CHAPTER 5 – EDWARD TITCHENER AND HUGO MUNSTERBERG

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Two Students of Wundt

- Edward Titchener & Hugo Munsterberg
- Both emigrated to the USA and conducted psychology labs:
  - Titchener at Cornell University in NY.
  - Munsterberg at Harvard University.
- Titchener is not as similar to Wundt as he has been portrayed in some histories of psychology.
- Munsterberg was more famous but also infamous – is he a victim or a visionary?
Edward Titchener (1867-1927)

- Titchener refined Wundt’s technique of introspection and to study sensation and it Structuralism.

- He defined this as the study of the structure of the conscious mind.

- Titchener translated Wundt’s major work “Principles of Physiological Psychology” into English.

- He considered himself a “true Wundtian” all his career.
Academic Gowns

Cambridge Dr. of Philosophy graduation gown.

Middle-length gown with sleeves similar to what Titchener and other scholarship students were required to wear at Cambridge.

Colors mean different things in doctoral regalia.
Titchener’s Version of Wundt

- Like Wundt, Titchener presented demos during his lectures and attracted many undergrads.

- Like Wundt, Titchener was a prolific writer:
  - 216 works including 6 major books.
  - “Experimental Psychology” – a 4-volume lab manual.

- Like Wundt, he dictated the problems his students should study.
  - Unlike Wundt, he was inflexible when his basic assumptions about psychology were challenged and considered his approach a “model laboratory.”
For Titchener, psychology was the study of the mind. He rejected the idea of a homunculus (mental mannikin) — a mind within the mind that doing the thinking.

Psychology has a three-fold task:

- Analyze the sum total of mental processes, their elements and how they go together.
- Discover the laws determining the connections between these elements.
- Work out in detail the correlations of mind and nervous system.
To accomplish psychology’s tasks, experiments must be conducted.

- For Titchener, experiments consisted entirely of introspections made under standard conditions.
- This approach became known as structuralism.

Mental processes must be observed, interrogated and described in terms of observed facts.

- He used Wundt’s techniques to carry out introspection.
- Observers needed extensive training (10,000+ controlled observations) to perform correct introspection.
Elements of Consciousness

- Titchener’s views of the elements of consciousness were influenced by the British associationists.
  - Sensations are the “feels” of the perceptual world.
  - Images come from objects not present – ideas.
  - Both sensations and ideas have describable qualities.
- The third mental element is feelings – emotional reactions accompanying mental experience.
  - Complex mental states combine sensations, ideas and feelings via attention.
  - Meaning comes from context and is lost with repetition.
Criticisms of Titchener

- Over the years his approach using introspection became more rigid and limited.
  - Uninterested in applied or clinical psychology, considering animal & child psychology impure and less important.
- Introspections are always retrospections (based on memory not immediate experience, with distortions).
- Introspections are remote from consciousness as it is subjectively experienced. Dull and irrelevant.
More Criticisms

- Because introspection itself is a conscious process it must interfere with the consciousness it aims to observe -- reflexivity concern is derived from Kant.
- Dunlap published “The Case Against Introspection” in the 1912 Psychological Review.
  - A demonstration of correct introspection at the 1913 Yale APA Conference was unconvincing to anyone.
- Eventually the technique of introspection became extinct.
The Controversial Titchener

- Brash, autocratic, dogmatic.
  - He dismissed Behaviorism as a passing academic fad.
  - Harsh and unyielding with former students but warm and supportive of those he considered loyal.
  - Those students who resented his interference in their lives were excommunicated.

- Despite this, he was cultured, spoke several languages and could be warm and compassionate.
  - He stuck by Watson during his crisis at Johns Hopkins.
Munsterberg studied with Wundt at Leipzig (1883).
Searching for “will” in the contents of consciousness he could only identify muscle movements, so he developed a theory of behavior based on these.
His view of emotion as conscious recognition of one’s bodily state is similar to William James.
Structuralism was the dominant approach in the USA until replaced by newer approaches.
He could never accept Functionalism and Behaviorism.
James-Lange Theory of Emotion

Musterberg’s approach

See a bear, react by running away, notice the bodily state and conclude “I must be afraid.”

See a bear, recognize the danger, feel fear, run away.

See a bear, recognize it and feel fear, notice bodily state and interpret that too.
Munsterberg’s Early Career

- Taught at University of Freiburg.
  - Restated his theory of will and was criticized by Titchener and Wundt in public, praised by Will. James.
- Established Germany’s second psychology lab.
- William James arranged for him to direct Harvard’s newly created psychology lab.
  - Briefly returned to Germany but came back to the USA after encountering anti-semitism and in-fighting there.
  - In 1900, wrote his first major book (Principles of Psychology), dedicated to William James
Munsterberg’s Writing Style

- Munsterberg illustrates an ongoing conflict between popular writing and academic writing.
  - He wrote books that appealed to the general public, quickly, using dictation, usually in German (later translated to English).
  - He published often in popular magazines.
  - He repeated himself often, ignoring contributions of others and claiming too much credit for himself.
  - He seldom published complete data or detailed analyses of his results.
Applied Psychology

- He disliked Titchener’s narrow, restrictive approach.
  - He considered structuralism precise but not useful.

- He was a purpose-oriented functionalist psychologist who refused to give a definition of psychology.
  - It is more natural to drink water than to analyze it into its chemical elements.

- His lifelong concern was application of psychology in the service of humanity (although he always considered himself an experimental psychologist).
Munsterberg studied clinical patients in his lab, seeing those of scientific interest without fee.

- He developed a “directive” approach that encouraged patients to expect to get better.
- **Reciprocal antagonism** (encouragement of an opposing tendency) was used to eliminate troublesome impulses.
- He used hypnosis, conservatively to relieve symptoms.

- His results were published in the book *Psychotherapy* (1909).
Munsterberg & Freud

- Freud was the dominant voice in psychiatry at the time.
  - Munsterberg accepted Freud’s views on trauma and hysterical symptoms and sexual basis of neuroses.
  - He rejected Freud’s view on unconscious determinants, saying “There is no subconscious.”

- He conducted a series of experiments aimed at inducing a second personality using hypnosis.
  - Automatic writing experiments were used to demonstrate the second personality.
He wrote a bestselling book “On the Witness Stand” applying psychology to legal situations.

- He outlined reasons for disagreement between eyewitness reports.
- He differentiated between subjective and objective truth – an oath to tell the truth does not guarantee objective truth.
- He staged a fight in class, then asked students to describe it, in a historic demo.
- He often criticized the legal system & was attacked.
He advocated use of psychological methods in interrogation instead of brutal 3rd degree methods.

Munsterberg used his methods to question Harry Orchard, a self-confessed murderer testifying against Mineworker’s union leaders.

- He accidentally told the press his “verdict,” which resulted in ridicule and negative publicity.

Munsterberg described false confessions and the conditions under which they are more likely to occur.
He studied jury decision-making using students making decision alone or in groups:
- 52% correct when alone, 78% correct in groups.
- He concluded that the jury system is psychologically sound.

When he repeated the experiment using women as subjects, there was no increase in accuracy.
- He concluded that women are not capable of rational discussion in groups and women should not serve.
- This attracted renewed controversy.
Munsterberg is often considered America’s first industrial psychologist.

His book “Psychology and Industrial Efficiency,” has three sections:

- Worker selection (which excludes women)
- Factors affecting worker efficiency
- Marketing, sales and advertising techniques
Munsterberg recommended self-report measures of vocational interest used with job-related mini-tasks.

He pioneered breaking a job down into tasks and identifying relevant performance abilities.

He used street-car simulations to test employees in a job context, finding differences not present in lab-based tests.

He developed tests for telephone operators and found that his tests identified the highly proficient operators (although not perfectly).
Worker Efficiency

- He studied workers in tedious, monotonous jobs and found that they didn’t experiment them that way.
  - Judgments of outsiders about how boring tasks are don’t agree with worker’s own judgments.
  - Many so-called higher professions also involve boring tasks.
  - Many factors affect worker morale and satisfaction and need to be studied.
He studied how to increase consumer demand and increase advertising effectiveness.

He tested the impact of repetition of ads on memory.

He wrote controversial articles on the placement of ads in magazines (all in one section vs scattered throughout).
Other Contributions

- He wrote extensively on teaching, education and social issues.
- He opposed Prohibition (making alcohol illegal).
  - He compared male drinking to women’s intemperance for candy and fashion, provoking outrage.
  - This increased when it was discovered he had taken money from a beer manufacturer (Adolphus Busch).
- He opposed sex education in schools.
- He fought against parapsychology and the occult and challenged claims of pseudopsychologists.
Why is Munsterberg “Lost”?

- Why is Munsterberg not among the well-known pioneers of American psychology?
  - He won many honors and recognition in his own time.
  - He was famous himself and knew famous people.

- One reason is his support for Germany and his writing in German during his lifetime.
  - The outbreak of WWI in 1914 led to anti-German feeling – he received hate mail and was accused of being a spy.
Anti-German Sentiment
William McDougall (1871-1938)

- McDougall took over for Munsterberg at Harvard when he died in 1917 – he too was vilified later.
- His book “Intro to Social Psychology” was foundational in social psychology.
- His book “Body and Mind” emphasized purposive behaviorism, describing motives and goals.
- He proposed an ever-increasing list of instincts to explain human behavior, studied parapsychology and supported Lamarckian evolution.
Munsterberg has had a huge influence on contemporary psychology, but Titchener has had very little.

Nevertheless, current histories emphasize Titchener but not Munsterberg. Why?

- Titchener continues to influence how history is written but not how psychology is done.
- Boring (Titchener’s student) is a major source for most histories of psychology.