes, I see.

KR: Now, the hiring of Luce back has made an impact, a big  
impact, and . . . because he's formed a new research unit.  
When the School of Management moved out, all of those people  
moved in there, so it's spatially adjacent, and I'm in that.  
And they have a <sup>seminar</sup>~~cloakroom~~ series, a reprint series, that was  
just designed . . . not connected to the research unit, but  
on our own, a graduate Ph.D. concentration in Mathematical  
Behavioral Science.

SM: Well, that's very interesting. Luce, that's L-U-C-E?

KR: Yes.

SM: I don't know him.

KR: Duncan Luce.

SM: Oh, Duncan Luce.

KR: He's a member of the National Academy.

SM: Oh, I know him. Oh, yes. I don't know what's the matter  
with me. Of course, I know him. I think my daughter had  
him in a class.



KR: Yes, he's first-rate. He's world famous.

SM: Yes, that's right. My daughter took an M.B.A. and somehow she got in a Duncan Luce class and she really enjoyed it. Now, I'd like you to tell me something, Kim, and that is about the future of the school and what you see coming up in the foreseeable future. Let's look down the path about five to seven years.

KR: Well, I think that there will be a few high spots, but the . . . I'll tell you what my honest opinion is.

SM: That's what I want.

KR: That we've seen our golden age at Irvine. It's over.  
(laughter)

SM: Yes.

KR: And that we still haven't learned to make intelligent decisions and we still have the rhetoric of building the strength, but very, very, very carefully, precisely not ever doing that.

SM: Oh, yes.

KR: And with the quick growth over the next decade will do is ensure us a mediocrity that competes with the mediocre departments at UCLA and that we're not going to be a Berkeley. Now, there may be a high point in Luce's new research unit, and there's a very bright point. They have world-class people in Cognitive and Mathematical Psychology. I have a hunch that . . . and by the time Luce retires, that may be in good enough shape to be world-class, but it's the

only world-class center that I see. Anthropology has one last gasp, to pick out a niche that is specialized and so not . . . If they go competitive across-the-board, they've lost it. And, up to this point, that's the net effect of departmentalization, is people start saying, "Well, look, we've got a department. We've got to cover this area and that area and that area."

SM: Yes, but you say across-the-board.

KR: We, by merely declaring ourselves as the best mathematical and scientific department in the world, we would be that. But there's not . . . You see, the department, due to the March and interdisciplinary legacy, has an economist in it. It has an historian of the Far East, it has a social psychologist, it has a musical historian, and it isn't just social anthropologists, because of the accident of who happened to be in that group when they departmentalized, which has a twenty-year history.

SM: Who is the historian?

KR: Karen Leonard.

SM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, she's very good.

KR: Yes. No, it's not that they're not good people individually.

SM: Yes, of course I know her very well.

KR: And Garfias is over here.

SM: And Garfias is your (inaudible).

KR: But it's a very mixed bag. And, in deference to everybody, you can't build in the areas of strength without hurting somebody's feelings, so you don't hurt their feelings, so . . . nothing happens. (laughter)

SM: Oh, yes.

KR: But the . . . There was something else I was going to mention.

SM: Well, you were talking about your Anthropology as a group, weren't you?

KR: Oh, I was going to mention another anecdote about the very early history. When I came here, I . . . well, I recently moved offices to go down to Luce's outfit. And I cleaned out my office and I ran across a letter that I'd written a colleague who was on leave from Harvard, to tell him that I was coming to Irvine. (tape difficulty)

SM: Back up just a little.

KR: Well, what I was talking about is that I had recently re-read a letter that I had written to a colleague who was on leave from Harvard, talking about coming to Irvine.

SM: To Irvine.

KR: And in it, I report a conversation that I had with Roger Russell in Washington at one of these meetings. And, in those days, we were thinking very big. You know, we were talking about a package deal in which I'd bring four or five other prominent anthropologists, and I had forgotten that because it's so foreign to today where you can say, "Well,

I'd like to bring so and so and so and so and so and so." And, actually, we actually tried to bring a set of those people. And, in the very beginning of the negotiations with Irvine, I was going to make my coming contingent on getting some of them. Well, actually, March and Russell came through with the positions, but the people didn't dare take a chance on coming to Irvine. And one or two of them had notions that Republican Orange County . . . (laughter)

SM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

KR: But others had, for a variety of reasons, they didn't want to come. But what I . . . What's relevant to the present is that the university is going to hire a lot of people in the next decade and, with really good planning, they could build world-class centers in narrow areas. But I simply don't see that happening. Now, I could be wrong. Actually, there's a young man in Social Anthropology who is about forty-three or four--I don't know how old he is--who is world-class, and he's the only one in the kind of research that's really fruitful nowadays. And if there's one chance in 100 that they might hire him in the next year or two, that would make a big difference. But I won't believe anything until I see it, because they've drug their feet and it's very difficult to get consensus, very difficult.

SM: Yes. Well, those were very heady days when we started, and when we were planning to be very original . . . we put in a call to Paris. I remember I called the guy who was in Texas

on leave, and he's now at Harvard, in French. And we tried to get the best, you know, right off the bat. But, you're right about this question of departmentalization when you . . . unless you have some real leaders in the department, who will go out and get the best, you can get down in--not mediocrity necessarily--but not the top.

KR: Well, you see, even if you aim for the top, you're going to make some wrong choices. And the moment that you stop aiming for the top . . .

SM: Yes, yes.

KR: Then it falls apart. You can afford to make two out of three bad choices, if your one out of three is really top and has energy and is going to become a leader. We've always also suffered from genuine dedicated leadership in this school. If you look at the deans that came after me . . .

SM: Creel and . . .

KR: Well, Creel, for example, absolutely by the end of two years was . . . fundamentally had had it and, you know, was worn out and indifferent about what was going on and just wanted out.

SM: Yes. (inaudible)

KR: And then Christian Werner, but he didn't ever have any of the social skills necessary for campus politics and didn't ever put on a suit and he was a bachelor and never entertained. And he didn't know how to do the interpersonal

politicking that would have made a difference to the image on campus. Then Linton Freeman took the job. Before he came, he said, "I just want to come to Irvine as a professor. I'll do that for two years, if that's the only way to get there." Well, he didn't care about the rules or anything else.

SM: Yes, that's true.

KR: There's only one ego involved in the job. Now, Willie is ego involved and Willie has done a wonderful job, and I think he's done almost everything a dean can do. But in Anthropology, we have not developed any leadership. I tried, but I mean, when you get . . . I'm sixty-three now, but at about age sixty, you shouldn't have to run the little leadership crusades.

SM: (laughter) You should be the elder statesman, not a camel.

KR: (laughter) Well . . .

SM: You can move in there with anything because you've no axe to grind.

KR: Sure, sure.

SM: I find myself doing so, after all.

KR: No, on some things they will accept people in the role of elder statesman, but if the decision has any substantive implications, they're not interested in that. (laughter)

SM: Now, I wouldn't say that all the time. Well, you've really given me a very fine interview, and I think that this will

help me when I'm writing the history of UCI. Is there anything else that you'd like to say?

KR: No, I think that we've covered . . . covered the ground.

SM: Anything that you want to bring up?

KR: No, the other thing, I might just make some personal remarks.

SM: Yes.

KR: And that is that in retrospect people have asked me whether I regretted leaving Stanford or Harvard or something like that. I've actually, despite the negative sound of some of these things, I have enjoyed my stay at Irvine, and I wouldn't . . . I never considered leaving it, and I don't find any other university any more attractive.

SM: That's nice of you to say.

KR: I think that the . . . I think, actually, we've done a remarkable job, given the circumstances that we grew up under, and . . .

SM: Well, what I think you're so right about, Kim, and what I am concerned about and won't really be involved in much, is the next ten years where they've got all these positions and they have a chance to get the best, the very best, if they'd necessarily be cutting a position out in order to fund a higher figure or (inaudible) people (inaudible).

KR: Well, that's the whole . . .

SM: The next year, I'd like to think of another golden age, but it isn't the age you and I went through.

KR: Well, next . . . There are two aspects about the departmentalization in the school. One is that it added an unbelievable number of extra meetings and bureaucratic and just pro forma kinds of things. For example, three years ago, basically, I could do my teaching and research and go to maybe one meeting a month. Now, I attend an average of six or eight meetings a week.

SM: Oh!

KR: Now, let me just illustrate what's happened. One, is that the Anthropologists organized. They have almost a weekly faculty meeting. They have almost a weekly colloquium.

SM: Which you have to attend . . .

KR: Oh, yes. And like this year, they wanted to make a TOP appointment, so they wine and dine six guests--that's six evenings broken into--and an afternoon shot to go to hear them, and endless meetings to talk about them. And that's compared with the earlier days where it was legal for a small number of opinion leaders to get together, make a decision. Each of them would go out and sell their respective audience and make everybody feel good about it and implement it. And you didn't have sixteen inches of things to, you know, verify.

SM: Papers to read through.

KR: And that's a very serious loss. They'd almost have to have . . . And after it's all said and done, we don't get any positions out of it because the TOP is for campus-wide



competition. And even if we won one of the competitions, the probability of that particular person coming might be very low. So, you can't do the intelligent kind of . . . Now, if you had a strategic plan . . . But, you see, even a strategic plan is against the spirit of the law.

SM: (laughter) Yes.

KR: I mean, you've got to advertise the position. And that means you've got to look at 150 proposals. And, if you do it by the book, what happens is that a mediocre Harvard student will win out of a Nobel prize quality Mississippi U[niversity] student. There's no way around it. And Harvard has a lot of mediocre students.

SM: Yes, they do.

KR: And we just made an appointment from there that shatters our value system. Our spread of values was that wide until he came and now it's this wide. And he's young, full of energy, charismatic, a wonderful debater, and that means everything's shifting, and so that I'm . . . I wish I could be more optimistic about the quality.

I think the next year is absolutely critical and is a turning point. It was refreshing to watch someone of Duncan Luce's stature to come in, because he actually had the clout to get space and change people's offices and do things in a way that I'd never seen at Irvine since, say, a Dean moves into a new building or something. They have a little bit of

leverage once in awhile about who's going to be where, but very little.

SM: Yes.

KR: So, I think that it will be tough. One last remark on the campus as a whole, and I think this affects the Social Sciences and the Humanities more than the Natural [Sciences], and I alluded to it earlier. But I think the fact that the university was formed during one of the most dramatic political crisis periods in the history of the United States, where in a sense it was a youth movement and the faculty was young and they identified with it, and they had not experienced a normal university experience before coming, simply meant that they were ill-prepared when the crisis of the moment was over to become normal human beings.

There are some people that were here originally that are now . . . that were young kids when they came, the first year or two, and if they put on a suit now at age fifty, it looks like they're trying to become a clown or something. And there are others that are even still wearing headbands or beards down to there. But, anyway, I think that . . . and the price that they pay for that is enormous, regardless of their intellectual merit. The price one pays for that is just staggering. Now, they don't have to dress up, but they need to look like . . . I mean, they're . . .

So, we went through the hippie period, but the fact that the university was established at that time, and that

you had someone as tolerant and quixotic as March to nurture that unreality, I think that it's had an impact on when we tried to get back to so-called normal times.

SM: That's very thoughtful, Kim, and I'm glad you have given me these thoughts of yours. Any more?

KR: No, that's . . . I think that's it.

SM: That's really very good.

END OF INTERVIEW