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THE STATUS OF THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY COURSE IN BRITISH AND IRISH PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENTS

Abstract

The history of psychology has a limited role in psychology departments. In many departments, the role of the subject is limited to a single undergraduate course, though there are also some departments that do not offer any courses in the subject. Many historians of psychology see the continued presence of the undergraduate course as important for the continued health of the field and there have been concerns expressed over the fact that some departments are no longer offering the course. These concerns have led to surveys being carried out in the United States and Canada but no such surveys have been carried out in Europe to date. The present study goes some way towards rectifying this situation by providing details of a survey of British and Irish psychology departments. The main finding is that the subject is not as widely taught as it is in Canada and the United States. It also tends to be offered as part of an introduction to psychology in the first year, whereas many American and Canadian departments offer a more detailed course in the final year. Many of the other findings are similar. The courses are generally taught by specialists in other areas of psychology who have the history of psychology as a secondary teaching interest. Few departments consider it important to have a specialist in the history of psychology. The view that the history of psychology can be adequately covered by incorporating historical material into other courses, which is commonly held in Britain, is also discussed.

Keywords

history, psychology, courses, Britain, Ireland

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Danziger (1994) has given the following outline of the position of history of psychology in psychology departments:

Departments of physics or chemistry are not in the habit of offering courses in the history of their subjects, yet the history of psychology continues to be taught in departments of psychology. This seems to point to the existence of at least a lingering belief that the history of psychology has a role within the discipline of psychology which the history of physics no longer has within the discipline of physics. But what is the nature of that role? To answer that question, let us apply some further institutional tests. How many university departments of psychology would accept a doctoral thesis in the history of psychology as grounds for certifying a candidate as qualified in the discipline of psychology? Or let us ask how many historical studies are accepted for publication in the standard research journals of the discipline. Such questions only need to be formulated to illustrate the point that tolerance for historical studies diminishes sharply as we enter the serious business of the discipline, its scientific practice. The role that is conventionally conceded to the history of psychology appears to be largely limited to a pedagogical context, the introduction of undergraduates to the discipline's view of itself. (p. 467)

It is easy to be dismissive towards this situation. However, many historians of psychology see the survival of the undergraduate history of psychology course as important for the continued health of the field. History of science is a small field and it is not represented in many universities. Also, as Danziger (1994) points out, history of science departments tend to be dominated by historians of the physical sciences with only a minority of historians of science being interested in the history of psychology. Furthermore, the humanities as a whole have problems of their own in gaining support (Nussbaum, 2010). Within the discipline of psychology, graduate programmes in the history of psychology like the one that Danziger helped to establish at York University in Toronto are rare. The graduate programme at York University is now the only one of its kind in North America. There was a similar graduate programme at the University of New Hampshire but it was discontinued in 2008.

The majority of psychologists who teach or conduct research on the history of psychology are self-taught and it is usually due to exposure to the history of psychology through an undergraduate course that they and the small minority of graduate students who specialise in the field became interested in it. The existence of the undergraduate course also ensures that some of the latter find employment in psychology departments at the end of their studies.

It is this situation that forms the background to the current anxieties that exist in North America over the future of the undergraduate course. It was these anxieties that led to the survey on which our own research is based. Alfred Fuchs, a senior psychologist at Bowdoin College in the state of Maine, was due to retire in the 1990s and he began to wonder what would happen to his history of psychology course when he was no longer there to teach it. Together with Wayne Viney of Colorado State University, he carried out a comprehensive survey of the history of psychology course in the United States. The results were published in the journal of the American Psychological Association, *History of Psychology* in 2002 (Fuchs & Viney, 2002).

The results suggested that a substantial number of psychology departments continue to offer a course on the history of psychology at the undergraduate level and many of them were committed to retaining it. There were also healthy student enrolments in the course, even where it was offered as an option, and some of the departments that had discontinued the course were actively considering its re-introduction. However, the authors also noticed a 'disturbing indication that some psychologists do not value the course sufficiently to commit staffing resources to it, that some departments will drop the course should the present instructor ceased to offer it, and that a number of departments do not require the course for psychology majors' (p. 12).

The anxieties continue to exist. In 2010, the monthly magazine of the American Psychological Association, the *Monitor on Psychology*, carried an article by Jamie Chamberlin with the title, 'Don't know much about history' (Chamberlin, 2010). Echoing the conclusions of Fuchs and Viney (2002), he notes that the psychology departments at Columbia University, Stan-

ford University and Claremont McKenna College no longer offer a history of psychology course. He also refers to the graduate programme at the University of New Hampshire being discontinued. In an interview for the article, Fuchs suggests that it could result in a decline in the number of psychologists specialising in the field, ‘if the course doesn’t exist, you can’t get interested in it’ (p. 44), while another historian of psychology, Dean Keith Simonton is quoted as saying, ‘history may soon be history’ (p. 44). That statement is clearly exaggerated. Although there may be a slight downward trend in the number of psychology departments offering the course, the results of Fuchs and Viney (2002) show that over 80% of American psychology departments continue to offer the course and most of these are committed to retaining it. It has a long way to go before it disappears from the undergraduate curriculum and any decline that can be detected is gradual rather than sharp.

Similar surveys have been conducted in Canada and they have produced similar results. Barnes and Greer (2014) conducted two surveys of Canadian psychology departments in 2007 and 2011. Their findings are similar to those of Fuchs and Viney (2002) with the vast majority of departments offering an undergraduate course:

First, the history of psychology course has, to a certain extent, retained its esteemed place in the curricula of undergraduate psychology: 96% of the departments surveyed listed it as a course offering, and approximately two thirds of undergraduate programs listed it as a requirement for either a major or honors degree. Furthermore, a number of graduate programs required the history of psychology for admission. (p. 162)

However, like Fuchs and Viney (2002), they found cause for concern:

Nevertheless, similar to the findings of Fuchs and Viney (2002), the results from our surveys show that the history of psychology course in Canada is currently in danger of being dropped in some departments for the lack of a qualified instructor; in some cases, it has already been cut. (p. 162)

Barnes and Greer are graduates of the York programme and one of their main concerns is that only a small minority of psychology departments are willing to hire a specialist in the history of psychology. The courses in Canada are usually taught by specialists in other areas who have it as a secondary teaching interest. This was also the situation in the United States.

The similarities between the findings of Fuchs and Viney (2002) and Barnes and Greer (2014) should come as no surprise. There is a great deal of contact between psychologists in Canada and the United States. The Canadian Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association have similar requirements. The latter frequently holds its annual conferences in Canada and many psychologists based in Canada are actively involved in its affairs (Brock, 2013).

What is the situation in Europe? To the best of our knowledge, no surveys of the kind that are reported by Fuchs and Viney (2002) and Barnes and Greer (2014) have been carried out. Our own research on the undergraduate course in history of psychology in British and Irish psychology departments was designed to shed some light on this issue. As with Canada and the United States, the Psychological Society of Ireland and the British Psychological Society have similar requirements and there is a great deal of contact between psychologists in the two countries. It therefore makes sense to include them in the same survey. Clearly, the results are relevant to only a part of Europe but they are a start. We hope that they will lead to psychologists in other parts of Europe exploring the situation there.

The basic qualification for psychologists in the United States and Canada is the PhD and their professional bodies require that graduate programmes in clinical psychology include some material on the history of psychology. Similar requirements for undergraduate programmes do not exist and the inclusion of history of psychology courses in the undergraduate curriculum is based largely on convention. The basic qualification for psychologists in Britain and Ireland is the BA or BSc and so their professional bodies have requirements relating to undergraduate education as well. What is particularly interesting for present purposes is that the British Psychological Society added 'Conceptual and Historical Issues in Psychology', popularly

known as CHIP, to its list of requirements in 2004. However, unlike all the other subjects that must be included in undergraduate degrees, it need not be taught or examined separately. This means that the requirement can be met by introducing some historical material into existing courses; for example, discussing the work of Ebbinghaus at the start of a memory course.

The Psychological Society of Ireland does not currently require that CHIP be taught as part of its approved degrees but its governing body recently decided to make it a requirement. The precise nature of the requirement has yet to be determined but, given that it usually follows the British Psychological Society in setting its requirements, it is very likely that there will be no obligation to teach or examine the subject separately in Ireland as well.

1. Method

Our survey was conducted more than a year before the article by Barnes and Greer (2014) was published. We consequently did not take it into account when designing the research. Both studies seem to have been inspired by that of Fuchs and Viney (2002). However, unlike Barnes and Greer (2014), who asked different questions from those that were asked by Fuchs and Viney (2002), we followed the latter closely in the questions that we asked. This was done to enable a comparison of the results. We will compare our results with those of Barnes and Greer (2014) where it is possible but the main comparison will be with the results of Fuchs and Viney (2002).

It would have been possible to infer the questions that Fuchs and Viney (2002) had used from their published results. In spite of this, we took the precaution of writing to them to ask for a list of these questions, which they kindly supplied. One linguistic change was made to allow for a difference between American and British/Irish English and this was that the word, 'instructor' was replaced with 'lecturer'. The references to the American Psychological Association and its Division for the History of Psychology were also replaced by references to the British Psychological Society and its Section for History

and Philosophy of Psychology. In addition, the question of whether a department subscribed to the APA journal, History of Psychology was supplemented by the question of whether it subscribed to the BPS section publication, History & Philosophy of Psychology. Apart from these minor changes, the questions were taken directly from the survey by Fuchs and Viney (2002).

Initially, three items of information were sought:

1. Name of your institution.
2. Number of staff in your department.
3. Does your department currently offer an undergraduate course on the history of psychology? (Yes/No)

Based on their answers to this last question, respondents were directed to a set of questions for the departments that offered an undergraduate course or to a different set of questions for the departments that did not. The questions for the departments that offered an undergraduate course were as follows:

1. What are the course prerequisites, if any?
2. Is the course required of psychology majors?
3. What is the approximate enrolment in the course?
4. Do you offer a graduate level course in the history of psychology?
5. If you offer a graduate level and an undergraduate course, how does the graduate level course differ from the undergraduate course?
6. Which textbook or textbooks, if any, are used?
7. Does your library subscribe to History of Psychology?
8. Does your library subscribe to History & Philosophy of Psychology?
9. Is the course lecturer a member of BPS?
10. If the course lecturer is a member of BPS, are they a member of the BPS Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology?
11. What is the lecturer's preparation for teaching the history of psychology?
12. If the lecturer were to resign or retire, would the course be removed from the curriculum? If not, would the department search for someone else to teach the course from the present staff or seek a new appointment?
 - a. Present staff.
 - b. New appointment for the course.
 - c. Allow the course to disappear from the curriculum.
 - d. Other (please detail).

13. If a replacement was sought, which selection criteria that would be used?
14. Additional comments or observations?

If a respondent reported that their department did not offer an undergraduate course on the history of psychology, the following questions were asked:

1. Has an undergraduate course in history of psychology been offered in your department in the past? (Yes/No)
2. If so, when was it last offered?
3. Why was it discontinued?
 - a. Poor enrolments.
 - b. Absence of interested staff.
 - c. Absence of staff with relevant expertise.
 - d. Other (please detail)
4. Are there any plans or discussions about reinstating the course?
5. Do you offer a graduate level course in the history of psychology? (Yes/No)
6. Does your library subscribe to History of Psychology?
7. Does your library subscribe to History & Philosophy of Psychology?
8. Additional comments or observations?

The survey was sent to the 119 heads of department in the UK whose institutions offer BPS-approved degrees and the 10 heads of department in Ireland whose institutions offer PSI-approved degrees. Each head of department received a standard e-mail explaining the nature of the research and requesting that they follow a link to the online questionnaire. The e-mails were individually addressed in the hope of getting a higher response. This method differed from that of Fuchs and Viney (2002) who sent out a paper questionnaire and received the responses in the post. This difference in the two surveys probably reflects the increasing use of the internet by researchers in recent years. The use of e-mail helped to cut down on time and cost and made it easier to send out further appeals to complete the survey. These further appeals were needed in order to get a sample of reasonable size.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Response Rate

54 (45.37%) of the 119 heads of UK departments and 7 (70%) of the 10 heads of Irish departments completed the survey. This level of response is similar to that reported by Fuchs and Viney (2002), who had a response rate of 52.75%, and Barnes and Greer (2014), who had response rates of 47% and 63%. In our case, it took three separate appeals to arrive at this figure. Curiously, no responses were received from Northern Ireland. All the responses from the UK were from England, Scotland and Wales. We will consequently refer to these results as 'British'. The results that are described as 'Irish' are all from the Republic of Ireland.

2.2. Number Offering an Undergraduate Course

22 (40.74%) of the 54 heads of British departments reported that their department offered an undergraduate course. However, on further examination, it became clear that 2 of the 22 did not have a specific course. One of the two respondents wrote: 'The history is incorporated into several courses'. The other wrote: 'history covered in several courses'. They clearly assumed that this situation constitutes having a history of psychology course. Given that the BPS requires that 'CHIP' be included in its approved degrees and that all the respondents in the British part of the survey offer BPS-approved degrees, it is safe to assume that this is the situation in the 32 departments where the respondents stated that they did not have a history of psychology course. We will consequently work with the figure 20 (37.04%) out of 54. Of the 7 heads of Irish departments who responded, 5 (71.43%) reported that their department offered an undergraduate course.

These figures are lower than those reported by Fuchs and Viney (2002). Of the 352 institutions with an undergraduate degree that responded to the survey, 286 (81.25%) had a history of psychology course. Barnes and Greer (2014) report an even higher figure of 27 (96.43%) out of 28.

2.3. Accuracy of the Figures for Institutions Offering an Undergraduate Course

Fuchs and Viney (2002) checked a sample of non-respondents in order to find out if the institutions that offered a history of psychology course were more likely to respond to the survey and found no differences between respondents and non-respondents in this regard. Barnes and Greer (2014) did not carry out a check of this kind, though they acknowledge that departments with a history of psychology course were more likely to respond to their surveys than those that did not.

We checked the websites of 33 of the 65 UK non-respondents (50.77%) and found that only 4 (12.12%) had a history of psychology course, while the remaining 29 (87.88%) made no reference to the history of psychology on their websites or stated that it was integrated into other courses. We also looked at the websites of the 3 Irish non-respondents and found that 2 (66.66%) had a history of psychology course while 1 (33.33%) did not. These results suggest that, while the figures for Ireland appear to reflect the situation as a whole, the much lower figures for Britain may be an overestimate due to the tendency of departments that offer the course being more likely to respond.

2.4. Size of the Department

Fuchs and Viney (2002) reported that some heads of departments suggested that the absence of the history of psychology course in their department was due to its small size, the implication being that they only had the resources to offer courses in a limited number of subjects. In order to see if the size of the department was a factor in offering the course, they compared the mean number of staff members in departments that offer the course with the mean number of staff members in departments that did not and found no appreciable difference between the two. Our results for Britain and Ireland were similar. The British departments that offer the course had an average of 25 staff members (range 6–58), while the British departments that did not offer the course had an average of 23.74 (range 10–80). The Irish departments that offer the course had an

average of 15 staff members (range 8–20) and the Irish departments that did not offer the course had an average of 19.50 (range 12–27). These results suggest that the presence or absence of the course in a particular department has nothing to do with its size and is more likely to be based on the importance that is given to the area by an individual staff member or by the department as a whole.

2.5. Required vs. Optional

Whether or not the history of psychology course is required is indicative of the importance that is given to the area. Of the 20 British departments that had an undergraduate course, 15 (75%) reported that the course was required, while it was optional for the other 5 (25%). The average enrolment in the required courses was 118.93 (range 40–220) while the average enrolment for the optional courses was 42.40 (range 12–70). Fuchs and Viney (2002) also found that the enrolment in required courses was higher than that of the enrolment in optional courses, though the difference was not as great (54.67 vs. 34.14). Of the 5 Irish departments that had an undergraduate course, 5 (100%) reported that the course was required.

The percentages for Britain and Ireland are higher than the 51.05% reported by Fuchs and Viney (2002) and the 34.61% reported by Barnes and Greer (2014). These figures suggest that, when the course is offered in Britain and Ireland, it is more likely to be required. However, these figures should be seen in their overall context. Students in American and Canadian universities tend to have more choice in the courses that they can take than their counterparts in British and Irish universities.

2.6. Course Prerequisites

In the United States and Canada, the history of psychology is generally taught in two ways. In some departments it is taken early in the degree and forms part of a general introduction to psychology. However, many departments offer it in the final

year of the undergraduate degree and this type of course is frequently described as a ‘capstone’ course (e.g., Raphelson, 1982; Benjamin, 2010). The idea here is that it should provide a more general view of psychology than the specialist areas of the discipline provide and help to integrate the various parts. Fuchs and Viney (2002) provide no figures for this section but the figures provided by Barnes and Greer (2014) are indicative of this situation. 3 (11%) of the departments offered the course in the second year, 8 (30%) offered it in the third year and 15 (56%) offered it in the fourth year.

Our results for Britain and Ireland suggest that the course tends to play a predominantly introductory role. 18 (90%) of the 20 British respondents reported that there were no prerequisites. All of these except one offered the course in the first year, while 2 offered it in the second year and 1 in the third year. 3 (60%) of the Irish respondents said there were no prerequisites and offered the course in the first year. Of the remaining 2, 1 offered it in the second year and 1 in the third year.

These results provide further evidence that the course is not given the same degree of importance in Britain and Ireland. When the content of the courses is geared towards first-year students who are relatively new to psychology, it is unlikely to be as difficult as a ‘capstone’ course in the final year. This use of disciplinary history was famously described by Thomas Kuhn (1962) as ‘preface history’; that is, history whose function is to provide an introduction to a discipline prior to learning about the discipline itself.

2.7. Graduate Level Courses

Only 2 (3.70%) of the 54 British respondents reported having a graduate level course. Neither had an undergraduate course and so they were not asked the question of how it differed from the undergraduate course. None of the 5 Irish respondents reported having a graduate level course.

These results are dramatically different from those of Fuchs and Viney (2002) who give an average of 62% for the institutions that offered graduate courses. Barnes and Greer (2014) give a figure of 35%. These differences should be seen in the context

of the point made earlier that the American Psychological Association and the Canadian Psychological Association require that the history of psychology be included in their approved clinical training programmes, whereas the British Psychological Society and the Psychological Society of Ireland have no such requirement.

2.8. Textbooks

18 of the 20 British respondents with an undergraduate history of psychology course provided no information or stated that a wide variety of literature was used. Only 2 respondents mentioned a specific text and these were *Pioneers of Psychology* by Fancher and Rutherford (2012) and *Putting Psychology in Its Place* by Richards (2010). 2 of the 5 Irish respondents mentioned a specific text and these were *A History of Modern Psychology* by Goodwin (2008) and *A History of Modern Psychology* by Schultz and Schultz (2011). This seems to be one aspect of the study where a genuine cross-cultural difference exists. American and Canadian universities are more likely to build their courses around a specific textbook, whereas in British and Irish universities a variety of literature tends to be used.

2.9. Subscriptions

7 (35%) of the 20 British departments with an undergraduate course reported that they had a subscription to the BPS publication, *History & Philosophy of Psychology* while 12 (60%) reported that they had a subscription to the APA journal, *History of Psychology*. 3 (60%) of the 5 Irish departments with an undergraduate course reported that they had a subscription to *History & Philosophy of Psychology* while 4 (80%) reported that they had a subscription to *History of Psychology*.

These figures are much higher than the 46 (11.98%) out of 384 departments with a subscription to *History of Psychology* that was reported by Fuchs and Viney (2002). They point out that the journal, which began publication in 1998, had not existed for long when they conducted their research but this

factor alone is unlikely to account for the differences that we found. A possible explanation is the increasing use of electronic journals which universities often purchase in 'bundles'. Thus anyone with access to the EBSCO database will automatically have access to the articles in History & Philosophy of Psychology. In this situation, the journal subscriptions of a department are not indicative of its priorities in the way that they were when journals were ordered in paper form on an individual basis.

2.10. Lecturer's Preparation for Teaching the Course and Professional Membership

1 (5%) of the 20 British respondents reported that the lecturer had a PhD in the history of psychology. Another 4 (20%) said that the lecturer attends conferences and/or publishes in the area. The remaining 15 (75%) referred to courses taken at the undergraduate or graduate level, reading in the area, general qualifications in psychology, experience of teaching the course and personal interest. 1 (20%) of the Irish respondents reported that the lecturer had a PhD in the history of psychology, while the remaining 4 (80%) referred to reading in the area, general qualifications in psychology, experience of teaching the course and personal interest.

Fuchs and Viney (2002) had a similar response:

The most common responses to the question regarding the instructor's preparation for teaching the course were: a prior course or courses at the undergraduate or graduate level; the training necessary to obtain the PhD; reading and self-teaching; years of teaching the course; and personal interest. Respondents often gave one or more of these answers and, indeed, they seem to be related, because very few of the respondents were trained in the history of psychology as a specialized area. (p. 11)

The findings of Barnes and Greer (2014) are more difficult to interpret but in one of the two surveys that they report, two-thirds (66.66%) of the lecturers were described as 'nonspecialists'.

These results will come as no surprise to anyone who is actively involved in the area. The history of psychology

continues to be widely taught in psychology departments but the number of psychologists who specialise in the area is relatively small and, although graduate training programmes like the one at York University have been around for many years, the majority of psychologists who conduct historical research are self-taught.

An interesting finding in our survey, which has no equivalent in the surveys by Fuchs and Viney (2002) and Barnes and Greer (2014), is that 7 of the 20 British courses and 1 of the 5 Irish courses are team-taught by as many as 10 staff members who, in the words of one respondent, 'look after the history and philosophy of their own areas'. In the absence of a single staff member who is interested in teaching the course, a team-taught course would be a reasonable alternative to dropping it completely. However, a course that is taught by a large number staff members would be lacking in unity and is not very different from the practice of incorporating the history of psychology into other courses.

The questionnaire had been formulated on the erroneous assumption that the courses would be taught by a single lecturer. In spite of this, all of the respondents provided answers to the questions concerning professional membership. 12 (60%) of the 20 British departments reported that the lecturer was a member of BPS but only 5 (25%) were said to be members of the BPS Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology. The Psychological Society of Ireland does not have a specialist branch for history of psychology and so the questions for them related to the BPS and its Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology as well. The results were similar with 3 (60%) of the 5 lecturers being a member of BPS but only 1 (20%) was a member of the BPS Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology. The low figure for membership of the latter probably reflects the fact that most of the course lecturers are drawn to the area by personal interest with only a small minority being actively involved in it and even fewer having professional training. These results are similar to those of Fuchs and Viney (2002) who found that 56.35% of the course lecturers were APA members but only 26.59% of them were members of the APA Division for History of Psychology.

One of the respondents in the survey by Fuchs and Viney (2002) suggested that the APA Division for History of Psychology could do more to welcome psychologists who teach courses in the area without being actively involved. The BPS Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology has offered workshops on teaching ‘CHIP’ at its annual meetings in 2012 and 2013 and a special issue of *History & Philosophy of Psychology* on this topic was published in 2015 (Hegarty, Hubbard & Nyatanga, 2015). Both are part of an attempt to improve the standards of teaching the field. We know from talking with the people who have been involved in offering these workshops that they often have mixed feelings about them. On the one hand, they want to improve the standards of teaching in the area but, on the other hand, they do not want to give the impression that such workshops are all that is needed to become ‘qualified’ to teach it. In practice, they take the pragmatic view that they have to deal with the situation as it currently exists and not how they would like it to be. Our results suggest that they could do even more by actively seeking out the psychologists who teach courses in this area and inviting them to become members of the section and to attend its annual meetings.

2.11. Fate of the Course if the Lecturer Retires or Resigns and Criteria for Finding a Replacement

A clear indication of how valued the history of psychology course is in a particular department is whether it would continue the course if the current lecturer retires or resigns. 17 of the 20 British respondents (85%) indicated that they would seek a replacement, with only 2 (10%) stating that they would drop the course completely. One of the respondents wrote ‘unsure’. However, while there is a strong commitment to continuing the course, the way in which a replacement would be sought is revealing. 14 (70%) respondents indicated that replacements would be drawn from the present staff while another 3 (15%) indicated that they would seek a new appointment, with 1 of the 3 stating that the appointment would be part-time. None of the 3 departments men-

tioned expertise in the history of psychology as a criterion in appointing a replacement.

The results from Ireland were similar. 4 of the 5 respondents said that they would seek a replacement from the existing staff. The other said that a new appointment would be made and while some expertise in the history of psychology would be desirable, the person would have to be actively engaged in research in another area of psychology.

These findings are similar to those of Fuchs and Viney (2002) where none of the departments that would seek a replacement mentioned specialist training in the history of psychology or engagement in research. They would look for someone who could meet other curricular needs and who had history of psychology as a secondary teaching interest.

The comment made by one of the Irish respondents about research should serve to remind us that this is an important criterion in making appointments at many colleges and universities. While some historians of psychology have presented arguments for why psychology departments should hire a specialist in the history of psychology (e.g., Barnes and Greer, 2014), they usually ignore the socioeconomic factors that have led to the present situation. Psychologists often argue ad nauseum that their subject is a 'science'. This makes sense in a society where science is highly regarded and usually well-supported. The social sciences and the humanities, in particular, are usually less well-supported. It is difficult to maintain that the history of psychology is a science, however hard one tries, and some psychologists may wish to expurgate it from the discipline because it does not conform to the image of psychology that they want to project. Psychology has also managed to establish a niche for itself in society by claiming to have practical applications and it is difficult to make a case for the history of psychology in this regard either. Far from getting any better, we believe that the situation is likely to get worse and this is because of the changes that are currently taking in colleges and universities around the world and which are particularly well-advanced in Ireland and the UK. The changes are wide-ranging but they primarily involve a reluctance on the part of governments to support them with money raised through taxation and the need to look

for alternative sources of support, such as student fees and donations by private benefactors. In this kind of environment, it will be even more difficult for the history of psychology to be treated on equal terms with the more mainstream areas of psychology.

2.12. Departments that Did Not Offer an Undergraduate Course

34 (62.96%) of the 54 British respondents did not offer an undergraduate course, making them the majority by far. Of these 34 departments, only 6 (17.64%) reported that they had had a course in the past. 2 (28.57%) of the 7 Irish respondents did not offer an undergraduate course and neither had offered a course in the past.

Contrary to the findings of Fuchs and Viney (2002), who reported the courses being phased out over several decades, all 6 of the British departments had dispensed with the course between 2004 and 2011. They were consequently phased out after the introduction of the BPS requirement that ‘CHIP’ be included in its approved degrees. When asked for the reasons behind the decision to discontinue the course, the most popular response was that the material had been integrated into other courses. When the same question was asked of the American and Canadian departments, the most popular response was a lack of interested staff. Integrating the material into other courses was not mentioned by anyone in the American and Canadian surveys, suggesting that the responses of the British departments had been influenced by the BPS requirement. One respondent explicitly stated that the course had been discontinued because it was not required by BPS.

5 of the 6 British departments stated that there were no plans or discussions about reinstating the course, while the remaining 1 department responded with the word, ‘possibly’. By way of contrast, Fuchs and Viney (2002) found that 11 of the 39 institutions that had discontinued the course were considering reinstating it, suggesting once again that the history of psychology course is more popular and/or highly valued in the United States.

2.13. Additional Comments and Observations

The most common response under this heading was to point out that, although the respondent's department did not offer a history of psychology course, the material was integrated into other subjects. As mentioned above, the BPS requires that 'CHIP' be included in its approved degrees, though not necessarily as a separate course. We consequently did not ask if this was the case in British departments that did not offer the course since the integration of this area into other courses could be assumed. However, some of the comments went further than this in suggesting that the history of psychology could be adequately covered in this way and that the existence or non-existence of a separate course was not a matter of any importance. This is presumably why two of the respondents who did not have a history of psychology course stated that they did. One head of department went even further and suggested that it was inappropriate to have a separate course:

The history of psychology is embedded into the general psychology undergraduate course at every level, and that is the standard practice of all module leaders – I am therefore unsure why anyone would want to offer a course on the history of psychology; certainly not from a psychology department (possibly a history department at a stretch).

Does the history of psychology differ from other areas of psychology in that it forms part of the background knowledge of every psychologist and requires no special training or expertise? The existence of PhD programmes in the area, as well as sections of professional societies, conferences, journals and all the other trappings of a specialist branch of psychology, would suggest otherwise, as would the ubiquity of courses on the history of psychology and the large number of textbooks that exist to support these courses.

Something else that would suggest otherwise is that, of the 384 American psychology departments that responded to the survey by Fuchs and Viney (2002), not a single one mentioned teaching the history of psychology in this way or that it might be appropriate to do so. It seems to be a uniquely British view that has been created by the BPS requirement that 'CHIP' be

included in its approved degrees, though not necessarily as a separate course. It is therefore appropriate to discuss the origins of this requirement.

Our first reaction on seeing the requirement was to assume that it must have been the result of a political compromise. We subsequently had an opportunity to speak with one of the people who were present at the meeting where the requirement was introduced and we were told that this was the case. There were those at the meeting who wanted to make history and philosophy of psychology a compulsory component of BPS-approved degrees and those who did not. Watering the requirement down so that the area would have to be included but not necessarily in a separate course resulted in a compromise that was acceptable to both sides. Thus the requirement tells us more about the priorities of many British psychologists than it does about the most appropriate way of teaching the subject.

3. Summary and Conclusions

The most striking difference between our findings and those of Fuchs and Viney (2002) and Barnes and Greer (2014) is the relative popularity of the history of psychology course in the United States and Canada compared to Britain and Ireland. In the United States, an undergraduate course was offered by over 80% of the departments surveyed and the figure of 96% for Canada was even higher. The figure for the British departments was less than 40%. Although the figure of 71% for Ireland is higher, the result should be interpreted with caution given the small numbers (5 out of 7) involved. There is also evidence to suggest that, whereas the figures for the USA and Ireland are a reliable estimate of the figures for psychology departments as a whole, the figure for Britain may be an overestimate due to the departments that offer a history of psychology course being more likely to respond to the survey than those that did not. With postgraduate courses the differences are even starker. The figures for the Britain and Ireland were 3.70% and 0% while the figures for the USA and Canada were 62% and 35%.

Another striking difference is that the course is almost always offered to first-year students in Britain and Ireland and forms part of a general introduction to psychology. The American/Canadian notion of the history of psychology as a 'capstone' course hardly exists. Only 1 of the British departments and 1 of the Irish departments in our survey offered the course in the final year. There was a slight tendency for more British and Irish departments to make the course required where it was offered, with the respective figures for the two being 75% and 100%. This is considerably more than the figure of 51.05% for the United States and 34.61% for Canada. However, this may be a reflection of the broader situation where students in American and Canadian universities tend to have more choice than their counterparts in British and Irish universities.

Where psychology departments had dispensed with the course, 11 out of 39 American departments were considering reinstating it while only 1 of the 6 British departments that had dispensed with the course was considering doing so. None of the Irish departments had dispensed with the course and so the issue of reinstating it did not arise.

It is perhaps ironic given these differences that several American and Canadian historians of psychology have claimed that the history of psychology course is in decline and may eventually disappear. They are clearly operating with the assumption that every psychology department should offer the course. The fact that their British counterparts are not making similar claims would suggest that they have lower expectations in this regard.

Most of the other findings were similar. The courses that are taught by psychologists who are actively involved in the area are rare and the courses that are taught by psychologists who have some formal training are rarer still. Moreover, while it is gratifying to know that most of the departments that currently offer the course are committed to continuing to offer it if the current lecturer should resign or retire, the ways in which a replacement would be found will only perpetuate this situation. Most departments would find a replacement from existing members of staff and, even in the cases where

a replacement would be sought from outside, expertise in the history of psychology is not usually an important criterion in making the appointment. Few departments consider it important or necessary to have a specialist on the history of psychology on their staff. It was suggested that this situation is unlikely to change and, if anything, it will get worse rather than better.

The practice of offering workshops on teaching ‘CHIP’ by the BPS Section for History and Philosophy of Psychology was noted and it was suggested that more could be done to reach out to the people who teach courses in this area instead of expecting them to make the first move.

Finally, the issue of whether it is appropriate to incorporate the history of psychology course into other courses was discussed. The political compromise that led to the CHIP requirement being introduced by BPS has had the unintended consequence that there is now a widespread view to the effect that the history of psychology can be adequately covered in non-historical courses and that this may be the most appropriate way of teaching the subject. Courses in the history of psychology will never be as common as they are in the United States and Canada as long as these views are widely held.

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