

Chapter 1

Historiography – Asking and Answering Historical Questions

Who would want to read a chapter about historiography? What a strange word! And when was the last time you heard anyone use it in a sentence?

We begin this book with a discussion of historiography because an understanding of it is critical to an understanding and greater enjoyment of history. Here is why. *History is not what happened in the past. It is what historians tell us happened in the past.* Thus to evaluate the history that you read, you need to know something about how historians do their work, that is, about how they do their research and the written accounts that follow from that research.

You can enjoy listening to music with no knowledge of music theory, but knowing something about music theory can add much richness to your appreciation of music. You can gaze into the Grand Canyon and marvel at this incredible sight carved by the Colorado River, but your appreciation for its structure and spectacular beauty can be magnified by even an elementary understanding of geology. In the same way, your understanding of history will be enhanced when you have some appreciation for the philosophies and methods that underlie historical research. Those philosophies and research methods are the defining elements of *historiography*.

History of Psychology as a Research Specialty

As noted in the preface to this book, the history of psychology as a research specialty is a little more than 40 years old. In those 40 years, history of psychology interest groups have formed, such as Division 26 of the American Psychological Association, a group of psychologists interested in the history of their field, and Cheiron – The International Society for the History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences – a group of historians, including psychologist-historians, of the social and behavioral sciences. Cheiron has a European counterpart that is one of a number of such organizations to emerge abroad in the past 30 years, including history of psychology societies in Spain, Italy, Germany, and Japan.

As a venue for publishing the new scholarship in the history of psychology, specialty journals have been created in the past 40 years, such as the *Journal of the History of the*

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Behavioral Sciences (founded in 1965) and *History of Psychology* (begun in 1997), both of which are published in North America. Similar journals can be found in Spain, Italy, England, and Germany. Historians of psychology also publish their work in a variety of historical journals of longer standing such as *Isis* (the quarterly publication of the History of Science Society), the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, and the *American Historical Review*, as well as in related area journals such as the *History of Psychiatry*, *History of the Human Sciences*, *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*, and the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*.

Graduate programs have been established to train students in the theory, methods, and content of the history of psychology. The best known of these programs in North America are located at York University in Canada and the University of New Hampshire. Other traditional programs in the history of science, for example, at Indiana University, Harvard University, and the universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania, also train doctoral students who specialize in the history of behavioral sciences.

Archival sources in psychology have grown enormously, led by the Archives of the History of American Psychology, the single largest collection of unpublished materials in psychology in the world, located at the University of Akron in Ohio (see Benjamin, 1980; Popplestone & McPherson, 1976). Historians of psychology make extensive use of archival collections all over the world today. And as interest in the history of psychology has grown, so too has interest in preserving the documents and manuscript collections of psychologists and psychological organizations. Today the manuscript collections of individual psychologists are more frequently being systematically preserved, as are the collections of organizations such as the American Psychological Association (whose archives are in the Library of Congress and at the APA Building in Washington, DC) and the Psychonomic Society and the Association for Psychological Science (whose archives are in the collections at Akron).

With the formation of special groups drawing individuals together with common research interests, the establishment of new journal outlets to publish their research, the formation of new doctoral programs to train students in the new research specialty, and the rapid growth of archival collections providing a rich database for the new research, the history of psychology has emerged as a recognized research specialty in the fields of psychology and the history of science. It is a research field that has been created jointly by psychologists shifting from their original fields of training (for example, cognition, development, personality) to historical research, and by historians of science shifting to psychology from the more traditional research areas of natural sciences and medicine.

Why is history or why should history be important to you **Psychology's Interest in its History**

As a field, psychology has a long-standing interest in its history. History of psychology courses have been taught since the 1920s and today such courses are commonly part of the undergraduate and graduate curricula in psychology. Indeed, the history of psychology course is frequently a required course for psychology majors and for doctoral students as well. For example, the American Psychological Association requires all graduates of accredited doctoral programs in professional psychology to have had some instruction in the history of psychology. So why are psychologists so interested in their own history? Such interest does not appear to be nearly so active in the other sciences.

In trying to answer this question, consider the following quotations from two eminent British historians. One, Robin Collingwood (1946), wrote that the “proper object of historical study . . . is the human mind, or more properly the activities of the human mind” (p. 215). And the other, Edward H. Carr (1961), proposed that “the historian is not really interested in the unique, but what is general in the unique” and that “the study of history is a study of causes . . . the historian . . . continuously asks the question: Why?” (pp. 80, 113). Thus, according to these historians, to study history is to study the human mind, to be able to generalize beyond the characteristics of a single individual or single event to other individuals and other events, and to be able to answer the “why” of human behavior in terms of motivation, personality, past experience, expectations, and so forth. Historians are not satisfied, for example, with a mere description of the events of May 4, 1970, in which National Guard troops killed four unarmed students on a college campus in Ohio. Description is useful, but it is not the scholarly end-product that is sought. By itself, description is unlikely to answer the questions that historians want to answer. They want to understand an event, like the shootings at Kent State University, so completely that they can explain *why* it happened.

Collingwood (1946) has described history as “the science of human nature” (p. 206). In defining history in that way, Collingwood has usurped psychology’s definition for itself. History is not a science in the sense that almost all sciences are experimental. Historians do not do experimental work (except on rare occasions), but they are engaged in empirical work. And they approach their questions in much the same way that psychologists do, by generating hypotheses and then seeking evidence that will confirm or disconfirm those hypotheses. Thus the intellectual pursuits of the historian and the psychologist are not really very different. And so, as psychologists or students of psychology, we are not moving very far from our own field of interest when we study the history of psychology.

In this book you will be reading selections from the scholarly works of the individuals working as historians of psychology today. Among other things, you will learn why James McKeen Cattell’s intelligence tests failed, why Watsonian behaviorism was not the immediate revolution that many histories have touted it to be, and why the incorporation of evolutionary theory into psychology was the impetus to the scientific study of claims about sex differences that promoted the belief in the biological inferiority of women. But it is important that you learn more than just what historians discovered in their research. You should also learn something about the nature of the questions they asked and the methods they used to answer their questions. These are issues of historiography, which is the principal subject of this chapter.

Historiography Defined

As noted earlier, historiography refers to the philosophy and methods of doing history. Psychology is certainly guided by underlying philosophies and a diversity of research methods. A behaviorist, for example, has certain assumptions about the influence of previous experience, in terms of a history of punishment and reinforcement, on current behavior. And the methods of study take those assumptions into account in the design and conduct of experiments. A psychoanalytic psychologist, on the other hand, has a very different philosophy and methodology in investigating the questions of interest, for example, believing in the influence of unconscious motives and using

techniques such as free association or analysis of latent dream content to understand those motives. Historical research is guided in the same way. So in the same way that it helps you to understand psychology by knowing about the philosophies and methods that underlie psychological research, it will help you to understand history by knowing something about its philosophy and methods as well.

One of the principal questions in historiography is “What is history?” That question was mentioned earlier, but more will be said about it in the next section. In answering that question there are related questions to ponder as well, such as: What are historical facts, and who or what determines if a fact has historical significance? Is objectivity possible in history? What is the nature of historical inquiry, and what are the different goals of historians? Finally, what are the resources and methods of research that historians use? Each of these questions will be addressed in the discussion that follows. Concluding this chapter is a brief section on what has been called the “new history” of psychology. Such an introduction to historiography should help you evaluate more fully the content of this book and other histories that you may read.

What is History?

You have read that historians have defined their field variously as the study of the human mind, as the study of causes, as the study of behavior, and as the science of human nature, definitions that make history seem indistinguishable from psychology. Whereas these fields have many commonalities, they are not indistinguishable. As noted earlier, both use empirical methods to answer their respective questions. However, psychology, as a science, makes use of the experimental method. That means the psychologist can select variables for manipulation and then study the effects of that manipulation. The experiment is a powerful tool that allows the psychologist to determine cause-and-effect relationships. The historian is also interested in such relationships, but must infer them from a reconstruction of past events where all of the relevant variables have already been manipulated, in some cases centuries ago. Gilderhus (2007) has written: “For historians, the identification of cause-and-effect relationships establishes meaning and comprehensibility but can never be proven as literally true” (p. 6). History is not a science; however, as Commager (1965) notes, it is “clear that history uses or aspires to use the scientific method. That is, it tests all things which can be tested” (p. 12).

Psychologists typically study contemporary events (behaviors and mental processes), whereas historians study events of the distant past. Both might be interested in the same behavior, but the time frame and the methods are usually distinct. Psychologists are interested in marriage, for example, and they might study marriage using surveys, ex post facto methods, or quasi-experimental designs using a sample of married couples (or perhaps divorced couples). Historians, on the other hand, would be likely to look at marriage, for example, as an institution in Victorian England, and they would be unable to use any of the methods listed above as part of the arsenal of the psychologist. The questions on marriage that would interest psychologists and historians might be similar – how are mates selected in marriage, at what age do people marry, what roles do wives and husbands play in these marriages, what causes marriages to end? But again, the methods of research and the time frame for the events would be different.

History, then, is the branch of knowledge that attempts to analyze and explain events of the past. The explanatory product is a narrative of those events, a story. Henry Steele Commager (1965), one of America's most eminent historians, put it this way: "history is a story. That was its original character, and that has continued to be its most distinctive character. If history forgets or neglects to tell a story, it will inevitably forfeit much of its appeal and much of its authority as well" (p. 3). History is about telling stories, and about the search for information that allows those stories to be told with considerable accuracy (see Butterfield, 1981). And the building blocks for those stories are facts; they are the information historians seek to be able to tell their stories. Facts are not the whole story, but they are the foundation of all good history. Just what is a fact, and who or what determines which facts have historical significance?



Historical Facts and their Selectivity

In *Dragnet*, a popular television police drama of the 1950s and 1960s, Detective Joe Friday frequently reminded the witnesses he was interviewing that he was only interested in the facts – "Just the facts, Ma'am," he would say. Detective Friday, like most people, used the word "fact" to mean some kind of demonstrable truth, some real event whose occurrence cannot be disputed. Yet facts are more elusive, as evidenced in the typical dictionary definition which notes that a fact is information that is "presented" as objectively real. Historians present as fact, for example, that an atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. And because of detailed records of that event, as well as many eyewitness accounts, that fact seems indisputable. It is the kind of fact that Carr (1961) has called the "backbone" of history, facts on which virtually all historians would agree. But there are other kinds of facts.

In addition to the date of the bombing of Hiroshima, historians have also presented a number of facts relevant to the decision made by the United States government to drop that bomb. Not surprisingly, those facts are more debatable. Thus facts differ in terms of their certainty. Sometimes that is because evidence is incomplete and much inference has to be made, sometimes it is because evidence is contradictory, and sometimes it is because of bias introduced in the observation or in the interpretation of these events. Flawed though they may be, facts are the basis of history. It is the job of the historian to uncover these items of the past and to piece them together in an account that is as accurate as can be constructed.

Not all facts are created equal; a few are of great interest to historians, whereas most are considered to have no historical significance at all. Carr (1961) has expressed it this way: "It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Caesar's crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all" (p. 9). He notes that the fact that you crossed the street yesterday is as much a fact as Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, but it is unlikely that anyone will consider your street-crossing as a historically significant fact. So who determines what historical facts are important? Sometimes monarchs do. Sometimes governments do. Sometimes cultures do. And many times historians do. Thus, historians are selective.

Historians determine which facts they will look for and which facts they will not search out. Of the facts they find, they decide which ones they will use and how they

will use them. Consider what we know about ancient Greece in the fifth century B.C. Carr (1961) has argued that our picture of Greece in that time is:

defective, not primarily because so many of the bits have been accidentally lost, but because it is, by and large, the picture formed by a tiny group of people in the city of Athens. We know a lot about what fifth-century Greece looked like to an Athenian citizen; but hardly anything about what it looked like to a Spartan, a Corinthian, or a Theban, not to mention a Persian, or a slave or other non-citizen resident in Athens. Our picture has been preselected and predetermined for us, not so much by accident as by people who were consciously or unconsciously imbued with a particular view and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving. (p. 12)

Selectivity of facts is a part of contemporary history as well, and it is one of the factors inherent in the historian's concern with objectivity.



Objectivity in History

Psychology was a late arrival in the house of sciences. Partly that was because there were many who agreed with philosopher Auguste Comte that the mind was capable of observing all phenomena but its own. A science of the mind would require that the mind study itself, and philosophers like Comte wondered how that could be possible. Surely, they thought, psychology could not achieve the objectivity that is required of the other sciences. Whereas psychology is not without its share of subjectivity and bias, it has grown as a science, and its methodologies, particularly ways for controlling confounding variables, have matured in ways that have greatly increased objectivity. History too has had to face these issues.

Objectivity is a critical goal for the historian. It has been referred to as “that noble dream” and has functioned as the guiding force for history since professional historians arrived on the scene in the nineteenth century (Novick, 1988). Carr (1961) has argued that objectivity is indeed only a dream: “The emphasis on the role of the historian in the making of history tends, if pressed to its logical conclusion, to rule out any objective history at all: history is what the historian makes” (p. 29).

Like psychologists, historians are human too, and they bring to their task a bundle of prejudices, preconceptions, penchants, predispositions, premises, and predilections. Such baggage does not mean that they abandon their hope for objectivity, nor does it mean that their histories are hopelessly flawed. Good historians know their biases. They use their understanding of them to search for evidence in places where they might not otherwise look or to ask questions that they would not ordinarily ask. And when this searching and questioning causes them to confront facts contrary to their own views, they must deal with those facts as they would with facts that are more consistent with their biases.

Bias in history begins at the beginning: “The historian displays a bias through the mere choice of a subject” (Gilderhus, 2007, p. 80). There are an infinite number of historical subjects to pursue. The historian selects from among those, often selecting one of paramount personal interest. The search within that subject begins with a question or questions that the historian hopes to answer, and likely the historian starts with some definite ideas about the answers to those questions.

Bias is manifested in numerous other ways as well. Already noted are the selectivity of facts – a selection controlled to some degree by the historian – and the bias of nationalistic perspective illustrated by the Athenian view of Grecian history as opposed to that history as it might have been told by a Spartan.

Bias is evident too in the data of history. It can occur in primary source material, for example, census records or other government documents, even though such sources are often regarded as quite accurate. Yet such sources are inherently biased by the philosophies underlying the construction of the instruments themselves and the ways in which those instruments are used. Secondary sources too are flawed. Their errors occur in transcription, translation, selection, and interpretation.

Oral histories are filled with biases of the interviewer and the interviewee. Some questions are asked, others are not. Some are answered, and others avoided. And memories of events long past are often unreliable. Manuscript collections, the substance of modern archives, are selective and incomplete. They contain the documents that someone decided were worth saving, and they are devoid of those documents that were discarded or lost for a host of reasons, perhaps known only to the discarder.

Biases are indigenous to the historian's high art of interpretation. Some historians have based their interpretations of the past on the context of the present, an error called *presentism* or "Whig history" by Butterfield (1931) or "present-mindedness" by Commager (1965). Not only do presentists seek to interpret the past in terms of the attitudes and values of the present, but they seek to interpret the past in a way that emphasizes "certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present" (Butterfield, 1931, p. v). To avoid this error of interpretation calls for a different approach that Stocking (1965) has labeled *historicism*: an understanding of the past in its own context and for its own sake. Such an approach requires historians to immerse themselves in the context of the times they are studying.

These are just some of the hurdles that the historian faces in striving for objectivity. They are not described here to suggest that the historian's task is a hopeless one; instead, they are meant to show the forces against which historians must struggle in attempts at accuracy and objectivity. Daniels (1981) wrote: "The requirements of reasonable objectivity do not rule out individual interpretation and judgment . . . there is no final truth in matters of historical interpretation and explanation" (p. 92). There is only the expectation that the story will be as objective as is possible. Carr (1961) has characterized the striving for this ideal as follows:

When we call a historian objective, we mean, I think, two things. First of all, we mean that he has the capacity to rise above the limited vision of his own situation in society and in history . . . Secondly, we mean that he has the capacity to project his vision into the future in such a way as to give him a more profound and lasting insight into the past than can be attained by those historians whose outlook is entirely bounded by their own immediate situation. (p. 163)

In summary, history is a product of selection and interpretation. Knowing that helps us understand why books are usually titled "A History" and not "The History." There are many histories of psychology, and it would be surprising to find any historians so arrogant to presume that their individual narratives constituted "*The History of Psychology*."

The Nature of Historical Inquiry

Historians are clearly interested in the past, and for them to do their work there must be some remnants of the past to be found. If no such traces exist, then there can be no history. History begins, as noted earlier, with the collecting of facts. These facts are then placed into some organized whole that allows for a description of the events in question. In this initial phase of historical research the historian is seeking to answer questions like “What happened?”, “When did it happen?”, and “Who was involved?” In the history of psychology we know that Wilhelm Wundt began laboratory research in psychology at the University of Leipzig in the 1870s. What was the nature of that laboratory? What was the space like? What kind of equipment did he have? Did students work with him in his research? What kind of studies were done in the lab? Who were the subjects (usually called observers) in these experiments? These questions are largely descriptive in nature and are typically where the historian would begin in piecing together the story of Wundt’s psychology laboratory. As noted earlier, historians, however, want to go beyond description. They want to say more than just what happened and who was involved. They want to be able to say “why.” Why did Wundt take up this new line of work at age 47? How did he get the financial support from the university for this new venture? Why were students attracted to this new field?

This second phase is the riskier part of historical inquiry, but it is essential for the telling of the story. Just as the psychologist wants to go beyond merely describing behavior to offering some explanation for why the behavior occurred, the historian has a similar goal. And like psychological explanations of behavior, historical explanations are riskier because they are more speculative. They often are based on assumptions that exceed the data and on rationales that may or may not be accurate. They draw on the biases discussed earlier, including the historian’s underlying assumptions about human motives. The historian is placed in the role of interpreter, trying to make sense of the assembled facts. Hard work and persistence can uncover the facts, but higher skills are needed to excel in interpretation. The great historians, according to Commager (1965), have been the interpreters. And among those, the greatest have been those with exceptional “judgment, originality, imagination, and art” (p. 6). Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1963) has argued that it is in interpretation that history as art is evidenced:

all the elements of artistic form are as organic in historical as in any other kind of literary composition. There are limits on the historian’s capacity for invention, but there need be none on his capacity for insight. Written history, after all, is the application of an aesthetic vision to a welter of facts; and both the weight and the vitality of a historical work depend on the quality of the vision. (p. 36)

It was noted earlier that history is about telling stories. Facts and a striving for accuracy of reconstruction of the past place limits on those stories. But history is a literary form, and in interpretation the literary art is manifested.

Gilderhus (2007) has argued that historical inquiry often proceeds to a third phase in which the historian evaluates the consequences of events. For example, ultimately the war between the United States and Iraq will be put to such historical judgments. Did things turn out well? Ultimately, who benefited from what happened? Would a better result have occurred if the events had happened at a different time or place, or maybe had never happened? Such evaluations, not surprisingly, have led to many

disagreements among historians. Still, these evaluations are part of the intellectual and artistic goals of historical writing.



Contemporary Historical Research

is this true? why?

Historical writing is said to have begun in the fifth century B.C. in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides. These earliest of historians sought to learn the facts of past events, albeit the recent past, that would allow them to render accounts of truth. They wrote of great wars, a subject that has remained a principal theme of many subsequent histories. Indeed, until the twentieth century much of the focus of history was on war and governments, that is, on events that were largely political in nature. Individuals, who were the subjects described in these histories, were kings and generals, individuals who were presumed to be historically important because of the ways in which their actions changed their world. Painters painted these same subjects, composers honored them in their ballads and symphonies, playwrights made them the subjects of the stage, and historians wrote books about them.

Today history is very different; both the subject matter of histories and the individuals portrayed in those histories are far more diverse than anything the early historians would have ever imagined. Historians today still write about the subjects of old, but they also write about common people, people who had no significant impact on a society, but whose common lives reveal something important about the nature of life in that society. In the same way that Pieter Bruegel (the elder) transformed painting in the sixteenth century from portraits of the rich and famous to paintings of the lives of ordinary people, historians of the twentieth century recognized that the standard historical accounts were incomplete. A change in historical philosophy emphasizing social history greatly broadened the definition of history's subject matter. Although much of contemporary historical writing is about politics, wars, and governments, it is also about peoples whose histories were often unreported, for example, women and African Americans, and about subjects that were rarely covered, such as art, marriage, agricultural methods, childrearing, and the care of the mentally ill.

One of the subjects of importance in twentieth-century history is the history of science. Although the typical survey courses in American history still give little attention to the history of science and the incredibly important role played by science and technology in shaping history in the past hundred years, the history of science scholarship is thriving. And the history of psychology and related behavioral sciences is an important part of the contemporary scene. As noted earlier, a number of the articles reprinted in the subsequent chapters of this book are indicative of today's scholarship in the history of psychology. As background for a better appreciation of those articles, the next two sections discuss the resources and research methods used by these historians.



Resources in History

The facts of history can be found in a multitude of places. They are in the books and articles written by historians and others. Those facts come pre-selected and pre-interpreted by the authors, a reality of using secondary sources as previously noted.

The primary sources, although closer to the events in question, are not without their biases. The primary source material ranges widely in kind and includes books, articles, government documents, business sales records, personal correspondence, patent records, taped or transcribed interviews, diaries, court documents, laboratory notes, patient records, association records, and school documents. And the locations too are many: archives, libraries, schools, corporations, small businesses, courthouses, newspaper files, attics, basements, and garages. In the course of a research project, the historian may search a number of these locations, looking at a variety of records. Let me give you an example from my own research, an investigation of the Coca-Cola court trials in the early 1900s that resulted from a federal government suit against Coca-Cola for marketing a beverage with a deleterious ingredient, namely caffeine (Benjamin, Rogers, & Rosenbaum, 1991). (This study is reprinted in Chapter 6 of this book.)

I was interested in this case because it marked one of the earliest instances of a psychologist being hired by a large corporation to do psychological research to be used in court. The case began when Harvey Wiley, a chemist and important administrator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, directed federal agents to seize a shipment of Coca-Cola syrup as it crossed state lines from Georgia into Tennessee. The trial was scheduled to begin in the spring of 1911, and as the Coca-Cola Company prepared for its defense, it realized that it had no behavioral data on the effects of caffeine on humans. So it hired a recently graduated psychologist, Harry Hollingworth, to do that research. The case progressed through three trials, starting in Chattanooga, followed by another trial before the Appeals Court in Cincinnati, and finally in 1916 before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The search for the information needed to tell that story led to a number of places. The papers of Harry Hollingworth were found at the Archives of the History of American Psychology at the University of Akron in Ohio. Other relevant Hollingworth materials were found at the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln, whose collection included a 600-page unpublished autobiography that Hollingworth had written in 1940. Harvey Wiley's papers were found at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Also there were the papers of James McKeen Cattell, a psychologist who had been contacted by Coca-Cola about doing the research, but who declined the offer.

The court records from the three trials were found in National Archives repositories in Atlanta, Chicago, and Washington, DC. The court record from the Chattanooga trial alone was more than 3,000 pages. Other important documents were found at the Coca-Cola Archives located in Atlanta and in the Coca-Cola Papers located at Emory University, also in Atlanta.

Published sources included the scientific literature on caffeine prior to 1911; biographies of Wiley, including an autobiography; books and articles on the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, which was the law used to seize the shipment; histories of the Coca-Cola Company; magazine articles written by Wiley on the dangers of caffeine; the daily local newspaper coverage of the three trials (from microfilm records); Coca-Cola advertisements in magazines from 1906 to 1915; and Hollingworth's own published account of his caffeine studies, and the subsequent reviews of those studies and citations of that research in later books and journal articles.

History research is often like detective work; the search for one piece of evidence leads to the search for another and another. One has to follow all leads, some of which produce no useful information. When all of the leads have been exhausted then you can analyze the facts to see if they are sufficient for telling the story. In the case of the Coca-Cola trials, that search required almost 15 years. It was not a full-time effort, but

it is indicative of the time typically required in historical studies, particularly those that have produced landmark books.

Archival Research

Contemporary research in the history of psychology makes great use of archival collections. Archival research does not constitute a methodology *per se*; rather, it is related to research goals, the nature of the archival materials, the finding aids that exist, and the search strategies employed. Undoubtedly the most comprehensive guide to locating a particular manuscript collection is the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*, a reference guide to collections throughout the United States. Although this reference work contains listings of thousands of collections, it is certainly not complete. Its accuracy depends on archives sending in descriptions of their collections to the *Catalog's* editor. Many archives do not do that for their smaller collections, so often those go unlisted.

A number of guides to archival collections exist (see Larsen, 1988), many of them organized by disciplinary field. For example, there is a guide to manuscript collections in psychology and related areas, compiled by Michael Sokal and Patrice Rafail (1982), that describes more than 500 collections in North America. This book is an excellent place to begin searching for archives and manuscript collections; its date, however, means that a number of psychology collections deposited since it was published will not be listed. A typical listing from that book is as follows for Robert M. Yerkes, who was the psychologist who led the development of the intelligence testing program for World War I and was one of the principal comparative psychologists of his time, known especially for his work with primates.

Yerkes, Robert Mearns, 1876–1956

Papers, 1898–1956, 1275 folders.

In Yale University Library (New Haven, Connecticut)

Correspondence from professional colleagues and incidental writers totaling 1,787 correspondents. Files cover Yerkes's service to three universities: Harvard (1901–1917), Minnesota (1917–1919), and Yale (1924–1958). Records cover service in two World Wars, including the organization of Army Mental Testing, service to the American Psychological Association, and his work with the National Research Council. Correspondence includes matters of editing the *Journal of Comparative Neurology and Psychology* and the *Journal of Animal Behavior*, and the founding and development of the Yale Laboratory of Primate Biology. Major correspondents include James R. Angell, Edwin G. Boring, Mary W. Calkins, G. Stanley Hall, Alfred Kinsey, Zing Yang Kuo, Edward B. Titchener, Margaret F. Washburn, John B. Watson, and others.

These papers were crucial for the research and writing of Donald Dewsbury's (2006) book, *Monkey Farm: A History of the Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology, Orange Park, Florida, 1930–1965*, that tells the fascinating story of the researchers and research that comprised America's most important primate research center. Although the research for that book involved many sources other than the Yerkes Papers, it is doubtful that the book could have been written had those papers not been preserved.

Typically, the descriptions of manuscript collections indicate the size of the collection, the range of years covered by the materials, the principal subject matter of the collection, the names of major correspondents, the location of the collection, and

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whether or not there are any special restrictions in using the collection. The listings in the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* use a similar format and can be found online at <<http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc>>.

All archives have a set of finding aids to help the researcher locate relevant materials. Some finding aids are more comprehensive than others. They include inventories of the various collections, indexes to correspondents, and name and subject indexes that cut across collections in the archives. Many of these finding aids are now in electronic form on the websites of the institutions where the particular manuscript collection is located. Thus, in many cases, contemporary historians can use the Web to see what is in an individual's personal papers, but they will most likely have to visit the archives in person to see the papers themselves. Still, despite the best of research strategies, good luck is often as important as diligence. As Brozek (1975) has described it, "In comparison with a history based on already published materials, archival research is apt to be a 'higher risk, higher gain' operation" (p. 15). Hill (1993) also has acknowledged the riskiness of archival work: "Investigations in archives simply cannot be predicted . . . That for me is an attraction, but to others it may seem too indeterminate, too risky" (p. 6). Despite its high-risk nature, archival research provides us with unique value in historical research because the material is itself unique.

Cadwallader (1975) listed the following as the special values of archival labors: unsuspected aspects of history may be discovered, unsuspected personal influences may be revealed, professional politics can be seen to influence personal careers and thus the shape of history, and a more balanced picture of an individual's personality is often revealed through her or his personal correspondence and diaries.

In archival research, one typically begins in one archival collection and then pursues related material through other archives, following wherever the leads suggest one goes. Collections are rarely, if ever, complete. Some documents relating to important questions are almost always missing. Occasionally, documents that were once part of the collection are missing, sometimes stolen by an unscrupulous "scholar." Some materials may be inaccessible, sealed until a certain time because of donor restrictions. Other problems include finding only one side of a correspondence, a problem partially alleviated by the invention of carbon paper in the 1920s, and sometimes solved by finding the other side in another archive.

Perhaps the greatest "problem" in archival research is one of its joys; it is the continual distraction presented by materials not related to the research purposes at hand. I refer to this disorder as *Documentus distractus*, a condition that produces disorientation and distortions in time perception. The affected researcher begins to read documents that are wholly irrelevant to the research effort. In its acute form, this disease greatly prolongs the time required for completion of the intended project. The more serious chronic form typically causes the researcher to abandon one project for a new one that is subsequently abandoned, and so forth, and so forth. Although this problem uses up valuable time in the archives intended for use on the target project, the experienced archival researcher learns to accept it. These distractions often produce discoveries that are quite informative. In my own research, for example, I once pulled two folders from an archival box, when I had meant to look only at the first folder. The second was marked "PRT," and reading the few letters it contained led me to discover a secret psychological society founded in 1936 which was called the Psychological Round Table, a by-invitation-only organization of young, male experimental psychologists, run by a group known as the Secret

Six. This secret society still exists today (women were admitted beginning in 1971), meeting annually, and kicking out attendees once they have turned 40 years of age (see Benjamin, 1977).

Sometimes these serendipitous events refuse to be ignored. Gloria Urch (1992) was searching the records in a county historical society when she discovered Rachel Harris, whom she described as perhaps the only African American nurse during the United States Civil War era:

I was looking for something else when I found her photo. . . . I held it for a moment and studied it. . . . I put her photo aside and continued my research. A few minutes later the photo – which I thought I had placed securely on the shelf above me – fell into my lap, and those same eyes were gazing up into mine again. Before I left that day I made a copy of Rachel's photo and obituary and tucked it away. (p. 8)

And that discovery started Urch on her quest to learn about the life and career of this unknown nurse.

Note that the discovery of Rachel Harris began with perhaps a casual interest in finding out a bit more about this nineteenth-century nurse. Intellectual curiosity usually begins the search; the excitement over discovery often comes later. Archival work is a source of great pleasure to historians, a point that is typically difficult for others to realize. The hours spent in these collections go by all too quickly. Often the researcher is waiting at the door when the archive opens in the morning and has to be told to leave at closing time. The hours in between are arguably the most enjoyable for the historical worker. Michael Hill (1993) has described the joys of archival research in this way:

Archival work appears bookish and commonplace to the uninitiated, but this mundane simplicity is deceptive. It bears repeating that events and materials in archives are not always what they seem on the surface. There are perpetual surprises, intrigues, and apprehensions. . . . Suffice it to say that it is a rare treat to visit an archive, to hold in one's hand the priceless and irreplaceable documents of our unfolding human drama. Each new box of archival material presents opportunities for discovery as well as obligations to treat the subjects of your . . . research with candor, theoretical sophistication, and a sense of fair play. Each archival visit is a journey into an unknown realm that rewards its visitors with challenging puzzles and unexpected revelations. (pp. 6–7)

The papers of important psychologists are spread among archives and libraries all over the world. In the United States you will find the papers of William James and B. F. Skinner in the collections at Harvard University. The papers of Hugo Münsterberg, a pioneer in the application of psychology to business, can be found at the Boston Public Library. The papers of Mary Whiton Calkins and Christine Ladd-Franklin, important early contributors to experimental psychology, can be found at Wellesley College, and Vassar College and Columbia University respectively. The Library of Congress includes the papers of James McKeen Cattell and Kenneth B. Clark. Cattell was one of the founders of American psychology and a leader among American scientists in general, and Clark, an African American psychologist, earned fame when his research on self-esteem in black children was cited prominently in the U.S. Supreme Court decision that made school segregation illegal (*Brown v. the Board of Education*, 1954).

As noted earlier, the single largest collection of archival materials on psychology anywhere in the world is the Archives of the History of American Psychology (AHAP), located at the University of Akron. This archive opened in 1965 and has grown enormously in the size and importance of its collection. Today it contains the papers of more than 800 individuals and organizations. In addition to the extensive manuscript collections of unpublished materials, AHAP also contains more than 1,000 pieces of early psychological apparatus, a collection of more than 8,000 psychological tests, 15,000 photographs, 6,000 reels of movie film, and a large collection of rare books in the history of psychology. The collection includes the papers of such psychologists as Abraham Maslow, Mary Ainsworth, Henry H. Goddard, Harry and Leta Stetter Hollingworth, Kurt Lewin, Walter Dill Miles, and Carolyn E. Spurgeon, and of such organizations as the American Group Psychotherapy Association, the Association for Humanistic Psychology, and the Midwestern Psychological Association.

The archive at Akron, although unique as a central repository for American psychology, is one of many archival collections available to researchers interested in psychology's past. As you read the articles in this book written by researchers in the history of psychology you will see the pervasive influence of archival materials on contemporary scholarship.



Oral History

Gertrude McArthur - John V. Hanasoff 1923-1995

When the events of interest are historically recent, that is within the last 75 years or so, a source of information for the historian is the oral history. The oral history is an autobiographical account, a personal history, usually in response to an interviewer and recorded on audio or video tape. Oral history research:

is a test of other people, of the accuracy of their memories, of their ability to assess their own lives realistically, and of their ability to profit from experience. In a sense it is a test of other people as historians, a test of how well they can deal with their personal histories. But oral history research is also a test of ourselves, of our ability to deserve and win the confidence of other people, of our ability to deal sympathetically but honestly and imaginatively with their memories, and of our ability to deal honestly with ourselves. (Hoopes, 1979, p. 5)

The oral historian, who is the person who will serve as the interviewer, must prepare carefully for the oral history. Following contact with the person to be interviewed, the oral historian collects relevant documents, perhaps including unpublished materials such as correspondence, and asks for names of persons (colleagues, friends, students) who might be contacted prior to the interview. The interviewer should read whatever books and articles are relevant to the subject, including any written by the interviewee and those written about that individual's life or work. At the end of the preparation, the oral historian should be *very familiar* with the facts surrounding the content of the history to be taken. Typically an outline is prepared that lists the topics and subtopics to be covered in the interview.

The rules for the conduct of the interview can be quite specific (see Hoopes, 1979; Lummis, 1987; Ritchie, 2003). They describe acceptable limits for socializing, the balance that must be struck between leading the interview and dominating it, and

procedures for following up on questions to complete the record, and backing off when the interviewee does not wish to pursue discussion in a particular area. Usually a transcript is typed from the tape, in part to protect preservation of the taped material. Often the transcript is sent to the interviewee for editing to promote accuracy (see Baum, 1981).

In short, an oral history is not a casual chat between interviewer and interviewee, although some “histories” are taken in that way. An oral history will be as valuable as the preparation that goes into it. Professional oral historians know that and prepare, often for months, for an encounter that may last only a day or two, or even a few hours. They are knowledgeable about both the method and the content of the interview. As a result, the quality of their product is significantly better than that of interviewers who are more casual in their approach.

Some archives, recognizing the unique value of oral histories, have collected these personal accounts. The Archives at the University of Akron has a large collection of these histories in psychology. Two collections of approximately 175 oral histories on the subjects of child development and child guidance are housed in the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland. Another large collection of more than 140 oral histories of American psychologists can be found in the American Psychological Association Archives. And a similar collection of tapes and transcripts of more than 100 Canadian psychologists is housed in the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

Often oral history data are criticized on the basis of poor reliability. Because the oral history may involve recall of events many years in the past, that recall is suspect. Further, the interviewee is not always forthright in answering questions and may slant answers, even unintentionally, in a self-serving way. That is, the person being interviewed may respond “truthfully” but it will be the truth as they wish to remember it. These problems with oral history data are both significant and controversial. Some historians have argued that both problems – problems of recall and bias – should be addressed in order to reduce the error in oral histories. They suggest that to deal with errors of recall, one should try to corroborate the testimony with written records or with the testimony from other individuals who would have knowledge of the same events. In terms of the personal bias of the subject, they suggest interviewing other persons who would have reason to hold different biases, thus broadening the perspective on the content in question. Of course, sometimes those cross-checks are not possible.

Trevor Lummis (1987) has questioned the critics who have labeled oral history data as unreliable. He has argued that “The value of oral evidence as a historical source must ultimately be established within its own authenticity. If it is accepted as authentic only when confirmed by documentary sources then one might as well use the documents” (p. 155). He reminds the critics that documentary evidence is not without its own bias, as we have noted earlier, and that “history does not happen in documents. Human activity happens” (p. 13) before being recorded by someone. And clearly there is opportunity for biases being introduced in that recording. For Lummis and his colleagues in oral history, oral histories provide historical evidence of independent value. These proponents of oral history do not deny the flaws of this method, and they take steps in the evaluation of oral history data to minimize errors of fact and interpretation. Still, they argue for the special value of oral histories as sources for personal feelings and motives, information that may be impossible to recover from any other kind of historical evidence.

In summary, oral history data are valuable in their own right and as a complement to other data sources in history. In some cases they may be the only data, for example, in situations where no written records were made. They are particularly valuable in revealing personal information about emotions and motives, about self-awareness, and about personality. These important records can significantly enhance the historian's role in the telling of stories.

Quantitative Methods

Although quantitative methods have enjoyed popularity in a number of historical fields (see Jarausch & Hardy, 1991), they have become part of the historiography of psychology only in the past 35 years, and then only marginally so. Content analysis and citation analysis are two of the more frequently used quantitative approaches in psychology, and in recent years both have benefited considerably from the convenience of computer analysis and online sources.

Content analysis is a method that converts verbal, written, or other kinds of symbolic material into categories and numbers in order that statistical operations might be performed on the material (see Holsti, 1969). The method is typically used to quantify material that is largely qualitative in nature. Although the method is not without its critics, its use has brought some degree of objectivity and meaning to subject areas that were often in great disarray. One begins by formulating a system of classification, that is, a system of categories that are usually mutually exclusive. Those categories should be clearly defined so that there will be good interjudge reliability in determining what material should be included in what categories. Further, the unit of analysis must be specified: words, phrases, sentences, headings, pages, or chapters.

Some examples of historical questions and materials that could be subjected to content analysis are: What were the intellectual themes expressed in William James's letters? How did research methodologies change over time in the articles of the *American Journal of Psychology* between 1887 and 1930? What common themes can be found in the presidential addresses for the American Psychological Association from 1892 to 1940? Virtually any written materials can be subjected to content analysis, for example, psychology department catalogs, oral history transcripts, laboratory notes, and introductory psychology textbooks. For an example of its use in psychology see Cardno's (1965) analysis of Victorian psychology.

In short, the strategy in using content analysis is to choose a content domain of interest, develop appropriate categories for the analysis, decide on the unit of analysis, and then analyze the content domain. Often the analysis will reveal features of the material that were not apparent in merely reading that material.

Citation analysis, or citation indexing as it is sometimes called, is the study of relationships of published material through an analysis of citation networks (see Garfield, 1964, 1979). As it is used in history, the purpose is often to find the influence of a particular publication or publications on subsequent writing in the field, or to trace the evolution of ideas through a quantitative analysis of citations.

A major development in this field has been the work of the Institute for Scientific Information, which publishes the *Science Citation Index* (begun in 1963) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index* (begun in 1973). Both indexes are now online (see ISI Web of Knowledge, available through many library computers). These indexes provide one measure of the importance of a particular publication, that is, how frequently that

publication is cited. Other questions that could be answered using citation analysis include: In what subfields of psychology is the publication cited? Does the frequency of citations increase or decrease over the years? Thus, from the point of view of the historian, one can get answers to questions about the influence of a particular theory and the evolution of ideas, that is, the issues of intellectual history in psychology. By examining who is doing the citing, one can trace the influence of a particular publication.

If you would like to see some examples of how this technique is used in history of psychology research, see Elizabeth Scarborough's (1971) analysis of the influence on contemporary psychology of an 1868 paper on mental reaction time written by F. C. Donders, Josef Brozek's (1980) study of the decay of Wilhelm Wundt's influence in American psychology, Franz Samelson's (1981) analysis of the influence of John Watson's 1913 behaviorist manifesto (included in Chapter 8 of this book), Darryl Bruce and Gene Winograd's (1998) study of the differential reception of James Deese's memory research, and Lydia Lange's (2005) analysis of publications in psychology that were cited immediately as opposed to others that were only discovered years later.

Other quantitative methods have also been used in historical research in psychology, such as a hypothesis-testing procedure known as *historiometry*. This method is actually more than 100 years old, but has been applied to historical questions in psychology in recent years largely through the work of Dean Keith Simonton (1990). He defines historiometry as the use of quantitative techniques to test hypotheses about the behavior of historical individuals. The ultimate goal of historiometry is the discovery of general principles that are descriptive of a certain class of individuals, for example, Nobel Prize winners, generals, composers, and presidents of the American Psychological Association. The method begins with defining a hypothesis in components that are quantifiable, and then testing that hypothesis. In Simonton's own work he has used this technique to investigate the causal relationship between war and scientific discovery, the relationship of creative productivity and age, the factors associated with greatness in American presidents, and the genius and creativity of individuals important in the history of psychology.



The New History of Psychology

*What is this?
exactly*

In the middle of the 1970s, as the history of psychology specialty began its second decade, it underwent a change that many would argue reflected an important maturational step for the field (Furumoto, 1989). Research and writing in the history of psychology progressed from ceremonial history to critical history, a change that mirrors historical evolution in other fields as well. The "new history" movement came from both psychologist historians and from historians of science who were working in the history of psychology. They called for a number of changes in the way the history of psychology was being done; most of those changes were conceptual rather than methodological.

First, advocates of the new history called for a more critical history that examined the givens that form the myths of psychology. They cautioned against the fictions that were often created in moments of celebration and ceremony (for example, the hundredth anniversary of Wundt's laboratory). They asked for a more objective evaluation of individuals and events, and called for histories that adopted new perspectives in looking at familiar subjects. The celebration of the centennial of the American

Psychological Association in 1992 is a case in point. As part of the celebration of that event, historian Michael Sokal (1992) wrote an article on the origins of the APA, providing a somewhat unflattering portrait of G. Stanley Hall, APA's founder and first president. Likely that article, critical of Hall, would not have been written 20 years earlier in the history of psychology. Critical history does not mean character assassination of the idols of psychology's past. Rather it is a thorough and objective examination of the record, published and unpublished, that allows the chips to fall where they may.

In terms of resources, the new history of psychology has made greater use of archival sources and primary documents, understanding the importance of those as the raw data of history. And in terms of philosophy, there has been greater attention to the dangers of interpretive errors, such as presentism. There has also been a much greater interest in *intellectual history*, that is, focusing on the developmental history of ideas rather than on the great personalities of psychology.

Perhaps of greatest importance, the new history of psychology has adopted what is often called an externalist approach, contrasted with the internalist work of the old history of psychology (Hilgard, Leary, & McGuire, 1991). *External histories* are those that move outside of the narrow confines of the discipline to recognize the broader socio-cultural context in which psychology has emerged. For example, one could write a history of business psychology that focused entirely on the early psychologists who did contract research for various businesses. That is, the story would be told by staying solely within that segment of the discipline of psychology. But such an internalist history would be an impoverished one. It would not only misrepresent the history of business psychology in terms of errors of omission, but it would distort that history by ignoring a potential host of external variables that shaped what was happening within psychology. Clearly psychology does not exist in a vacuum. What happens in psychology influences events outside of psychology, and, of greater importance, events outside of psychology shape the field considerably. An external history means that the history of psychology is told in the context of the social, cultural, political, economic, and geographic factors that affect it.

Another part of the new history of psychology comes from a philosophy that is variously described as *postmodernism* or *deconstructionism*, a philosophy of history that emphasizes context and evidences a critical attitude toward the aims of science (Anderson, 1998). These historians presuppose science as an enterprise guided by political or social or economic agendas, rather than an objective and honest search for the truth. Such a deconstructionist approach has not been without criticism from other historians, who see it as historical bias at its worst (see Bruce, 2000; Popplestone, 2004; Zammito, 2004). This controversy is indicative of the ongoing historiographic debates in psychology, and more broadly in the history of science.

The impact of the new history of psychology has been a richer product for both the scholar and the student of history. It has encouraged scholarship in new fields, particularly in social history, and especially so with regard to the psychology of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and racial identity (see, as examples, Guthrie, 1998; Philogène, 2004; Pickren, 2004; Winston, 2004). That work, like the rest of the new history, has reminded us of the critical importance of painting history with the broad brush of context.

The contemporary selections reprinted in this book are representative of this new history. As you read these selections, I encourage you to keep in mind the lessons of this chapter. See if you can identify the questions that led the authors to their research.



What methods did they use? What are the facts of their stories and where did they uncover those facts? What archival records were used? What conclusions did they draw, and do those conclusions seem supported by the evidence? Would you draw different conclusions from the evidence and arguments presented, and why? With your knowledge of historiography you should have a greater appreciation of the important stories that these historians tell.

Do this!

