The seats on the train of progress all face backwards: you can see the past but only guess about the future. Yet a knowledge of history, although it can never be complete and fails miserably to foretell the future, has a huge capacity for adding significance to the understanding of the present.
—E. G. Boring, 1963a

PREVIEW AND CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This chapter opens by describing the origins of psychology’s interest in its past and the reasons why it is important to know and appreciate history. A contrast will be drawn between traditional histories of psychology, which emphasize the contributions of distinguished psychologists, the outcomes of famous experiments, and the debates among adherents of different “schools” of psychology, and a newer approach, which tries to situate events and people into a broader historical context. This chapter also considers the methods used by historians to conduct research in history, and the problems they face when constructing a historical narrative from the accumulated data. After you finish this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the events during the 1960s that led to a renewed interest in psychology’s history
- Explain the reasons why it is important to understand history in general
- Explain the reasons why it is especially important for students of psychology to understand psychology’s history
- Distinguish between “old” and “new” history, as psychologist/historian Laurel Furumoto used the terms
- Distinguish between presentist and historicist views of history and articulate the dangers of presentist thinking
- Distinguish between internal and external histories of psychology and the benefits of examining each
- Explain the appeal of and the problems with a personalistic approach to history
- Describe a naturalistic approach to history, the kind of evidence used to support it (e.g., multiples), and its limitations
- Define historiography and describe the selection and interpretation problems faced by historians
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING PSYCHOLOGY'S HISTORY

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources of historical information and describe the kinds of primary source information typically found by historians in archives
- Explain how the process of doing history can produce some degree of confidence that truth has been attained

PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS HISTORY

One hundred is a nice round number and a one-hundredth anniversary is ample cause for celebration. In recent years, psychologists with a sense of history have celebrated often. The festivities began back in 1979, with the centennial of the founding of Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory at Leipzig, Germany. In 1992, the American Psychological Association (APA) created a yearlong series of events to commemorate the centennial of its founding in G. Stanley Hall's study at Clark University on July 8, 1892. During the centennial year, historical articles appeared in all of the APA's journals and a special issue of American Psychologist focused on history; several books dealing with APA's history were commissioned (e.g., Evans, Sexton, & Cadwallader, 1992); regional conventions had historical themes; and the annual convention in Washington featured events ranging from the usual symposia and invited addresses on history to a fancy dress ball at Union Station featuring period (1892) costumes and a huge APA birthday cake.

Interest in psychology's history has not been limited to centennial celebrations, of course. Histories of psychology were written soon after psychology itself appeared on the academic scene (e.g., Baldwin, 1913), and at least two of psychology's most famous books, E. G. Boring's A History of Experimental Psychology (1929; 1950) and Edna Heidbreder's Seven Psychologies (1933) are histories. It wasn't until the 1960s, however, that significant interest in the history of psychology as a specialized area of research began. During that decade, a number of individuals with training as psychologists and a keen interest in history banded together and did the sorts of things that mark the creation of a new specialized discipline—they formed organizations, they created a journal, and they established bases for the production of research.

Many people were involved, but the major impetus came from a clinical psychologist with a passion for history, Robert I. Watson (1909–1980) (Figure 1.1). He began with a call to arms, an American Psychologist article entitled "The History of Psychology: A Neglected Area" (Watson, 1960). He then mobilized a group of like-minded psychologists within the APA into a History of Psychology Group, the eventual outcome being the creation of a new APA Division (#26) of the APA in 1965 (Hilgard, 1982). Naturally, Watson was first president of the division. Also in 1965, (a) John Popplestone and Marion White McPherson (two more clinicians in love with history) established the Archives of the History of American Psychology at their university, the University of Akron, and made Watson chair of the Archive's Board of Advisors, and (b) the first issue of the Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences was published, edited by Watson. A few years later, as part of a reorganization of their graduate programs, the University of New Hampshire created the first doctoral program offering specialization.

1Today, Division 26 is also known as the Society for the History of Psychology—see www.hood.edu/shp/
niple cause for celebrat{ed often. Celebration of Wilhelm 1968) that spawned Watson's final creation, the Cheiron Society, an "International Society for the History of Behavioral and Social Sciences" (Brozek, Watson, & Ross, 1970). Within a decade, then, Watson was the prime mover in developing the history of psychology as a research specialty.

Since the 1960s, interest in psychology's history has grown steadily. For example, membership in APA's Division 26 in 2006 stood at just under 600, compared with the 234 who joined as charter members in 1965. The story is the same for Cheiron. Psychologists also recognize the importance of the history course to the psychology curriculum. At the most recent conference on the undergraduate curriculum, held at St. Mary's College in Maryland in 1991, one of the group's recommendations was for the curriculum to include a senior capstone course that integrated student experiences in other courses; the history and systems course was mentioned as a prime example of such a capstone (Lloyd & Brewer, 1992). In a recent survey of the "present status" of the history of psychology course, Fuchs & Viney (2002) worried that course content and textbooks did not always reflect recent scholarship in psychology's history, but found that virtually all psychology departments teach the course and that more than half require psychology majors to take it. On balance, they pronounced the history of psychology course to be "alive and well" (p. 12).

Despite the consensus among psychologists that studying the discipline's history is important, students majoring in psychology are often surprised to discover that a course in the history of psychology is offered in and perhaps required by their department. They check with their chemistry-major friends and find nothing comparable in that department. They examine the college catalog and discover that the closest course is one in the History in the history of psychology. Guess who was named its first director? Finally, also under the leadership of Watson, Joseph Brozek, and Barbara Ross, the National Science Foundation sponsored a six-week summer institute on the UNH campus in 1968 that spawned Watson's final creation, the Cheiron Society, an "International Society for the History of Behavioral and Social Sciences" (Brozek, Watson, & Ross, 1970). Within a decade, then, Watson was the prime mover in developing the history of psychology as a research specialty.

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of Science, but the history department teaches it, not one of the science departments. What’s going on? Why is there a history of psychology course taught by a psychologist, but not a history of chemistry course taught by a chemist?

The rationale for a history of psychology course is important and it will be considered shortly. First, however, let us examine the more general question of why it is important to study the history of anything. Is it true that “history is more or less bunk,” as Henry Ford put it, or is it more likely, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, that “we cannot escape history” (both quotes from Simonton, 1994, p. 3), and that to “neglect history does not mean to escape from its influence,” as Robert Watson (1960, p. 255) declared in his call for psychologists to become more involved in the history of their discipline?

WHY STUDY HISTORY?

Every history course you have ever taken has preached to you that knowing history helps us to avoid the mistakes of the past and provides us with a guide to the future. There is a germ of truth to those old and well-worn platitudes, but both of these standard reasons are a bit simplistic. Concerning the “mistake” argument, rather than learning from the past, much of history appears to provide evidence that humans deliberately ignore the past. This possibility led the philosopher/historian G. W. F. Hegel to worry that the only true lesson of history is that people don’t learn anything from history (Gilderhus, 2000). This overstates the case, of course. It is also true that when trying to convince others of some course of action, part of the argument usually involves references to the past. And if we seem to ignore the past more than we attend to it, it is also true that knowing the past only provides a very rough guide, for history never repeats itself—all events are tied into the unique historical context in which they occur. History is also a less than reliable guide to the future, a fact that historians recognize, although the acknowledgement seldom prevents them from venturing forecasts. In his celebrated What is history?, for instance, the historian E. H. Carr wrote that “good historians, I suspect, whether they think about it or not, have the future in their bones. Besides the question why? The historian also asks the question: Whither?” (1961, pp. 142-143). This may be so, but it is worth noting that every paper I have ever read or listened to, for which the purpose was to predict the future, has begun with the same disclaimer. The writer or speaker always starts by going to great lengths to insure the audience that predictions about the future are notoriously inaccurate. As psychology’s eminent historian, E. G. Boring, once wrote, “The past is not a crystal ball. It has more whence than whither to it. The seats on the train of progress all face backwards: you can see the past but only guess about the future (1963a, p. 5).”

If knowing history is no guarantee that mistakes won’t be repeated and if history is an imperfect (at best) means of forecasting the future, then what is left? The present. In the sentence immediately following the one I just quoted from Boring, he wrote: “Yet a knowledge of history, although it can never be complete and fails miserably to foretell the future, has a huge capacity for adding significance to the understanding of the present” (1963a, p. 5). I believe the single most important reason to study history is that the present time we are living in cannot be understood without knowing something about the past—how the present came to be. Historian David McCullough (1992) expressed this
WHY STUDY HISTORY?

Imagine a man who professes over and over his unending love for a woman but who knows nothing of where she was born or who her parents were or where she went to school or what her life had been like until he came along—and furthermore, doesn't care to learn. What would you think of such a person? Yet we appear to have an unending supply of patriots who know nothing of the history of this country, nor are they interested. (p. 222, italics in the original)

Think of any current event and you will recognize that it is impossible to understand the event adequately without knowing some of the history leading to it. For example, consider some recent history within psychology. I am sure that you have heard about APA, the American Psychological Association. You might also know about or at least have heard of APS—the Association for Psychological Science. You might even know that the APS is a fairly recent creature—it was born in 1988. Perhaps you also recognize that the APS seems more focused on scientific research than the APA, although maybe you are not quite so sure about that, and you might be wondering why there are two organizations for psychologists. Knowing some history would help you understand this. Specifically, your understanding of why the APS exists and its purpose would be vastly enhanced if you knew of the long-standing tensions between research psychologists and psychologists whose prime interest is in the professional practice of psychology (e.g., psychotherapy). The problem traces to the very beginnings of the APA in the late nineteenth century and contributed to the formation of a separate group of “Experimentalists” in 1904 (the story of this remarkable group is elaborated in Chapter 7). Also, when the APA was reorganized after World War II, the divisional structure that exists today was designed in part to reconcile the conflicting goals of scientists and practitioners. The good will that accompanied the end of the war led those with different interests in psychology to unite, but the unity didn’t last long. Without knowing something of this history, you could never have a clear understanding of the APS, why it exists today, or why there is lingering tension between APS leaders and the APA governing structure.

Another aspect of the importance of the past for understanding the present is that knowledge of history helps us put present events in a better perspective. In the same commencement address quoted from earlier, David McCullough related the story of an encounter in Washington with an apparently well-educated friend who had just visited the Vietnam Memorial and, like everyone who visits, was visibly moved by it. She asked if McCullough had visited the site and he said that he had; his first visit was late on a day spent at the nearby Civil War battlefield of Antietam. McCullough was astounded to learn that his friend could not recall ever hearing of this battle, which included a day during which more American lives were lost than on any other day in history. McCullough pointed out that the Vietnam Memorial holds the names of about 57,000 Americans killed during eleven years, but at Antietam on September 17, 1862, there were 23,000 casualties—on one day. Knowing about Antietam in no way lessens the tragedy.
of the Vietnam War, and certainly even World War I itself. But the war and its important perspective is gained by knowing about the situation prior to that. And while this adds an appreciation of the situation at that time, it is also associated with just one period of recent history.

There is another way in which knowing history can be especially useful for the present day. We sometimes believe that our current issues, such as chlorofluorocarbons, are issues of the age of man. We complain about the seemingly insurmountable problems that the present danger that seems to accompany the society of the twenty-first century. We long for the "good old days," a simpler time when nobody locked their doors and a good house could be ordered from Sears on paper. We think that there really should be places like Disney World's Main Street, U.S.A. But knowing history is a good corrective here. Noted historian and former Chairman of Congress Daniel Boorstin, in an essay entitled "The Prison of the Present," described this fallacy:

We split against the background of the automobile. We compare our tiny city with that of the automobile. We compare our barren city with that of the automobile. We compare our gardens with that of the automobile. We forget the cities of the past, the black cities with their clouds of soot, the cities in the cities of the past, with the honey-like production of coal, and soot, with the soot, with the soot, with the soot. We reproach ourselves for the "absence of modern" restrictions and fears that would recently, through the use of industrialism, destroy the "impractical" way of killing diseases of children, "impractical" way of saving human life."

Knowing history won't give us an answer to current problems, but it certainly can give us an appreciation of the present and what it is that they used to be. In fact, knowing the past can provide a surprising perspective on the present. For example, I grew up in South Carolina in the South. I thought I knew something about the Pilgrims, but I had just finished Nathaniel Philbrick's 2006 brilliant history of the Pilgrims. He showed me that I knew very little about the Pilgrims' relations with local tribes. I was shocked, impressed, and amazed by how much I thought I knew. I thought the Pilgrims' relations with local tribes was dead wrong. I thought that sometimes in ignorance of the past can lead us to a kind of arrogance. We believe that the present is the culmination of centuries of progress and that today's achievements and thinking are more sophisticated and far surpass those of the past. Knowing history, however, forces an understanding that such ideas are not new and new ideas have occurred before and its own creative genius. Modern scientific sciences seem to be twisting discoveries every day, but the importance of their discoveries and the quality of their scientific thinking does not make the difference of Pierre Bouvard's nineteenth-century investigations of the brain, which effectively described the concept of a synapse. (Chapter 1)
WHY STUDY PSYCHOLOGY'S HISTORY?

Finally, studying history ultimately means searching for answers to one of life's most fundamental yet perplexing questions: What does it mean to be human? That is, to study the history of World War II is to delve into the basic nature of prejudice, aggression, and violence. To study the American Revolution is to examine the human desire for freedom and self-determination. To study the history of Renaissance art is to study the human passion for aesthetic pleasure. And to the extent that history involves people behaving in various situations, studying history means studying and trying to understand human behavior. For this reason alone, psychologists should be inherently attracted to the subject.

WHY STUDY PSYCHOLOGY'S HISTORY?

The preceding rationale for studying history is by itself a sufficient justification for studying the history of psychology, but there are additional reasons why psychologists should be interested in their ancestry. First, compared with other sciences, psychology is still in its infancy, not much more than 125 years old. Much of the content of the other psychology courses you have taken traces back through at least half of those years, and many of the so-called classic studies that you learned about (e.g., Pavlov's conditioning studies) formed a major part of the first half of those years. Hence, modern psychology is closely tied to its past; being a literate psychologist necessarily requires knowing some history.

A second and related reason for an interest in psychology's history among psychologists is that the field is still grappling with many of the same topics that occupied it a century ago. Thus, an important issue today is the heritability of traits ranging from intelligence to shyness to schizophrenia. This nature-nurture issue, first popularized more than 130 years ago by Sir Francis Galton (see Chapter 5) and pondered by humans for centuries, reverberates through the history of psychology. Seeing the parallels between the arguments made now about the relative influence of heredity and environment, and comparing them with those made in earlier times, allows the psychologist a more informed understanding of the issue. Understanding something about the origins and early development of the IQ concept gives the modern psychologist a greater depth of understanding of the problems surrounding it.

Earlier, a question was raised about the presence of a history of psychology course and the absence of a history of chemistry course. While an understanding of current research and related issues is essential in psychology, the situation is somewhat different in chemistry. Although the history of alchemy makes for a fascinating story and can teach us a great deal about how science works and evolves, it doesn’t inform today’s students about the chemical properties of lead or of gold. Chemists, who tend to think (naively, as it happens) of their science as steadily progressing from the errors of the past to the truth of the present, aren’t normally interested in cluttering their students’ minds with “old” ideas. There is an element of truth to this model of science as advancing through history (nobody tries to reach the alchemist’s goal of turning lead into gold anymore), but it is nonetheless unfortunate that many scientists don’t see the value of studying the history of their discipline. At the very least, it would round out their education and teach
them something about how scientific thinking has evolved. Indeed, there ought to be a
history of chemistry course for chemistry students to take.

A third reason for the existence of the history of psychology course is that it can
provide some unity for what has become a diverse and highly specialized field. Despite its
youth, psychology in the early twenty-first century is notable for its lack of unity. Indeed,
some observers (e.g., Koch, 1992a) believe that a single field of psychology no longer
exists, that a neuroscientist investigating the functioning of endorphins has virtually
nothing in common with an industrial psychologist studying the effectiveness of various
management styles. Yet all psychologists do have something in common—their history.
For the student who has taken a seemingly disconnected variety of courses ranging
from developmental to abnormal to social psychology, the history course can serve as
a synthesizing experience. By the time you reach the final chapter of this text, where
the issue of psychology's increased specialization will again be addressed, you will have
learned enough to begin to understand the interconnectedness among the different areas
of psychology.

Fourth, an understanding of psychology's history makes one a more critical thinker.
Aware of the history of various treatments for psychological disorders, the discerning
psychologist is better able to evaluate claims for a "revolutionary breakthrough" in psy­
chotherapy. A close examination of this allegedly unique therapy might reveal similarities
to earlier approaches. The historically literate psychologist will also be aware that on
many other occasions, initial excitement over a flashy new therapy is tempered by a
later failure to find any evidence that it works. Furthermore, knowing about the devel­
opmental course of various historical pseudoscientific approaches to psychotherapy, and
understanding their common features, enables the psychologist to spot the presence of a
new one and be suitably skeptical.

Finally, the history of psychology course may be a history course but it is also a
psychology course. Thus, one of its goals is to continue educating us about human behav­
or. Studying historical individuals as they helped develop the science of psychology can
only increase our understanding of what makes people behave the way they do. For
instance, our understanding of scientific creativity can be enhanced by studying the lives
and works of historically creative individuals (Hermann Ebbinghaus is a good example;
his work is found in Chapter 4). Some insight into the psychology of controversy and
the rigid, dogmatic adherence to one's beliefs can be gained by studying the behavior
of scientists engaged in bitter debate with their peers (e.g., the Baldwin-Titchener con­
troversy, described in Chapter 6). In general, if all human behavior reflects a complex
interplay between individuals and the environments they inhabit, then studying the lives
of historical characters being shaped by and in turn shaping their environments can only
increase our understanding of the forces that affect human behavior.

KEY ISSUES IN PSYCHOLOGY'S HISTORY

A common misconception of history is that historians simply "find out what happened"
and then write it down in chronological order. As you will learn in the next two sections
of this chapter, the process is infinitely more complicated. When they are engaged in
their craft, historians have to confront and take a stand on several important issues.
Old Versus New History

In 1980, the APA created the G. Stanley Hall Lecture Series. Prominent psychologists deliver these talks, which are designed to aid undergraduate instruction by informing teachers of the latest developments in the various subfields of psychology. In 1988, Laurel Furumoto, a psychologist/historian from Wellesley College, delivered the first of these lectures devoted to the teaching of psychology’s history. The focus of her talk was on a distinction between what she referred to as “old” and “new” history.

The old history of psychology, according to Furumoto (1989), refers to an approach emphasizing the accomplishments of “great” philosophers and psychologists and concentrates on celebrating “classic studies” and “breakthrough discoveries.” Within psychology, the preservation and retelling of these “great events” helped psychology secure an identity as a respectable scientific discipline. The milestones, whether accurately described or not, are passed down from history text to history text as their authors rely heavily on secondary sources (e.g., earlier history texts). Furthermore, previous insights or achievements are valued only if they somehow “anticipated” some modern idea or research outcome. Old research that is of no current relevance is considered erroneous or quaint and is either discarded or held up as an example of “how far we’ve come.” Thus, from the standpoint of old history, the purpose of the history of psychology is to emphasize and even to glorify present-day psychology, and to show how it emerged triumphant from the murky depths of its past.

According to Furumoto, old history tends to be presentist, internal, and personalistic. New history, on the other hand, is more historicist, external, and naturalistic. Let’s examine these concepts in more detail.

Presentism Versus Historicism

Earlier, I argued that a major reason for studying history is to better understand what is happening in the present. This is indeed a valid argument. On the other hand, to interpret the past only in terms of present concepts and values is to be guilty of what George Stocking (1965) called presentism. In an editorial published in the opening volume of the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Stocking contrasted presentism with an approach called historicism. As Stocking described it, the presentist interprets historical events only with reference to modern knowledge and values, whereas the historicist tries to understand the same event in terms of the knowledge and values in existence at the time of the event. Because the historicist tries to place historical events within the overall context of their times, this approach is sometimes called a contextual approach to history.

In absolute terms, presentist thinking is impossible to avoid. Our current thinking has been shaped by our experiences, and we cannot simply ignore those experiences. To illustrate, think of situations where you had to make the same basic decision at two different times. For example, suppose you just bought a computer to replace the one you acquired five years ago. In the present moment, you might say to yourself, “How could I have been so shortsighted back then, buying a computer with a hard drive that only had 100 MB?” To say that is to forget the original context in which that first computer was bought, a time when a 100 MB drive seemed as appropriately sized as a 100 GB drive might seem now. Thus, it is easy to criticize the past when relying on the knowledge of the present. It is also easy to think that because you have gone from a 100 MB to a
100 GB hard drive, you have somehow progressed as a decision maker. The larger hard drive might indeed make your life easier now (i.e., there has been some progress), but it doesn’t mean that you are any better as a decision maker now than you were five years ago. The old decision might seem stupid now, but that’s only because of what we now know; back then, it was precisely as reasonable a choice as the one made in the present. To understand the old decision requires us to avoid seeing it in the light of what we know now.

To demonstrate the point with reference to a more complex historical event than computer buying, consider some aspects of the history of intelligence testing. As you will learn in Chapter 8, in the years just prior to World War I, an American intelligence tester named Henry Goddard was invited to Ellis Island in New York to help in the screening of immigrants. Immigrants deemed “unfit” for some reason were returned to their country of origin. Goddard firmly believed that intelligence was an inherited trait and that it could be measured with a brand new technology—something created in France and just beginning to be called an IQ test. Goddard used a version of an IQ test that he had translated from the French test to identify “mentally defective” immigrants. He even argued that he could pick out defective immigrants simply by looking at them. His work contributed to the questionable deportation of untold numbers of people and his conclusion that large percentages of immigrants were “morons” (a term he invented to describe a subcategory of “feeblemindedness”) might have contributed to the atmosphere that led Congress to pass restrictive immigration quotas in the 1920s. From today’s standpoint, on the basis of an additional 75 years or so of research, we know about the problems with IQ testing and the need for caution when using and interpreting IQ tests. Hence, we find it difficult to believe that someone as smart as Goddard could have behaved with such obvious bias. “What was he thinking?” we might ask ourselves. But to understand Goddard’s behavior, it is necessary to study it from the vantage point of the historical period in which it occurred instead of that of the present time. This means being knowledgeable about such things as (a) the powerful influence of Darwinian thinking and Mendelian genetics on the psychological testers of that day, which led easily to a belief that intelligence was a trait that had been naturally selected and enabled a physically weak species (humans) to adapt to their environment during the “struggle for existence” and was therefore inherited; (b) the nation’s fears of being overrun with immigrants (large-scale immigration was a new phenomenon at that time); and (c) the assumption, not yet brought into question by such things as atomic bombs and ozone-depleting aerosol cans, that any new technology (e.g., IQ tests) with the “scientific” seal of approval had to be good. The list could be continued but the point is clear. Goddard’s work cannot be fairly evaluated by modern standards; it can only be understood in the context of its times. On the other hand, his work does have relevance for us in the present. Knowing about it can (a) help us better understand modern concerns about immigration; (b) inform us of the subtle influence of racism and other forms of bigotry, even in intelligent people; and (c) make us properly cautious about the alleged wonders of new technologies that arrive in our own day.

The Goddard episode illustrates how difficult it is for us to avoid a presentist orientation. After all, we are the products of our own personal histories, and it is perhaps impossible to ask us to think like a person who never experienced MTV, computers, World War II, or the events of 9/11/01. Nonetheless, for the historian and the reader
of history it is important to at least be aware of the dangers of a strictly presentist view of history, and to constantly seek to understand historical episodes on their own terms. One must recognize, as pointed out by historian Bernard Bailyn (Latham, 1994), that “the past is not only distant, but different” (p. 53). He went on to write that the major obstacle in overcoming presentism (or “anachronism,” as Bailyn referred to it) is the problem of “overcoming the knowledge of the outcome. This is one of the great impediments to a truly contextualized history” (p. 53). As to how one might go beyond our knowledge of outcomes and overcome presentist thinking, Bailyn had this suggestion:

Somewhere one has to recapture, and build into the story, contemporaries’ ignorance of the future…. One stresses the contingencies—looks for the accidents of the time and tries to avoid assigning the heroism or villainy that was unclear at the time but that was determined by later outcomes. And, if possible, one gives a sympathetic account of the losers. If one can, up to a certain point, work sympathetically with the losers, one can—in some small part at least—overcome the knowledge of the outcome. (pp. 53–54)

Let me close this section by giving you an example of presentist writing that I found while reading a biography of Sir Isaac Newton (White, 1997). One of Newton’s strong avocations was alchemy, the quest for a means to create gold from other metals. Describing the alchemy interests of one of Newton’s predecessors, Paracelsus (otherwise famous in the history of medicine), the author wrote that “[f]ollowing many an alchemicist about, he traveled Europe in search of the secrets of the ancients, squandering much of his talent and any money he earned along the way” (p. 120). This is a good example of writing from the standpoint of knowing the outcome (alchemy failed), while ignoring the importance of alchemy to the history of science and the historical context that made alchemy a respected endeavor for a time.

**Internal Versus External History** Histories of psychology are often written by psychologists who wish to trace the development of theories of behavior that have been held by various psychologists, based on research completed by psychologists. This kind of approach is referred to as an **internal history**; what is written occurs entirely within (“internal to”) the discipline of psychology. Such an approach has the value of providing detailed descriptions of the evolution of theory and research, but it ignores those influences outside of psychology that nonetheless have influenced the discipline. An **external history** focuses on those influences.

Internal histories are often referred to as histories of ideas. Typically, they are written by people trained in the specific discipline being analyzed, and they tend to be written by people with little or no expertise in history per se. They are inward looking, focusing on the development of ideas to the exclusion of the larger world. On the other hand, external histories take the broader view: They examine societal, economic, institutional and extradisciplinary influences. An exclusively internal history is narrow and loses the richness of historical context, whereas an excessively external history fails to convey an adequate understanding of the ideas and contributions of a discipline’s key figures. A balance is needed.
The interplay between internal and external history is demonstrated nicely in the history of comparative psychology, the evolution-based study of animal behavior. It developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, primarily out of interest in demonstrating the continuity among species implied by Darwinian evolution. One interest of early comparative psychologists was in determining the extent to which other species showed evidence of consciousness. From the standpoint of internal history, students learn that comparative psychologists studying this question helped make the transition from psychology as the study of consciousness to psychology as the study of behavior. Why? Because studying animal behavior, even if the interest is in understanding "animal consciousness," requires developing procedures (e.g., maze learning) that involve the objective measurement of observable behaviors. John B. Watson, usually considered the founder of behaviorism as a school of thought (see Chapter 10), cut his research teeth in the world of comparative psychology, and saw how the methods for studying animals could be applied to the study of humans as well. Thus, there appears to be a logical progression from (a) being required to use behavioral methods if one is interested in studying animals, to (b) seeing that these methods could be used to study humans as well. In Watson's research, for example, there is a gradual shift from the study of animal behavior to the study of human behavior. In addition, other comparative psychologists of the time, especially Robert Yerkes, made a similar transformation from the study of animals to the study of humans.

There is some truth to this internal history of comparative psychology. Watson himself argued that his system of behaviorism first evolved out of his animal work. Nonetheless, a full understanding of the impact of comparative psychology requires knowing about some of the external factors that led researchers to shift from studying animals to studying humans. For example, consider the institutional context. In the early years of the twentieth century, experimental psychology was relatively new and psychologists normally resided within departments of philosophy. In the fight for an adequate slice of the budget pie, psychologists found it necessary to justify the costs of their laboratories. Senior members of the department, usually philosophers, could be difficult to convince. One approach was to demonstrate the usefulness of psychological knowledge in solving practical problems. For instance, sometimes it was argued that the fruits of psychological research would improve education. This problem of demonstrating utility was difficult enough for researchers studying humans in their laboratories; it was infinitely more problematic for comparative psychologists studying other species. Their arguments for the value of their research were even more difficult to sustain. In addition, they had a problem unique to their research interests—their laboratories were an assault on the olfactory senses. A combination of smell and no air-conditioning relegated many laboratories to obscure corners of campuses (O'Donnell, 1985). For many, then, the desire to improve their institutional status was a major driving force in their change from animal to human psychology.

The experience of Robert Yerkes illustrates the problem for animal researchers. A brilliant comparative psychologist at Harvard University at the turn of the century, he found himself initially encouraged to pursue his animal work, primarily for political reasons. Harvard wished to maintain its exalted position in the academic world, and that meant competing successfully with young upstarts like Clark University, 30 miles to the west in Worcester. Clark had established an active program in comparative psychology,
nicely in the behavior. It is in demonstrative interest of other species, students to the transition of behavior. Standing "animal psychology," are students as "psychologists" for studying behavior. In the early years to be a consideration "animal psychology," for studying humans as "psychologists" the study of animal psychology. Watson leads animal work. Animal psychology requires from studying humans. In the early years, and psychologists an adequate knowledge of their laboratories be difficult to animal knowledge and the fruits of demonstrating utility; it was species. Their change sustain. In addition, researchers were an adequate knowledge. For many, then, in their change researchers.

Harvard would not be outdone, and Yerkes would carry the torch. But he quickly discovered that his work was not valued very highly in a department that featured three of America’s most famous philosophers: Josiah Royce, Charles S. Peirce, and William James. He was not promoted, he had difficulty securing laboratory space, and as the years passed, he was subtly told that his animal work was irrelevant. To be promoted, he would have to do more “on the human side.” This he did, first by producing an undergraduate textbook that emphasized human experimental psychology, and later by embracing psychology’s love affair with intelligence testing (O’Donnell, 1985). Thus, understanding the shift that some psychologists made from studying animals to studying humans requires knowing more than just the ideas that were debated within the discipline of psychology.

**Personalistic Versus Naturalistic History**

In addition to the presentist/historicist and internal/external distinction, one additional contrast needs to be drawn before returning to Furumoto’s old versus new history. That distinction is between a personalistic history, one that sees the actions of individual historical characters as primary in bringing about history, and a naturalistic history, one that emphasizes the overall intellectual and cultural climate of a particular historical era—what the German philosopher Hegel called the *zeitgeist*.

According to a personalistic history, or what used to be called the “Great Man” theory, the important events in history result from the heroic (or evil) actions of individuals and without those individuals, history would be vastly different. This approach is often associated with the nineteenth-century historian and essayist Thomas Carlyle, whose “On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History,” written in 1840, is best remembered for this line: “The history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here” (cited in Boring, 1963a, p. 6). According to this view, people like Newton, Darwin, and Freud changed the course of the history of science. Without them, the history would have been completely different. From this standpoint, the preferred method of writing history is biography, and as a consequence of this approach, what are sometimes called eponyms (Boring, 1963a) are created. That is, historical periods are identified with reference to the individuals whose actions are believed to be critical in shaping events. Thus, we read of Newtonian physics, Darwinian biology, and Freudian psychology.

The personalistic approach has intuitive appeal. Although psychology’s most famous historian, Edwin G. Boring (featured in the Close-Up), favored a naturalistic model of history, arguing that “[h]istory is continuous and sleek,” he recognized that great people “are the handles that you put on its smooth sides” (Boring, 1963b, p. 130). Boring argued that the persistence of a personalistic approach to history results from several factors, including a human need for heroes and the need of hard-working scientists for personal recognition (Who wants to eliminate the Nobel Prizes for science?). More important, if history is continuous and sleek, then it is also immensely complex. In seeking to understand it, we try to reduce the complexity to understandable dimensions. More generally, a universal cognitive process, essential for achieving understanding, is to organize information into categories. Our recall of concepts like Freudian unconscious and Pavlovian conditioning is easier when the eponyms serve as retrieval cues.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING PSYCHOLOGY'S HISTORY

It is unfortunate that psychology's most famous historian has a name that students often associate with the general topic of history. In fact, E. G. Boring's writings are lively and elegant. In recent years, his version of psychology's history has been criticized, but it is also true that historians of psychology owe a great debt to Boring's pioneering historical work.

While an engineering student at Cornell University, Boring first encountered psychology in the fall of 1905 by taking an elective course in elementary psychology, taught by the great E. B. Titchener (Chapter 7). He described the lectures as "magic, so potent that even my roommates demanded, each lecture day, to be told what had been said" (Boring, 1961b, p. 18). Yet he was not converted at that point and continued his engineering studies, earning a master's degree in 1908. After two marginally successful years as an engineer for a steel company and as a high school teacher, he returned to Cornell and earned a Ph.D. from Titchener in 1914. While at Cornell his research interests included (a) human maze learning, during which he met, fell in love with, and eventually married one of his research subjects, fellow doctoral student Lucy May (who died in 1996 at the age of 109); (b) nerve regeneration, studied firsthand and rather dramatically by severing a nerve in his arm and charting its recovery; (c) the learning processes of schizophrenics; and (d) his dissertation topic, visceral sensitivity. Boring studied this by learning to swallow a stomach tube to varying depths, then pouring different substances into the tube and noting the (often unpleasant) sensory effects (Jaynes, 1969b). Nobody could ever accuse Boring of not being involved in his work!

After finishing his degree at Cornell and staying on briefly as an instructor, Boring served in World War I in the Army IQ testing program (Chapter 8), taught briefly at Clark University, then went to Harvard in 1922. He remained there for the rest of his career. At Harvard, Boring spent the next decade building up the laboratory and trying to convince the authorities that psychology should be a separate department, not a part of the philosophy department. This did not occur until 1934. It was during the 1920s that he wrote his famous *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929), partly to further his political fight with the philosophers and administrators at Harvard, and partly to bolster basic research in experimental psychology at a time when the majority of American psychologists seemed to be interested in applied psychology (O'Donnell, 1979).

In his years at Clark and Harvard, Boring's work habits, in imitation of Titchener, were legendary. In his words, ...

...my friends, my children, and my students know how I have talked about the eighty-hour week in the fifty-week year (the 4000-hour working year) and I have scorned those forty-hour academicians who take long summers off from work. I have no hobbies, except for a shop in my cellar. My vacations were never successful until I got a little study with a typewriter in it and could answer eight letters a day and write up the waiting papers. (Boring, 1961b, p. 14)

Also in the tradition of Titchener, Boring taught the introductory course in psychology, believing that a student's first encounter with psychology should be from the master. He even became a pioneer in the video-course: thirty-eight half-hour programs on Boston's educational TV channel WGBH in 1960 featured Boring demonstrating various phenomena, but mainly sitting "on the corner of a table and talking in a friendly, enthusiastic, paternal manner to the red lights on whatever camera was on the air" (Boring, 1961b, p. 77; Figure 1.2).

We've seen that the APA's Division 26, established in 1965, elected Robert Watson as its first president. According to Hilgard, this occurred after Boring refused to run for the office but agreed to be named "honorary president." Boring's increasing deafness kept him away from the division's inaugural meeting during the APA's 1966 convention, but he sent a written introduction to Watson's presidential address, describing himself as the "ghost of History Past, when the interest in the history of psychology had not yet become as vigorous as it is now" (Hilgard, 1982, p. 310). Modern historians of psychology owe much to Boring's example.
The alternative to a personalistic history is a **naturalistic history**, an approach emphasizing the forces of history that act on individuals. The Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy was a famous advocate of this determinist approach. One of his goals in writing the massive *War and Peace* was to demonstrate that history is moved by forces beyond the control of individuals. For Tolstoy, so-called “Great Men” like Napoleon were in reality mere agents of historical causes larger than themselves. In Book IX in *War and Peace* he refers to kings and generals as history’s slaves: “Every act of theirs, which appears to them an act of their own will, is in a historical sense involuntary and is related to the whole course of history and predestined from eternity” (Tolstoy, 1942, p. 671).

Among psychologists, Boring has most vigorously promoted a naturalistic view of history. Especially in his later years, he championed the zeitgeist concept, both in the second edition of his famous *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1950) and in numerous essays. For Boring, understanding history meant understanding the historical forces that influenced the men and women living in a particular era. While not denying Darwin’s genius, for example, Boring would argue that the concept of evolution was common in the nineteenth century and extended beyond just biology (to geology, for instance). Without Darwin, someone else would have produced a theory of biological evolution. Indeed, Darwin’s theory was for a brief time called the Darwin-Wallace theory of evolution, in recognition of Alfred Russell Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin’s who independently developed virtually the identical theory (see Chapter 5 for this fascinating story). Great scientists can and do influence events, but simply focusing on individuals leaves unanswered the question of how those individuals were affected by the worlds in which they lived.

In support of the zeitgeist concept, Boring pointed to two kinds of historical events. In the first, called a **multiple** by historian Robert Merton (1961), two or more individuals independently make the same discovery at about the same time. Darwin and Wallace codiscovering natural selection at a time when evolutionary thinking was “in the air” is an example. Darwin’s grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, illustrates the second type of
event, a discovery or a theory that is said to be “ahead of its time.” Like his more famous grandson, Erasmus developed a theory of evolution, but did so in the eighteenth century, when belief in the immutability of species (i.e., each species is created in its finished form by God and it doesn’t change over time) was stronger than in the nineteenth century.

Relying on the zeitgeist as a way of explaining history can be problematic, however. For example, the uncritical observer might be tempted to reify (i.e., give a concrete and detached existence to an abstraction) the concept and consider it a controlling force that is independent of the historical persons who in fact give it meaning. That is, in answering the question, “Why did event X occur instead of event Y at time Z?”, one might be tempted to answer, “Because of the zeitgeist.” But such an answer hardly explains the events in question. The concept of the zeitgeist invites one to examine the attitudes, values, and theories in existence at the time of some event to be explained, but it cannot exist by itself as some mysterious directing agent. As historian Dorothy Ross (1969) pointed out with reference to the history of educational psychology,

It has been stated, for example, that neither James, Dewey, Hall, Thorndike, Cattell, Galton, nor Darwin were necessary to the rapid development of educational psychology in America, for that was the trend of the “Zeitgeist.” But certainly we only know what the Zeitgeist in fact was by the way in which James, Hall, Cattell, Darwin and others behaved. If they had not thought and acted the way they did, neither would the “Zeitgeist” they are said to embody. (p. 257, italics in the original)

Thus, a balanced view of history recognizes the complex interrelationships between people and the environments in which they act. The historical characters you are about to encounter were all products of the world in which they lived, but they also made decisions that helped form and transform the historical context that surrounded them. Wallace might have been inspired to write a paper proposing a theory of evolution that matched the essence of Darwin’s, but it is no accident that the term evolution is associated with Darwin and not with Wallace. It was Darwin who invested the years of research examining the intricacies of numerous species, and it was Darwin who followed up his initial writings with the monumental texts that brought evolution into its full development.

This Book’s Point of View  This section of the chapter began with a reference to Furumoto’s distinction between old and new history; presentist, internal, and personalist approaches typically go together and comprise what she referred to as the old history of psychology. It is a history that interprets events only from the standpoint of the present, concentrates on the development of ideas within a specific discipline, and view progress as reflecting the sequential accomplishments of important people. The new history of psychology, on the other hand, combines historicist, external, and naturalist approaches. It tries to examine historical events on their own terms, with reference to the times in which they occurred, looks for the influence of extradisciplinary forces, and looks beyond great men and women to examine the contextual factors that produce their ideas. Furumoto also points out that new history relies more on archival data as primary source materials than on secondary textbooks, and it is more critically analytic than ceremonial and celebratory.
Like his more famous counterpart, the eighteenth century created in its natic, however, a concrete and compelling force that is, in answer to "what is?, one might hardly explain the attitudes, but it cannot possibly lead. As Dewsbury (1990) pointed out in a review of several history of psychology texts, it is important to distinguish between "scholarly research directed at colleagues and... textbooks directed at introductory students" (p. 372). For the latter, the ideals of the new history need to be incorporated into the course, but they must be weighed against a need to inform students about content that is relevant to the psychology curriculum. This book presents a history of psychology that leans toward the values espoused by Furumoto, but it is important to remember that the course for which this text is designed is not just a history course, but is also a psychology course. Thus, while it is important to understand Pavlov's work within the historical climate of the early twentieth century in Russia, it is also important to understand the various classical conditioning phenomena that he investigated and how his work related to American behaviorism and conditioning research in more recent times. While it is important to understand the influence of the institutional context on the fate of comparative psychologists like Yerkes, it is also important for the psychology student to know about the animal research that Yerkes was able to complete. And although a purely personalistic history can degenerate into cute anecdotes and can overlook the complexities of historical events, it is also true that persons are interesting to study, and biographical information can increase the psychology student's understanding of human behavior.

This book will take the following stance:

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That is, the only strong tendency will be to (attempt to) avoid presentist interpretations. On the other two dimensions of old and new history, the book will blend (a) the various ideas, research, and theories that constitute psychology's internal history with the external historical context in which they developed, and (b) accounts of the persons who produced the history of psychology and the important features of the times in which they lived.

HISTORIOGRAPHY: DOING AND WRITING HISTORY

The simplest definition of historiography derives from the origins of the word itself: it is to write history. But the term goes beyond the writing of historical narrative, referring also to theoretical issues like the ones just described, and to the methods that historians use when doing historical research. Although the primary purpose of this book is to inform you about the history of psychology, a secondary goal is to give you some insight into the professional behavior of historians. That is, we will examine the kinds of data of interest to historians and the problems confronting historians as they do their work.
Sources of Historical Data

Writers of psychology’s history, especially textbook writers, have often relied on secondary sources to write their histories. A secondary source is a document that has been published and is typically an analysis or summary of some historical person, event, or period. These sources include books, articles published in journals, magazines, encyclopedia, and the like. Those doing research in the history of psychology, however, rely more on primary sources of information, which are usually found in archives. An archive is normally an area within a university library that holds unpublished information. This primary source information includes university records, correspondence, diaries, speeches, minutes of the meetings of professional organizations, and papers donated by individuals connected in some way with the university. In addition to these separate university archives, historians of psychology often find primary source material at the Library of Congress archives in Washington, D.C., the British Museum Library in London, and, especially, the Archives of the History of American Psychology (AHAP) at the University of Akron, Akron, Ohio. In general, primary source materials are items written or created at or near the time of some historical event, while secondary sources are written at some time after a historical event and serve to summarize or analyze.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, AHAP’s 1965 founding by John Popplestone and Marion McPherson (Figure 1.3) was one of a series of events sparked by the efforts of Robert I. Watson to generate interest in psychology’s history. As of its 40th anniversary in 2005, AHAP’s collection included the following: the papers of more than 750 psychologists (e.g., Abraham Maslow, Henry Goddard) and organizations (e.g., APA’s history division, #26); more than 1000 pieces of original laboratory apparatus; approximately 20,000 photographs and 6000 films; and over 15,000 psychological tests.

What can you expect to find in a place like AHAP? Just about anything. Looking into the records of a professional organization, for instance, you would probably find lists of officers and correspondence between them, minutes of meetings, early drafts of position papers, and the like. When examining the papers of an individual psychologist, you might find (a) correspondence between that person and other psychologists, (b) personal diaries and/or calendars, (c) course lecture notes and course schedules, (d) laboratory protocols, drawings of apparatus, data summaries, and other laboratory-related information, (e) early draft manuscripts of writings that eventually became secondary sources, (f) photographs and films of people, places, and research equipment, and (g) minutes of professional meetings attended by the psychologist. There will also be some surprises. For instance, AHAP holds the papers of the experimental psychologist Walter Miles. They include the usual materials, but when the papers first arrived at the archives, they also included a brick that Miles took from the building site of a new lab. A more startling example was reported in Civilization, a magazine published by the Library of Congress. A researcher was studying a nineteenth-century Viennese physician (Carl Koller) who was experimenting with the use of cocaine as an anesthetic in eye surgery. One of the folders contained a small pharmacist’s packet containing, you guessed it, white powder. Federal authorities were called in to remove the drug, but the envelope remains in the archive collection, labeled as follows: “Remainder of the 1st dose of cocaine, which I used in my first cocaine experiments in August 1884. Dr. Koller” (“A Stash,” 1996, p. 15).

How does a researcher interested in psychology’s history know which archives to contact or visit when starting a project? Because their holdings are so extensive, AHAP is a good place to start. Even if it is not the primary repository for the papers of the person being studied, AHAP might hold some correspondence from that person in the papers they do have. Another good starting place is the university where the person in question worked. Third, bibliographic sources exist. The best known is A Guide to Manuscript Collections in the History of Psychology and Selected Areas (Sokal & Rafail, 1982). Suppose you are interested in the work of IQ researcher Henry Goddard, for instance. The guide briefly describes the contents of the Goddard papers, which happen to be held at AHAP. It also informs you of additional Goddard materials in the papers of Edgar Doll and Emily Stogdill at AHAP, and in the papers of developmental psychologist Arnold Gesell in the Library of Congress.

Historians also rely on their general knowledge to aid in their search. For example, some years ago I became interested in Edmund Clark Sanford (1859–1924), the first director of the psychology laboratory at Clark University (Goodwin, 1987). Naturally, Clark was the starting point for the search, and through contact with the archivist there and two visits, I accumulated some information, but not a great deal. Sanford didn’t seem to save very much, or if he did, the information didn’t find its way to Clark. Some of the university records were helpful, however, in determining such things as laboratory purchases, and the papers of psychologist/university president G. Stanley Hall yielded some additional data, including one exciting discovery—a series of photographs taken in the laboratory in 1892, several of which are to be found in later chapters of this book. Many of them showed (or simulated, most likely) experiments in progress, thus providing a glimpse of what it was like to be doing research in psychology then. By searching through secondary sources, I knew about other psychologists who were contemporaries of Sanford and I knew from his obituaries that Sanford was very close to E. B. Titchener.
of Cornell and Mary Calkins of Wellesley (Sanford died of a heart attack in 1924 on his way to give a talk at Wellesley). A visit to Wellesley and two visits to Cornell yielded more information. The Titchener papers were especially helpful—Titchener seemed to keep just about everything. I also wrote to about two dozen other archives that I guessed might be holding papers that Sanford might have written to his colleagues. Copies of a few pieces trickled in. At the same time, I was reading everything that Sanford published (not much, actually) and everything else that could shed some light on him and the world he inhabited.

**Problems with the Writing of History**

From an archives visit to a published paper or book is a long, often tedious, occasionally exhilarating, but never easy journey. Along the way, the historian must confront two major difficulties. First, there are problems associated with the collection of data. The historian must evaluate the validity of data and select a subset of those data for inclusion in the historical narrative. The second problem concerns writing history. Historians are human, so their interpretations of the data will reflect their beliefs, their theories about the nature of history, and potentially, their unexamined biases.

**Data Selection Problems** Historians usually collect more information than will ever make its way into the historical narrative they write. Hence, they must make judgments about the adequacy and relevance of the data at hand and they must select a sample of the data while discarding the remainder. Sometimes, despite the large amount of data that might be collected during an archive visit, important pieces might be missing, further complicating the historian’s life. For example, Titchener and Sanford wrote to each other frequently, but only Titchener saved his correspondence. The Titchener papers contain several hundred letters from Sanford to Titchener, but the Sanford papers include _none_ from Titchener. In trying to piece together the Sanford–Titchener relationship, the historian gets only half the story. Another example concerns Walter Miles, an experimental psychologist from Stanford, who once wrote an article on the early development of mazes (Miles, 1930) that included excerpts of letters he received from some of the early pioneers (e.g., Willard Small, who completed the first maze learning study with rats). The Miles papers at AHAP do not contain any of the correspondence related to the maze history paper, however. This is surprising, considering the size of the Miles collection. It fills 128 boxes and the inventory alone runs to a numbing 756 pages (Goodwin, 2003).

Sometimes information that could aid a historian can be lost through what insurance adjusters would call an act of God. For example, after painstakingly tracking down descendants of Mary Whiton Calkins, the APA’s first woman president, Laurel Furumoto discovered that many of Calkins’s papers had been entrusted to her younger brother. Unfortunately, he put them in his cellar where they were destroyed by flooding that accompanied a devastating New England hurricane in 1938 (Furumoto, 1991).

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3 More than half, actually. After about 1910, Titchener often made and kept carbon copies of the letters he sent.
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Data might also be missing on purpose. In the last year of his life, John Watson, behaviorism’s founder, burned all of his remaining notes, correspondence, and rough manuscripts. According to Watson’s biographer, when “his secretary protested the loss to posterity and to history, Watson only replied: ‘When you’re dead, you’re all dead’” (Buckley, 1989, p. 182). Similarly, on two separate occasions Sigmund Freud also destroyed his papers, partly to make it difficult for others to trace the sources of his ideas (Chapter 12 details one of these episodes).

In addition to missing data, some information might be restricted by the donor and inaccessible to the historian. Even someone with the status of E. G. Boring could be denied. In a letter to John Popplestone of AHAP, Boring wrote that even as a known historian and a faculty member at Harvard, he had been denied access to some papers at the Harvard archives. In his words,

I trust the general atmosphere of the Archivists at Harvard. This is because I have been denied access to some things that are none of my business, graciously denied it because I am a Harvard professor. But, nevertheless, shut off from certain files of William James. (Popplestone, 1975, p. 21)

Beyond dealing with missing or incomplete information, the historian must make judgments about the adequacy of the available data. We know that eyewitness descriptions of everyday events can be quite wrong, that two witnesses can differ dramatically in their accounts. If eyewitness unreliability can be demonstrated easily in late twentieth-century psychology laboratories, then it is safe to say that the same lack of reliability exists for eyewitness accounts of historical events by psychologists. A good example of this was experienced by E. G. Boring. While preparing a history of Titchener’s Experimentalists, a group of researchers who met each year to discuss their work (see Chapter 7), Boring launched a massive letter-writing campaign to colleagues who had been to meetings, asking for their first-hand descriptions. There were numerous discrepancies, including one amusing example from a colleague who recounted to Boring in great detail a dinner conversation with Harvard’s Hugo Münterberg at the 1917 meeting at Harvard. Boring wrote back gently reminding his friend that Münterberg had died in 1916 (Goodwin, 2005). In general, any autobiographical description is subject to memory lapses.

Information found in someone’s correspondence or diary can also be of questionable value. Was the letter writer providing insight into the personality of a colleague or merely passing on cruel and unsubstantiated gossip? When the diarist described the meeting as meaningless and a waste of time, would others at the same meeting draw the same conclusion? Can letters and diaries be slanted by the writer’s knowledge that historians might someday read his or her words? To what extent do the contents of letters and diaries reflect the personal prejudices of the writer? I think you can see the difficulty here.

Those who create the records that eventually occupy archives are human and therefore susceptible to the subtleties of human belief, preconception, and bias. Those who explore the archives and write the history are also human and subject to the same frailties. By virtue of their training, historians are certainly more disciplined than laypeople; nonetheless, when making decisions about what information to select for historical analyses and narratives, the historian is not a machine. E. G. Boring expressed the problem...
eloquently in the preface to his 1942 text on the history of research in sensation and perception:

Indeed, so much a matter of selection is the preparation of an historical text, that I am sobered by the responsibility. The history of psychology text of 1929 has existed long enough for me to see how the mood that determined the choice of an afternoon’s exposition can fix the “truth” of a certain matter upon graduate students for years to come. With industry and patience one may avoid the falsification of facts, but those virtues are not enough to make one wise in choosing what to ignore. For that one also needs the wisdom and the integrity of objectivity, and who knows for sure whether he commands such? (Boring 1942, p. viii, italics added)

As you will learn in a few paragraphs, this passage from Boring is ironic. One of the themes of modern historiography within psychology is that Boring distorted psychology’s history and that his writings reflect a strong bias for a specific brand of psychology. It also appears that he was motivated at least partly by the political and institutional context that he occupied.

**Interpretation Problems** Winston Churchill, who made history and also wrote it, is alleged to have said history would be kind to him because he was going to be the person writing it. Historians normally try to be more objective than this, while realizing that a historical narrative will necessarily reflect something about the writer. Decisions about selection and about writing history both involve interpreting the information at hand and those interpretations are influenced by the individual characteristics of the historian and by the features of the historical context in which the historian is writing. Thus, historians will be influenced by their preconceptions, by the amount of knowledge they already have, as well as by the theories they hold about the nature of history (e.g., personalistic versus naturalistic). In addition, even without their being aware of it, historians can be influenced in many ways by elements of the environment in which the histories are being written. For example, you will discover in Chapter 4 that the work of Wilhelm Wundt has been reevaluated recently (e.g., Blumenthal, 1975), and many of his ideas have been found to be similar to those of modern cognitive psychologists. This similarity, of course, could not have been noticed prior to the advent of modern cognitive psychology—Blumenthal was writing at the height of the so-called cognitive revolution in psychology. Thus, historical characters are not the only ones influenced by the historical context in which they live; historians are affected as well.

The history written by E. G. Boring is a case in point. You know from this chapter Close-Up that Boring was a devoted student of E. B. Titchener’s, and in the 1920s he was a vigorous advocate for the development of a separate psychology department at Harvard that would emphasize “pure” laboratory research rather than application. Both of those facts played a role in the way he wrote history. First, his training as an experimental psychologist in Titchener’s laboratory at Cornell surely affected his own conception of psychology. More specifically, it influenced what Boring thought about Wilhelm Wundt, in whose laboratory Titchener earned a Ph.D. in 1892. In general Boring believed that Titchener’s brand of experimental psychology, called structuralism, was virtually identical to Wundt’s psychology, and that Titchener had merely import it to America. In fact, Wundt’s system was quite different from Titchener’s system (d
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details of Wundt's and Titchener's systems will become clear in Chapters 4 and 7, respectively), but because of Titchener's influence on Boring, combined with the fact that Titchener translated much of Wundt's work and that Boring was not conversant with some of Wundt's nonexperimental writings, the distinctions were lost. Thus, when writing his history, Boring's description of Wundt was filtered through Titchener's version and was consequently flawed. Because most psychologists trained in the period 1950 to 1980 learned their history by reading Boring's *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929; 1950), the mythological identification of Wundt's and Titchener's systems became conventional wisdom.

A second distortion in Boring's history relates to his emphasis on basic experimental psychology to the exclusion of applied psychology. As O'Donnell (1979) has shown, Boring was disturbed by the growing status of applied psychology, especially mental testing. Believing basic laboratory research to be in jeopardy, he took several steps to restore its standing. One was writing the first edition of his history in 1929, which largely ignored the work of a substantial number of psychologists who were busily applying psychological principles to education, mental health, and the workplace. The reader of the 1929 history could be excused for believing that applied psychology barely existed.

A common misconception of history goes like this: The events occurred in the past; now that they have been lined up chronologically and described in a historical narrative, that's the end of it. As the E. G. Boring evidence shows, however, historical analyses are in continual need of revision in the light of new information and new ways of examining old information. In recent years, for instance, scholars (e.g., Leahey, 1981) have taken a fresh look at (a) the relationship between Wundt's and Titchener's ideas, and (b) the role of application in the development of psychology in America. As a result, newer histories describe the Wundt-Titchener differences more accurately and document the pervasive influence of applied psychology.

Comparing different editions of a history text can illustrate this reexamination process. For example, one popular undergraduate history text, clearly influenced by Boring in its early editions, also shows the impact of the recent scholarship on Wundt in its later editions. In the book's third edition (Schultz, 1981), Wundt is described in a chapter that has "structuralism" in its title. The following chapter, on Titchener, refers to Wundtian psychology being "transplanted" to America by Titchener and includes sentences like this: "A knowledge of Wundt's psychology provides a reasonably accurate picture of Titchener's system" (p. 87). Six years later, in the fourth edition, "structuralism" no longer appears in the title of the Wundt chapter, there is an explicit description of the problems with Boring's historical account, and the Titchener chapter opens by saying that the systems of Wundt and Titchener were "radically different," and that Titchener "altered Wundt's system dramatically while claiming to be a loyal follower" (Schultz & Schultz, 1987, p. 85).

The important lesson for the reader of history is to be alert to the dangers of assuming that if something is printed in black and white, it somehow must be true. Rather, it is important to read histories, including this one, with a healthy dose of skeptical awareness that other information might have been selected for inclusion in the narrative and that other ways of interpreting the historical record exist. This raises an interesting question: Can history uncover the truth?
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING PSYCHOLOGY'S HISTORY

Approaching Historical Truth

From the foregoing discussion, you might be tempted to accept a version of historical relativism in which five different historians make five different claims for truth and there is no reasonable way to decide among them. Relativism among historians is a postmodern outgrowth of a reaction against traditional history, which held that the job of the historian is to search out the facts of "what really happened" and place them into a narrative with enough style to attract readers. The outcome was a tendency to write history from the standpoint of what happened to those who happened to be in positions of power and influence, while ignoring the rich variety of alternative perspectives. Thus, a traditional history of the American West, taught to American schoolchildren and grounded in a belief in the idea of manifest destiny, glorified the rugged pioneer who persevered in the face of daunting obstacles, including wild men who liked to shoot arrows. It is clear, though, that the very same history could be written from the standpoint of the Native American who valiantly defended the homeland against the invasion of wild men who liked to shoot guns.

The postmodern critique of the narrowness and arbitrariness of traditional history has had the meritorious effect of enriching our knowledge of it. Thus, we have come to recognize that history extends beyond the lives, deeds, and misdeeds of the stereotypical dead, white, European male; it must be more inclusive. On the other hand, an unfortunate consequence of this critique has been a relativism that, taken to extreme (an absolute relativism?), can lead to absurd claims like the one made occasionally that the Jewish Holocaust in World War II never really happened but was merely "constructed" and exaggerated out of a few isolated events (said to have explanations other than genocide) by historians sympathetic to the Jewish movement who wished to encourage the creation of the nation of Israel following the war. Those arguing for the "myth" of the Holocaust claim that their version is as valid as any other. Yet this example makes it clear that some versions of history are indeed better (i.e., closer to truth) than others. How does one decide?

To reach the truth through historical analysis requires an objectivity that recognizes the limits of one historian's views but also has faith in the notion that meaningful historical narrative and analysis can emerge from the combined efforts of many scholars, according to historians Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. In *Telling the Truth About History* (1994), they argue for a historiography in which truth about history emerges from a Darwinian-like struggle between competing ideas held by historians, that "knowledge-seeking involves a lively, contentious struggle among diverse groups of truth-seekers" (p. 254). Some measure of truth, then, evolves out of this struggle. Thus, just as individual variation within a species provides the basis for natural selection to operate, so do different versions of historical episodes exist, subject to competing critical analyses that determine which version adapts best to the scholarly environment. This does not mean that the goal is a single version of truth that is then "settled" and immune to change. Rather, historical truth continues to evolve as new information is discovered and brought to light and as old information is subjected to new interpretations. Also, evolving historical truth includes a variety of perspectives. Multiple eyewitnesses to an event might give different versions of it, but all agree that the event did indeed occur. From their combined information, a complex truth might emerge that would improve on a single description from one perspective. If one historian of the Civil War period "sees
An event from a slave's point of view, that rendering does not obliterate the perspective of the slaveholder; it only complicates the task of interpretation" (p. 256).

Just as theories in science are temporary working truths that guide future research, their futures depending on the open and honest inquiry of scientists, so may historical truths be considered tentative yet valuable guides for further research by intellectually honest historians with open access to historical materials. And just as some theories in science are more durable than others, so are some historical truths: "all knowledge can be provisional, in theory, without eliminating the possibility of some truths prevailing for centuries, perhaps forever" (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994, p. 284).

Presumably, on the basis of the hard work of many historians of psychology, some degree of truth about the discipline's history has emerged over the past one hundred years, and I will try my best to describe it to you in the following chapters. Many disagreements among historians of psychology exist, but Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob (1994) would consider that to be a good thing, the basis for future historical truths to develop during psychology's next one hundred years. Placing the word "A" in the title of this book, rather than "The," recognizes the fact that other histories exist now and more will exist in the future. Nonetheless, I believe that what you are about to read contains some truth about the discipline you have chosen to study. To the extent that some of the truth might be tentative, I hope it will motivate you to continue learning about psychology's history long after you have finished with this particular version of it.

SUMMARY

Psychology and Its History

- Recently, psychologists have celebrated several centennials, including the anniversary of the founding of Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory at Leipzig, Germany, in 1879, and the creation of the American Psychological Association in 1892.
- Interest in the history of psychology has grown steadily since the mid-1960s, primarily through the initiatives of Robert Watson. He helped establish professional organizations for historians of psychology (Division 26 of the APA, the Cheiron Society), a journal (Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences), an archive at the University of Akron (Archives of the History of American Psychology), and a doctoral program in the history of psychology at the University of New Hampshire.

Why Study Psychology's History?

- Because psychology is a relatively young science, much of its history is recent and of relevance for understanding psychological concepts and theories. Also, many of the issues of concern to early psychologists (e.g., nature-nurture) are still important.
- The history of psychology course provides a synthesizing experience, tying together the loose threads that comprise the modern diversity of psychology.
- Knowing about historical examples of (a) supposed breakthroughs in psychological research or practice, or (b) new theories that were shown to be pseudoscientific,
the student of history is able to evaluate modern claims more critically.

- Because the history of psychology course informs the student about people behaving within their historical context, the course provides further understanding of human behavior.

**Key Issues in History**

- The traditional approach to the history of psychology has been presentist, internal, and personalistic. Recently, historians have tended to be more historicist, external, and naturalistic.

- The presentist evaluates the past in terms of present knowledge and values, often passing judgment unfairly. The historicist tries to avoid imposing modern values on the past, and tries to understand the past from the standpoint of the knowledge and values present in the past.

- An internal history of psychology is a history of the ideas, research, and theories that have existed within the discipline of psychology. An external history emphasizes the historical context—institutional, economic, social, political—and how it influenced the history of psychology.

- A personalistic approach to history glorifies the major historical figures and argues that history moves through the action of heroic individuals. When historical periods are labeled with reference to people, those labels are called eponyms (e.g., Darwinian biology). A naturalistic approach emphasizes the zeitgeist, the mood or spirit of the times, as the prime moving force in history. The existence of multiples, and of people with ideas said to be "ahead of their times," is consistent with a natural view.

**Historiography: Doing History**

- Historiography refers to the process of doing research in history and writing historical narratives.

- Historians rely on both primary and secondary sources of information. A secondary source is a document that has been published and includes analysis. Primary source materials constitute the raw data for historians and include documents created at or near the time of the historic event in question (e.g., diaries, letters).

- Historical research often takes place in archives, which hold primary source information such as diaries, notes, original manuscripts, and correspondence, as well as secondary source information. The major archive for historians is the Archives of the History of American Psychology, located at the University of Akron.

- Archival collections can be extensive, but they can also be incomplete, with important information missing for various reasons. The information that is available is subject to numerous sources of error (e.g., the biases of the diary writer; the vagaries of eyewitness memory).

- Historians are faced with two major problems: the selection of information for their historical narratives and the interpretation of the information at hand. These decisions can reflect bias on the part of the historian, and they can reflect the historical context within which the historian is writing. Nonetheless, most historians believe that some degree of truth can be reached through the open exchange of information and by examining historical events through a variety of perspectives.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the contributions of Robert Watson during the 1960s to the discipline of the history of psychology.

2. Explain why "understanding the present" is a more compelling reason for studying history than the traditional arguments about avoiding the mistakes of the past and predicting the future.

3. Explain why it is important for (a) any educated person to have an understanding of and appreciation for history and (b) any student of psychology to have an understanding of psychology's history.

4. What is the point made by Boorstin in his essay on *The Prison of the Present*?

5. Explain why psychology majors are more likely to be required to study the history of psychology than chemistry majors are likely to be required to study the history of chemistry.

6. Define presentism, give an example of presentist thinking, and explain the dangers of this manner of looking at history.
7. Explain why a historicist approach to history is sometimes called a contextualized history.

8. Distinguish between internal and external histories. Use the example from comparative psychology to illustrate the point.

9. What is a personalistic history, how is it related to the concept of an eponym, and what are its limitations?

10. What is a naturalistic approach to history and what kinds of evidence are used to support this approach?

11. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources of information and describe some of the primary sources likely to be found in an archive.

FOR FURTHER READING

Traces the rise of "intellectual absolutisms," such as the Enlightenment ideal of science and history as a purely objective chronicling of the facts, and their replacement with a postmodern relativism that questions the possibility of history ever achieving truth; proposes a "pragmatic" Darwinian approach to history that steers a middle course.

A good example of Boring's erudition and his championing of the zeitgeist concept; argues that the effect of a "great man" theory is to create "eponyms" that give us an oversimplified and distorted view of history; given the complexity of history, eponyms serve as ways of classifying information.

An excellent introduction to historiographic issues, written for teachers, but of interest to students as well; includes an example of old and new history by comparing early and more recent articles written by Furumoto about Mary Whiton Calkins, the APA's first woman president.

A brief book summarizing a wide-ranging question and answer session with a noted historian that covers such topics as historiography, the reasons to study history, presentism, and the teaching of history.

The best brief description of how Boring's concerns over applied psychology contributed to his efforts to reestablish the primacy of basic research through his behind-the-scenes APA activities and by constructing a history that emphasized experimental psychology.

In his essay on
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