

To be published in: W. Pickren (Ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of the History of Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## History of the History of Psychology

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### Summary

Reflexivity has been a common theme in the literature on the history of psychology in recent years. Reflecting on the history of psychology is for historians of psychology the ultimate reflexive step. Germany is widely regarded as the homeland of “modern” or “scientific” psychology. It is here that the oldest surviving work with the word, “psychology” in the title was published in 1590. It was also here that the first book with the title, “History of Psychology” [Geschichte der Psychologie] was published in 1808. This reflects the fact that a substantial literature on psychology had already been published in Continental Europe by the end of the eighteenth century. Several other works on the history of psychology were published in German-speaking countries in the nineteenth century and in the years leading up to the First World War. English-speaking countries were relatively late in adopting psychology but it grew rapidly in the United States when it was adopted and the country was already the dominant power in the field by the outbreak of the First World War. Several works on the history of psychology were published in the United States around the same time, suggesting that disciplines and disciplinary history tend to appear simultaneously. This is because disciplines use their history to create a distinct identity for themselves. The history of psychology was widely taught in American psychology departments and several textbooks were published to support these courses. E. G. Boring’s *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929/1950) was by far the most influential of these textbooks and it has profoundly shaped the understanding of psychologists of the history of their field. For example, it was Boring who traced the history of the discipline to the establishment of Wilhelm Wundt’s laboratory for experimental psychology at the University of Leipzig in 1879. 1979/80 was widely celebrated as the “centennial” of psychology and the XXII International Congress of Psychology was held in Leipzig to mark the occasion. Prior to the 1960s, the history of psychology was mainly a pedagogical field and it still is as far as many psychologists are concerned. However, it also became an area of specialization during this decade. This was partly due to a few psychologists adopting it as their main area of interest and partly due to historians of science becoming more interested in the field. A large body of scholarly literature has been produced, including some scholarly textbooks, but this literature exists side-by-side with more traditional textbooks for which there is still a significant demand. There are signs that the history of psychology has been facing difficulties as a branch of psychology in Europe and North America in recent years. However, interest in the field has been growing among psychologists in other parts of the world and among historians of science. This situation will inevitably have implications for the content of the field.

**Keywords:** history of psychology, reflexivity; disciplinary history; scientific controversies; historiography; textbooks; critical history; history of science

## **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a term that has been frequently used in the history of psychology in recent years (e.g. Capshew, 2007; Smith, 2007; Richards, 2011; Morawski, 2014). It has been used in different ways by different authors but one of its common uses has been to point out that psychology involves human beings trying to understand human beings and so the theories of psychologists should be applicable to themselves. The history of psychology provides psychologists with a rare opportunity to stand back and reflect on their discipline and so it is of particular importance in this regard. The history of psychology similarly involves human beings trying to understand the human beings who call themselves “psychologists” and so reflecting on the history of the history of psychology is for historians of psychology the ultimate reflexive step.

## **Scope and limits of the entry**

All histories are selective whether their authors are consciously aware of it are not. The best way to approach this problem is to make the selection explicit and to explain the reasons for it. I have neither the space nor the expertise to cover the history of the history of psychology in every country around the world. I will therefore focus mainly on Germany in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth century.

Germany is widely regarded as the homeland of scientific psychology (Ash, 2003). It is here that the earliest surviving work with the word, “psychology” in the title was published in 1590 (Goelenius, 1590). It was also here that the earliest work with the title, “History of Psychology” [Geschichte der Psychologie] was published in 1808 (Carus, 1808). Germany was also the home of significant figures like Helmholtz, Fechner and Wundt and a substantial literature on the history of psychology was published in German in the nineteenth century and in the years leading up to the First World War.

Both psychology and its history were relatively slow to develop in the United States but they grew rapidly when they did. By the start of the First World War, the United States was the dominant power in psychology and a great deal of literature on the history of psychology was published around the same time. It was also in the United States that what is undoubtedly the most influential work on the history of psychology, E. G. Boring's *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929/1950) was published and it was in the United States that the history of psychology first became an area of professional specialization in the 1960s. The upshot of all this is that, even when the history of psychology is considered on a global scale, both of these countries have played a significant role.

### **Where does the history of psychology begin?**

The point may seem obvious but the history of psychology is dependent on its subject-matter. In other words, without psychology there could not be a history of psychology. It is therefore worth looking at where the history of psychology begins.

Textbooks have traditionally given it two origins. On the one hand, it is usually traced back to Ancient Greece with the work of Aristotle on the soul being particularly prominent (e.g. Watson, 1963). On the other hand, the beginnings of “modern” or “scientific” psychology are usually located in the nineteenth century, with the establishment of Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory for experimental psychology at the University of Leipzig in 1879 being given a prominent role. The American Psychological Association declared 1979/80 to be the centennial of psychology and the XXII International Congress of Psychology was held in Leipzig to mark the occasion. This dualistic account of psychology's origins is often explained with reference to the famous statement by Hermann Ebbinghaus that psychology has a short history and a long past (Ebbinghaus, 1908). According to this view, psychology's history begins when it became an experimental science. Everything prior to it is pre-history.

The purpose of these accounts is clear. Tracing psychology back to Ancient Greece provides it with a long and distinguished ancestry, with Aristotle being what is known in the marriage stakes as “a good catch”. Although only a small part of psychology is, and always has been experimental, tracing the discipline back to the establishment of a laboratory helps to reinforce its scientific status.

Both of these accounts are of questionable accuracy. Discourse about what it is to be human has been a feature of many societies over the years but it was not a part of a specific area of knowledge called, “psychology” until the sixteenth century. It was scattered across a wide range of subjects, including philosophy, theology, literature, medicine and biology, as well as non-Western areas of knowledge that defy classification in these terms. This is still the case today and psychology has to share its territory with these subjects and with the other subjects that are variously called the human, social or behavioral sciences. As Richards (1987) has pointed out, including all this material in the history of psychology would make it so vast as to be unmanageable.

One way of approaching the problem is to look at the origins of the term, “psychology”. Its earliest recorded uses are in the sixteenth century and, as mentioned earlier, the oldest surviving work with the word in its title is from 1590. There is a paper from 1964 in which a Croatian author claims that the term was first used by a Croatian but the work in which it was allegedly used has not survived. The claim is based entirely on a secondary source (Krstic, 1964). This points to a third way of using the history of psychology: to raise the prestige of one’s national or ethnic group. There was a similar situation around the time of the “Wundt centennial” in 1979/80 when some Americans, who were presumably unhappy about the “founder” of psychology being German, began to claim that William James already had a laboratory at Harvard University in 1875. Apparently one of the issues of the American Psychological Association’s *Monitor on Psychology* contains a cartoon depicting Wundt and

James as two western gunslingers battling it out over who had the first laboratory (Hillix, 1980). Yet another example is the more recent claim that all the major innovations in the history of psychology originally occurred in the medieval Islamic world (Brock, 2015).

The book from 1590 was by Rudolf Göckel of Marburg who is sometimes known by his Latin name, Goclenius. Its title is *Psychologia: hoc est de Hominis Perfectione* [Psychology or on the perfection of man] (Goclenius, 1590). As the title suggests, the subject had little in common with what we understand by the term, “psychology” today. It was a form of religious discourse centered on the soul and this is how the term was used in its early years. Another example is a work by Göckel’s former student, Otto Cassman from 1594 titled, *Psychologia anthropologia; sive animae humanae doctrina* [Psychology anthropology or human learning] (Cassman, 1594). Like the term, “psychologia”, “anthropologia” had little in common with what we understand by the term, “anthropology” today. It was a general account of human beings that was subdivided in two parts: “psychologia”, which was concerned with matters of the soul, and “somatologia”, which was concerned with matters of the body. According to Vidal (2012), who has made a detailed study of the original literature from the early years of psychology, the field that we would now recognize as psychology began in the eighteenth century when these religious accounts of the soul were replaced by secular accounts of the mind. Christian Wolff, whose works on rational psychology and empirical psychology appeared respectively in 1730 and 1732 played an important role in this regard (Wolff, 1737; 1738). The term was also widely used in France. For example, Diderot’s famous *Encyclopédie* contains an entry on “Psychologie” (La Chapelle, 1765). The point is that a significant amount of literature on psychology was available in Continental Europe by the end of the eighteenth century (Vidal, 2012). This would explain why the first work on the history of psychology appeared in 1808, more than 70 years before the discipline was allegedly founded in 1879.

### **Early German work on the history of psychology**

The work in question was titled, *Geschichte der Psychologie* [History of Psychology] and its author was Friedrich August Carus, a professor of philosophy at the University of Leipzig. It covers the period from pre-history to his own time and he divides it into stages. Pre-history is said to be marked by fantasy. The second period from 600 to 400 BC is said to be marked by the development of reason. The third period from 400 BC to 210 AD is marked by the incorporation of psychology into philosophy and the fourth period covers the long stretch of time from Ancient Greece to the development of empiricism in the seventeenth century (Pongratz, 1980). It is an unusual book and it was ignored by later historians of psychology with the exception of Klemm (1911). It is notable mainly for its early publication.

Several works on the history of psychology appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. Psychology was institutionally a part of philosophy and this is reflected in some of the work. For example, Friedrich Harms published a history of philosophy in 1878 and devoted the first volume to psychology (Harms, 1878). This was of course the period when psychophysics and experimental psychology were beginning to emerge and some of the work was written with explicit aim of creating a distinct identity for psychology. A two-volume work by Hermann Siebeck is notable in this regard. He opened the first volume from 1880 with the following words: “The need for its own history is greatest for a particular science whenever it is about to enter a new phase of its evolution” (Siebeck, 1880; p. viii). He also refers to it freeing itself of philosophy and becoming a distinct subject with its own research problems and methods. It is also no coincidence that Siebeck centered his history on the mind-body problem and portrayed the history of psychology as an attempt to overcome dualism. This was in line with the contemporary work on psychophysics and the psychophysical parallelism that was popular at the time.

Geuter (1983) refers to this aspect of the literature of the time and points out that much of it was written with the aim of supporting the author's position in inner-disciplinary controversies. Wilhelm Dilthey had explicitly criticized an exclusively scientific approach to psychology in an essay from 1894 (Dilthey, 1894). In the same year, one of his former students, Max Dessoir published a history of recent German psychology in which he divided the field into three areas: *Seelenphysik* [psychological physics], *Seelentheologie* [psychological theology] and *Seelenkunst* [psychological art]. Dessoir also included the study of the occult in his history, a topic with which he was personally engaged (Dessoir, 1894). The phenomenon of using history to support one's position in inner-disciplinary controversies can also be seen in a history of psychology that was published by Eduard von Hartmann in 1901. Hartmann believed that the subject-matter of psychology was the unconscious and this was reflected in the work (Hartmann, 1901).

Hermann Ebbinghaus did not write a history of psychology but his comments on the subject in his *Abriss der Psychologie* [Outline of Psychology] from 1908 are legendary. It was he who famously distinguished psychology's short history and its long past. His other comments show that he thought that psychology had made a radical departure from the past:

When in 1829 E. H. Weber inspired by apparently petty curiosity wanted to know with what fineness two separate touches at different points of the skin can be distinguished, and later with what exactness we are able to tell the difference between two weights laid on our hand ... more real progress was made for psychology than by all the distinctions, definitions and classifications from the time of Aristotle to Hobbes. (Ebbinghaus, 1908; p. 19)

For Ebbinghaus, psychology was a science of laws (*Gesetzwissenschaft*) and there was no part of it that could not be studied with experimental methods. Here we can see the two goals

of creating a distinct identity for psychology and supporting one's position in inner-disciplinary controversies coming together.

Otto Klemm (1911) was not as radical as Ebbinghaus but his history of psychology displays similar goals. He began the work with the famous quotation from Ebbinghaus and, like Dessoir, focussed his history on the recent past. He also distanced himself from Dessoir by discounting what he called, "psychological art" and the study of the occult. As with the work of Ebbinghaus, Klemm combined a particular approach to psychology with the view that it had made a radical departure from the past and had thus established its own identity.

In his account of the early German work on the history of psychology, Pongratz (1980) refers to "fifty lean years" between 1911 and 1963. Apparently only two works on the history of psychology that were written in German were published during this time and one of the two only appeared in English translation. It is by Richard Müller-Freienfels (1935). The other was by Paul von Schiller and appeared in 1948 (Schiller, 1948). Why there was such a dramatic decline in the history of psychology in German-speaking countries after 1911 has never been satisfactorily explained. Pongratz (1980) suggests that the so-called "crisis" of psychology (e.g. Driesch, 1926; Bühler, 1927) led to psychologists being involved with contemporary concerns. However, the same situation existed in the United States and it did not prevent psychologists from publishing work on the history of psychology. Indeed, it could be suggested that the fragmentation of psychology encouraged an interest in its history.

The history of psychology did eventually re-emerge in Germany in the 1960s and - 70s, where it was often associated with the radical politics of the time, but this seems like an appropriate point to shift the focus of the entry to the United States.

## The United States in the first half of the twentieth century

English-speaking countries were relatively late in adopting psychology. Samuel Taylor Coleridge had lived in Germany and spoke German. As late as 1817, he could still write that “psychology” was a word that the English language would do well to adopt (Coleridge, 1817). Further evidence of this can be seen in a lecture by Sir William Hamilton from 1836 in which he apologized for using this “exotic, technical name” (Hamilton, 1836; p. 130). According to Lapointe (1970), the first English-language book with the word, “psychology” in the title was published in 1840 and the first systematic textbook on the subject was Herbert Spencer’s *Principles of Psychology* from 1855 (Spencer, 1855).

With the notable exceptions of Cambridge and London, psychology was relatively slow to develop in Britain. Most British universities did not establish psychology departments until after the Second World War. However, it was picked up by the Americans in a big way so that by the outbreak of the First World, the United States was already the dominant power in the field (Ash, 2003). It was, perhaps not coincidentally, around this time that a large number of American books on the history of psychology began to appear. This conforms to the pattern seen earlier in Germany where the rise of psychology and the rise of its history tend to occur around the same time. Clearly, new disciplines beget new disciplinary histories.

The early literature was diverse. There was G. Stanley Hall’s largely anecdotal account, *Founders of Modern Psychology* (Hall, 1912). Benjamin Rand also published a collection of readings under the title, *Classical Psychologists: Selections Illustrating Psychology from Anaxogoras to Wundt*. (Rand, 1912). James Mark Baldwin’s *History of Psychology: A Sketch and an Interpretation* was written around the time that he moved into philosophy and it displayed his philosophical interests (Baldwin, 1913). This was equally true of the British-Canadian author, George Sidney Brett who published the first volume of his three-volume *A History of Psychology* in 1912. Only a few pages of the third volume dealt

with the recent attempts to establish psychology as a science (Brett, 1912-1921). English translations of German works by Max Dessoir and Otto Klemm were also published around this time (Dessoir, 1912; Klemm, 1914). Presumably they met a need for more coverage of these recent attempts than was being met by the other English-language literature.

1929 was an eventful year in that three textbooks on the history of psychology were published: E. G. Boring's *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929); Gardner Murphy's *A Historical Introduction to Modern Psychology* (1929); and Walter Pillsbury's *The History of Psychology* (1929). The fact that so many textbooks were published around this time suggests that the history of psychology was being widely taught in psychology departments.

Boring's textbook is by far the most important of the three. Some indication of its influence can be seen from a survey that was carried out in the early 1960s. No less than 75% of the respondents reported that Boring's textbook was the sole or main textbook that was used in their history of psychology course (Nance, 1962). It was Boring who expressed the view that Wilhelm Wundt was the "founder" of modern psychology when he established a laboratory at the University of Leipzig in 1879 and his influence can be seen in the fact that 1979-80 was widely celebrated as the "centennial" of psychology (Ross, 1979). Contrast this with Hall's earlier work, *Founders of Modern Psychology* (1912) in which he had more accurately listed Wundt as one of several "founders" of the modern discipline.

There is clearly something psychologically significant about 100 years (Geuter, 1983). Flügel (1933) published, *A Hundred Years of Psychology, 1833-1933* and this was followed by Hearnshaw (1964) whose 100 years ran from 1840 to 1940. It seems to suggest that psychology has achieved a certain level of maturity. This often takes precedence over historical accuracy but the specific choice of 1879 reflects the influence of Boring's work.

O'Donnell (1979) has analyzed Boring's aims in writing the book. Harvard University where he was based was one of the few universities in the United States where psychology

was still associated with philosophy. He therefore had similar aims to some of the early German historians of psychology in making a case for the existence of psychology as a field that was distinct from philosophy. He also belonged to a small group of self-styled “experimentalists” centered on his mentor, Edward B. Titchener of Cornell University who resisted the rise of applied psychology in United States. This development occurred out of need as much as anything else. Whereas psychologists in Germany were generally based in well-funded philosophy departments, psychologists in the United States had to seek funding from non-academic sources that would only support their work if it led to results that they regarded as useful. American psychology had to a large extent grown on the back of the testing was done by psychologists in the army during the First World War (Samelson, 1977).

Boring (1929) repeated the legendary words of Ebbinghaus that “psychology has a long past, but only a short history” (p. vii). He then added: “in general the histories of psychology have emphasized its long past at the expense of its short history” (p. vii). The title of the work, “a history of *experimental* psychology” shows that it was mainly concerned with one aspect of this short history, namely the rise of experimental psychology. This is why Boring traced the establishment of the discipline to the founding of Wundt’s laboratory in 1879. He was simultaneously creating a line of ancestry for himself to the discipline’s founder through Titchener who had obtained his own doctorate after studying with Wundt in Leipzig from 1890 to 1892. The view that Titchener was a loyal disciple of Wundt, which Boring encouraged, was later shown to be false, though the news does not seem to have reached the authors of some introductory textbooks on psychology (e.g. Holt et al., 2015).

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Boring’s textbook. Apart from the influence of the work itself, it formed a template for later American textbooks on the history of psychology and to some extent still does. For example, it was Boring who introduced the now ubiquitous concept of the *Zeitgeist*. I would not be the first to point to “the irony of

yoking a fierce advocacy of experimentalism to one of German Idealism's more nebulous concepts" (Danziger, 2010; p. 13). This is what passed for locating historical events in their wider context and the emphasis was mostly on the achievements of "great men". Ash (1983) points out that Gardner Murphy, who published a history of psychology textbook in the same year, "showed more awareness of the role of general historical and cultural conditions in the history of science and of psychology than Boring did. Examples include references to the role of the voyages of discovery and the commercial revolution in the rise of modern science" (p. 156). This was possibly due to his background as a social psychologist. However, it was Boring's more individualistic approach to the subject that won the day.

It is pertinent to ask how a history of psychology that was unrepresentative of much of the discipline could be so popular and become so influential. Clearly, the emphasis on psychology as an experimental science helped to reinforce its scientific status. This is important in a society that holds science in high regard and is just as important as being able to demonstrate the usefulness of the field. Basic and applied psychology have always had a difficult relationship. They are like the bickering partners in an unhappy marriage who stay together because it is in their interests to do so (Danziger, 1990a).

It is also pertinent to ask why the history of psychology was being taught. After all, natural scientists like physicists and chemists who psychologists have often seen as role models do not usually offer courses in the history of their fields. If students of physics or chemistry become interested in the history of these subjects, and some of them do, they are usually expected to leave these disciplines and become historians of science. A clue might lie in the expression, "history and systems of psychology" that is used not only in common parlance in the United States but also in the official documents of the American Psychological Association (e.g. American Psychological Association, 2006). The 1920s and 1930s are sometimes described as "the age of schools" and, as noted earlier, it led to some

psychologists in Europe declaring the field to be in “crisis”. Books like R. S. Woodworth’s *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* (1931) and Edna Heidbreder’s *Seven Psychologies* (1933) dealt with this situation as well. One of the arguments that has been frequently used by historians of psychology to justify the existence of their field is that it helps students to see the broader picture in what is a diverse and fragmented field (e.g. Henle & Sullivan, 1974). While the history of psychology might help students to understand how this situation came about, it offers few resources for resolving it. The continuing existence of a movement for the unification of psychology provides ample evidence of that (Charles, 2013).

Other work from this time includes the *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* series, which was started in 1930 (Murchison, 1930). A ninth volume in the series appeared as recently as 2007 (Lindzey & Runyan, 2007). Although it is not “history” in the usual sense of the term, it has been a useful resource for historians of psychology ever since.

Psychology expanded significantly during the Second World War, just as it had during the First World War (Capshe, 1999). In spite of this situation, the history of psychology does not seem to have been a priority in the post-war years. This can be seen from the fact that most of the textbooks in the field were new editions of textbooks that had been published before the war. They included the books by Woodworth (1948), Murphy (1949), and Boring (1950). Brett’s three-volume history was also condensed into one volume and brought up to date by R. S. Peters (1953), though its emphasis on the philosophical antecedents of psychology did not make it any more popular with psychologists.

### **The history of psychology becomes an area of professional specialization**

History of psychology was mainly a pedagogical field prior to the 1960s. This was to change in that decade as a few psychologists began to adopt it as an area of specialization and research. There was simultaneously a move among historians of science into the field. The

history of science had been around as a specialty for most of the twentieth century but it had mainly concentrated on the natural sciences up to that point.

Most of the institutions in the United States that are associated with the history of psychology were founded during a brief period in the 1960s. The story of their founding has already been told in detail elsewhere and so it will be given only in outline here (Hilgard, Leary & McGuire, 1991; Vaughn-Blount, Rutherford & Baker, 2009; Capshew, 2014). Three of the institutions were founded in 1965. They are Division 26 (History of Psychology) of the American Psychological Association, the Archives for the History of American Psychology at the University of Akron in Ohio, and the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*.

These developments did not represent a major shift of interest in the history of psychology among psychologists. Referring to the establishment of the history of psychology division of the American Psychological Association, Mayer (1997) wrote:

There was no great groundswell demanding a history division. Less than a dozen persons seemed particularly motivated. It appears that a few activists managed to marshal support from a wide array of friends and colleagues. (p.135)

The same few names tend to appear in the story. Robert I. Watson was the central figure but there were others like David Bakan, Josef Brozek, John Burnham, Marion White MacPherson and John Popplestone. Other developments that occurred during this decade were the establishment of a graduate program in history and theory of psychology at the University of New Hampshire in 1967 and the establishment of the Cheiron Society (Society for the History of the Social and Behavioral Sciences) in 1969. The latter celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2018. This is because its formal establishment was preceded by a summer school at the University of New Hampshire in 1968 (Scarborough, 2004).

These developments did not initially lead to an improvement in scholarly standards. Watson seems to have regarded himself as Boring's successor and his textbook, *The Great*

*Psychologists: Aristotle to Freud* (1963) adopted a similar “great man” approach (Capshe, 2014). Boring was made honorary president of APA Division 26 when it was established in 1965 and he published the opening article in the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, “On the Subjectivity of Historical Dates” in which he discussed the founding of Wundt’s laboratory in 1879 (Boring, 1965). It was hoped that he would take part in the summer school that led to the founding of Cheiron but news of his death reached the participants while the school was taking place. As for Watson himself, he adopted an ahistorical “prescriptivism” in which different eras were judged on the basis of a series of dichotomies, such as mind-body, free will-determinism, and rationalism-empiricism (Watson, 1971). These dichotomies are of course a common feature of psychology questionnaires.

The poor quality of much of the scholarship in the field was highlighted by Robert L. Young, a historian of science originally from Texas who was based at the University of Cambridge in the UK. In 1966, he published a 50-page article in the journal, *History of Science* with the title, “Scholarship and the History of the Behavioral Sciences” in which he criticized much of the work in the field. Young (1966) referred to its lack of professionalism and described it as “an avocation with very uneven standards” (p.18). In particular, he questioned the viability of an area of knowledge that was centered on textbooks. This might seem strange to someone who is used to this situation but we can conduct a thought-experiment on how it would work in other areas of psychology. For example, what would the textbooks on social or developmental psychology contain if no one ever carried out any research on these subjects? They would probably be based on common assumptions or folk wisdom. The view that the history of psychology is an exclusively pedagogical field is based on the questionable assumption that it consists of an unproblematic “story” that can be found in its textbooks. This leads to the further assumption that there is no need for any research.

One of the problems here is that the vast scope of history of psychology textbooks makes it impossible for their authors to check the original sources of their information. Their textbooks were based mainly on other textbooks and, in particular, Boring's work. Young suggested that a moratorium be placed on attempts to portray the big picture with respect to the history of psychology until more research on specific topics had been carried out. The criticism could not have been pleasant for the people concerned and Young later explained his article as the ravings of a Young Turk. However, it did have a positive effect in that it led to a dialogue between historians and psychologists about standards of scholarship in the field and a general improvement in the quality of the historical work (Capshe, 2014).

The 1970s saw the rise of an approach called, "critical history". It was often critical of psychology but it was especially critical of the previous work on the history of psychology. One of its opening shots was an article by Franz Samelson in which he criticized the account of Gordon Allport in the *Handbook of Social Psychology* that the French sociologist, Auguste Comte had "founded" social psychology (Samelson, 1974). Allport's introductory essay had originally been published in the first edition from 1954 and was subsequently published in the second edition from 1968 (Allport, 1968). Samelson showed that Allport could not have been familiar with Comte's work and dismissed the account as an "origin myth". Similar points were made by Benjamin Harris in his analysis of textbook accounts of J. B. Watson's work with the child who came to be known as "Little Albert" (Harris, 1979). In his reply to the comments on his article, Harris (1980) made a distinction between "ceremonial" and "critical" history. An alternative name for the former is "celebratory history".

There is some irony in the fact that Boring's dating of the history of psychology to 1879 led to a great deal of criticism of his portrait of Wundt around the time of the "centennial" in 1979/80. The modern "reappraisal" of Wundt can be traced back to a footnote in a book by Arthur Blumenthal (1970) in which he wrote that "textbooks accounts of Wundt

now present highly inaccurate and mythological caricatures of the man and his work” (p.11). This point was expanded in articles with titles such as “A Reappraisal of Wilhelm Wundt” (1975) and “The Founding Father We Never Knew” (1979). Blumenthal’s aims in reassessing the legacy of Wundt were not exclusively historical. He was a psycholinguist who wanted to recast Wundt as a cognitive psychologist. As Ash (1983) pointed out, his critique of Boring’s portrait of Wundt is subject to a *tu quoque* rebuttal in that he seems to have appropriated his own founding father. Clearly, the tendency to use history to support one’s position in inner-disciplinary controversies was still an important aspect of the field.

Kurt Danziger (1979) joined in the criticism of Boring’s account of Wundt and focussed in particular on Wundt’s methods (e.g. Danziger, 1980). This interest led to a more general interest in the history of psychology’s methods and ultimately to a book that some authors have seen as a paradigmatic example of critical history, *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (Danziger, 1990b).

In retrospect, we can say that the so-called “centennial” of psychology played an important role in the growth of the history of psychology as an area of specialization. Not only was there a great deal of literature on Wundt around this time (e.g. Rieber, 1979; Bringmann & Tweney, 1980), there was also a volume on the historiography of psychology (Brozek & Pongratz, 1980), and other more general work on the history of psychology (Rieber & Salzinger, 1980), as well as reflections on a century of psychology (Koch & Leary, 1985). There were similar developments in Germany where there was also a literature on Wundt (e.g. Meischner & Eschler, 1979; Meischner & Metge, 1980) and more general literature on the history of psychology (Eckardt & Sprung, 1980; Eckardt, Bringmann & Sprung, 1983). The psychologists of the German Democratic Republic (or “East Germany” as it was known in the West) must have been surprised to learn that Wundt was regarded as the “founder” of psychology in the United States but the centennial celebrations provided an opportunity for greater recognition of their country and their profession that they were not going to pass up.

The 1970s and -80s also saw a greater recognition of underrepresented groups in the history of psychology. One of the best-known examples of this genre is *Even the Rat was White: A Historical View of Psychology* by Robert V. Guthrie (1976). There was also a significant increase in the amount of research on women in the history of psychology and this was due in no small part to the increasing number of women who were becoming psychologists. One of the classics in this area is *Untold Lives; The First Generation of American Women Psychologists* by Elizabeth Scarborough and Laurel Furumoto (1985). The latter is particularly well known for a G. Stanley Hall Lecture that she gave at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in 1988 titled, “The New History of Psychology” in which she summarized the changes that had taken place (Furumoto, 1989).

### **Textbooks**

The professionalization of the field should not be overestimated. Several surveys have been carried out on the state of the history of psychology and these show that the subject is typically taught by psychologists who are not specialists in the field (Fuchs & Viney, 2002; Barnes & Greer, 2014; Brock & Harvey, 2015). This situation explains why some of the most popular textbooks on the subject have been written by psychologists who are not specialists in the field either. One of the better-known examples in this regard is the textbook by Duane and Ellen Schultz, which began in 1969 and which is now in its 11th edition (Schultz, 1969; Schultz & Schultz, 2015). It seems that psychologists who are not specialists in the field can more easily identify with textbooks that have been written by someone who is in a similar position to themselves and publishers are primarily concerned with publishing textbooks for which there is a demand. Young’s (1966) characterization of the field as “an avocation with

very uneven standards” (p. 18) is still relevant today. Indeed, it may be more relevant than it was then because the contrast between the work of amateurs and professionals is even more stark than it was when he published his article in 1966. The problems that he discussed still exist. As Thomas (2007) has pointed out, history of psychology textbooks often repeat the same mistakes over and over again. They go uncorrected because their authors tend not to read the professional literature. Their main source of information is other textbooks.

Fortunately, some alternatives exist. Raymond Fancher’s *Pioneers of Psychology* has always been a scholarly work and the involvement of his former student, Alexandra Rutherford in the most recent editions has led to it being more representative of current research (Fancher & Rutherford, 2016). Rutherford is also the co-author of another scholarly textbook, *A History of Psychology in Context* (Pickren & Rutherford, 2010). Critical history has also made an appearance in textbooks in more recent years (Richards, 2010; Walsh, Teo & Baydala, 2016). There is even a textbook that has been written by a professional historian who is perhaps fittingly a former student of Robert Young (Smith, 2013). The history of the history of psychology is best seen in terms of stratification whereby new approaches have emerged but the older ones have continued to exist because there is still a demand for them.

### **More recent developments**

The institutionalization of the field that took place in the United States in the 1960s was largely replicated in Canada and Europe in the 1980s. Branches devoted to the history of psychology were established in the professional organizations of psychology in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain. Journals like *History of the Human Sciences*, *Psychologie und Geschichte* [Psychology and History], *Storia della Psicologia* [History of Psychology] and the *Revista de la Historia de la Psicología* [Journal of the History of Psychology] were established around the same time. A European equivalent of Cheiron,

originally known as Cheiron-Europe but which subsequently changed its name to the European Society for the History of the Human Sciences, was established in 1982. Graduate programs similar to the one at the University of New Hampshire were also established at York University in Canada and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. The British Psychological Society has also established a Centre for the History of Psychology containing archival material and there is a similar archive at the University of Würzburg in Germany.

There were also further developments in the United States. A group of professional historians along with some interested psychologists founded an interest group in the History of Science Society called, Forum for the History of the Human Sciences in 1988. Its aim was to achieve greater recognition for this field within the history of science and it has been largely successful in this regard. Another significant development was the establishment of the journal, *History of Psychology* which the American Psychological Association began publishing in 1998. There has also more recently been the appearance of the *European Yearbook for the History of Psychology* in 2015. The fact that it only appears once a year would suggest that there is a limited demand for material of this kind.

The story is not one of uninterrupted growth. The journals, *Psychologie und Geschichte* and *Storia della Psicologia* no longer exist, while the *Revista de la Historia de la Psicología* is published exclusively online. Clearly, it is difficult for journals in languages other than English to survive in this field.

Perhaps even more significant is the end of the graduate program in history and theory of psychology at the University of New Hampshire in 2009, leaving the program at York University in Canada as the only one of its kind in North America. One of the problems of these programs has been to find jobs for their graduates since psychology departments that are willing to hire a specialist in the history of psychology tend to be the exception rather than the rule (Barnes & Greer, 2016). Graduates of the program at the University of New

Hampshire usually found positions in smaller colleges and universities where teaching was emphasized at the expense of research. It seems that the price one has to pay for having unorthodox research interests is to end up in institutions that do not encourage or support research. It is also significant that the programs at York University and the University of Groningen have changed their names in recent years. The former is now known as “Historical, Theoretical and Critical Studies of Psychology” while the latter uses the title, “Reflecting on Psychology”. These are attempts to make the subject seem more relevant.

There are also signs that some psychology departments are no longer offering courses in the history of psychology in North America (Fuchs & Viney, 2002; Chamberlin, 2010; Barnes & Greer, 2014). Courses of this kind are less common in Europe (Brock & Harvey, 2015; Brock, 2016a). Some of the professional organizations in Europe have been struggling to survive. For example, the Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology of the British Psychological Society has been holding joint conferences with other organizations in recent years because it has not had enough submissions to justify having a conference on its own. There are signs that interest in the field has been growing in Latin America, especially in Argentina and Brazil (Klappenbach & Jacó-Vilela, 2016), but whether such growth can make up for its relative decline in Europe and North America remains to be seen.

The picture is somewhat different in the history of science. As noted earlier, the history of the human sciences has achieved more recognition in this field than it once had. However, that should be qualified with the observation that history of science is a small field that is not represented at every university and it has the problems of funding that beset the humanities as a whole (Nussbaum, 2010). Even where it does exist, the history of psychology has to compete for space with the history of the whole range of the natural and social sciences, and often with the history of technology and medicine as well. A common situation in history of science departments is for there to be one person who covers the history of the

human sciences as a whole. In spite of these problems, there are signs that historians of science have a greater presence in the field than they once did, especially in the United States. For example, the journal of the American Psychological Association, *History of Psychology*, has had four editors since it was established in 1998 and only one of the four was a professional psychologist. The other three were or are historians of science.

Whereas psychologists have traditionally resorted to history to provide their subject with a distinct identity and to support their positions in inner-disciplinary controversies, historians tend to have other aims. A common theme of the literature by historians has been a critical examination the role that psychology has played in society. *The Romance of American Psychology* (1995) by Ellen Herman is an example of this kind. Historians also have their own disciplinary interests. Another common theme of the literature is the importance of history in understanding psychology (e.g. Smith, 2007; Klempe & Smith, 2016).

### **Whither the history of psychology?**

Predictions are difficult to make at the best of the times but one can extrapolate from current trends (Danziger, 1994; Brock, 2016b). The history of psychology will continue as a pedagogical field, largely being taught by psychologists who are not specialists in the field, though it might become less common than it once was. The specialists themselves will continue to have a difficult existence on the margins of psychology. Meanwhile, there will be greater involvement from professional historians and from psychologists outside Europe and North America. This situation will inevitably have implications for the content of the field.

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