

Henry Murray and the Science of Personality: A case study in the Psychology of Scientific Progress

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ABSTRACT

At Harvard University in the 1930s strong competing forces influenced the history of modern psychology. Scientific progress, institutional prestige, and personal ambitions fought to define academic psychology. Science is a product of minds, explanations of science involve the psychology of scientists, and elements of this struggle are illustrated in the personalities of this conflict. In 1933 James Conant's goal as president was to make Harvard first in research science. Edwin Boring's goal as chairman of the Psychology Department was to make psychology a pure laboratory science. Boring's understanding of scientific psychology was based on 19th century psycho-physiology. This view was challenged by Henry Murray who introduced the latest biological model of science to research personality. Each of them fought for their beliefs and personal ambitions. This conflict marked changes in psychology's institutional identity for the second half of the 20th century.

Henry Murray y la Ciencia de la Personalidad: un estudio de caso en la Psicología del Progreso Científico

RESUMEN

En la Universidad de Harvard, en la década de 1930, fuertes fuerzas enfrentadas influyeron en la historia de la psicología moderna. El progreso científico, el prestigio institucional y las ambiciones personales pugnar por definir la psicología académica. La ciencia es un producto de las mentes, las explicaciones de la ciencia involucran la psicología de los científicos, y elementos de esta lucha se ilustran en las personalidades de este conflicto. En 1933, el objetivo de James Conant como presidente era hacer de Harvard el líder de la investigación científica. El objetivo de Edwin Boring como presidente del Departamento de Psicología era hacer de la psicología una ciencia de laboratorio pura. La comprensión de Boring de la psicología científica se basaba en la psicofisiología del siglo XIX. Esta visión fue desafiada por Henry Murray, quien introdujo el último modelo biológico de la ciencia para investigar la personalidad. Cada uno de ellos luchó por sus creencias y ambiciones personales. Este conflicto marcó cambios en la identidad institucional de la psicología para la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

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Introduction

“Let not him who seeks cease until he finds and when he finds he shall be astonished.”

Henry Murray

In the fall of 1926 Henry Murray (1893-1978), a 33 year old physiologist, joined an innovative psychology program at Harvard University. In 1928, despite reservations about his qualifications, he was made the director of the Harvard Psychological Clinic. His 1933 report to the Rockefeller Foundation, *Researches Conducted at the Harvard Psychological Clinic During the Year 1933*, marked Murray's transition from medical research into an independent research psychologist (Triplet, 1982).

Also in 1933 James Conant (1893-1978) was elected president of Harvard University with the mandate to transform Harvard into a leading research institution. One of Conant's first concerns as president was to restore prestige to Harvard psychology. To that end, Conant established an independent psychology department, he made Edwin Boring (1886-1968) chairman, and he hired Karl Lashley (1890-1958) to fulfill the cameo role of prestigious experimental scientist-psychologist. Moreover, believing that the best university was the university with the best professors, Conant instituted an 'up-or-out' promotion system based on merit, merit was determined by a committee charged with insuring research excellence.

On December 23, 1936, a select committee of experts met at Conant's home to evaluate Murray. Representing the psychology department, there was Edwin Boring, Karl Lashley, and Gordon Allport (Boring and Lashley were past presidents of the American Psychological Association, Allport was a future president.). Dean Birkhoff represented the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Dean Burrell and Dr. Stanley Cobb represented the Medical School. In his extensive dissertation written with Murray's cooperation, Triplet (1983) included a hearsay account of the proceedings. Strongly supporting Murray's promotion, Allport began by saying that Murray's research was in the great humanistic tradition of psychology begun at Harvard by William James. Fiercely opposing Murray, Lashley replied that James was the problem with American psychology. Interpreting Lashley's criticism of James as an insult to Harvard, Conant was overcome with rage and left the room to regain his composure. With strongly held divisive opinions about what constituted excellence in psychological science, the distinguished experts adjourned undecided, some with lasting contempt for one another.

Widely known for his history of psychology, Edwin Boring (1886-1968) read the history of science as a psychologist. After considering several acrimonious disagreements among influential scientists, Boring (1927, 1929a) concluded that the disagreements were not limited to the evidence or methods. He opined that many debates among scientists resulted from egoistic blindness. Boring commented, "Work of the exact sciences... involves not only precise observation but also a loose admixture of personal prejudice, ambition, and conviction" (Boring, 1963, p. 67). As Triplet (1983) interpreted the significance of Murray's review: The controversy surrounding Murray's evaluation represented a

struggle to define psychology's intellectual, methodological, and institutional identity.

Harvard University 1922

The circumstances of Conant's dilemma over scientific excellence in psychology began back in 1922. A decade after William James's passing, his once prestigious experimental psychology program was in decline, suffering. To reenergize the psychology program, the Harvard philosophy and psychology department reached out to nationally prominent psychologists, who declined because the department was controlled by philosophers. The least objectionable candidate available was hired, Edwin Boring (1886-1868).

After falling out of favor with the president at Clark University, Boring needed the job. He arrived young and ambitious with the undisclosed goal of rescuing psychology from the philosophers and establishing an exemplary psychology program of pure laboratory science (Boring, 1961). Boring's ideal for a program to secure psychology's position among the experimental sciences can be found in his iconic textbook, *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929b). Therein, Boring placed psychology's genesis in high relief against the background of philosophy and 19th century physiology; psychology emerged at a confluence of empirical philosophy and physiology grounded on the Natural Sciences. That meant science in the manner of physics, a mechanistic conception of cause and effect relationships revealed by crucial controlled experiments. Boring's attitude towards experimental psychology was formed in his graduate student days at Cornell University, formed by an extraordinary history course initiated in 1912 by Edward Titchener (1867-1927), a course of 200 sessions delivered three times a week over two years (Boring, 1961).

Approximately seventeen years later, in 1929, Boring published his interpretation of the history of psychology, the new psychology founded by Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). Boring dedicated this iconic history to his beloved mentor, "In dedicating this book to Edward B. Titchener, I am acknowledging my greatest intellectual debt... the gift of professional maturity comes only to the psychologist who knows the history of his science..." (Boring, 1929b, p. x).

Titchener's psychology was characterized by Boring as introspective, elementaristic, sensationalistic, and associationistic (Boring, 1929). "The word experimental was kept for the meaning that Wundt gave it; animal, child, abnormal, and applied psychology, no matter how much they experimented, were not called 'experimental psychology,' *nor are they to-day*" [italics added] (Boring, 1929b, p. 407). The *pure data* [italics added] was "sensations, images, and feelings" (Boring, 1929b, p. 411). This was the psychology of the 'contents-of-consciousness.' This was Boring's ideal of a laboratory based science that he hoped to establish and to influence the future of American psychology.

In reality, by 1910 American psychology was much different than Boring would have his readers believe; it was predominantly the psychology of adaptation, American Functionalism (Clark, 2023). American functional psychology recognized consciousness, but it emphasized observed adaptive behavior associated with changes in the environment, practically realized and studied in learning

experiments. Criticizing Boring's history, O'Donnell said, "... history was not only a matter of describing the past but of altering the future for Boring...Boring bequeathed to psychology a structuralist's interpretation of its development." (O'Donnell, 1979, p. 289). Boring's influence on American academic psychology can be compared to the movie director John Ford's Western movies, when it was said of Ford that he invented the legend of the American West. However, an alternative story of psychology's genetic identity arrived in 1926, a radically new program of psychology was instituted at Harvard in Boring's department. This was the nursery for Murray's development as a psychologist, and Morton Prince was his benefactor.

Morton Prince

In 1926 Morton Prince (1854-1929) was at the end of a distinguished career, which he began as a Harvard trained physician and ended as a world renowned psychiatrist. Prince's mother suffered from a neurotic ailment, and young Dr. Prince took his mother to see the leading authority of the mind and nervous diseases in Paris, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893). "Tine, Ribot, Janet, and Binet can be considered the founders French scientific psychology, dated roughly to the period 1870-1900" (Carroy & Plas, 1996). French experimental psychology originated in the 1870s with medical case studies of disturbed states of consciousness. Significantly, the fracturing of consciousness made analytic investigation of mental processes possible. In 1887 France institutionalized psychology with a chair of experimental and comparative psychology at the College of France. In 1890 Charcot established a psychology laboratory in the Salpetriere Hospita. In 1896 Binet and Henri published the foundation for individual psychology, outlining characteristics that made individuals different, complete with an experimental synthesis of functions that constituted personality.

When Prince returned to America from Paris, he devoted himself to investigating psychopathology, and at the end of a long distinguished research career, his legacy ambition was to establish a center to carry on his work. He approached President Lowell of Harvard with his plan to fund a teaching and research center in the college of arts and science. Lowell accepted Prince's conditions and appointed him professor of abnormal psychology. And Lowell transferred the administration of the Harvard Psychological Clinic to the Department of Philosophy and Psychology for implementation in the fall semester of the 1926-1927 academic year (Triplet, 1992). In accordance with the law of unforeseeable consequences, Boring was unavoidably confronted with administering an alternative history of psychology research, an experimental medical tradition conflicting with his ambitions for experimental psychology.

Murray's Circuitous Path to Psychology

Murray graduated from Harvard College in 1915, distinguishing himself as a scholastically indifferent wealthy adolescent with a passion for competitive boat rowing. Upon graduating he married, both bride and groom were born into wealth and privilege. With the

freedom of choice that great wealth gives, in the fall of 1915 Murray entered Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. This was his first step on the path back to Harvard, to the Psychological Clinic, and to the eventual conflict over the future direction of academic psychology.

Medical school began with two years of classroom instruction, followed by two years in a New York City hospital where Murray was supervised by a physiologist who was noteworthy for introducing Murray to the idea that many physical disorders resulted from psychogenic causes, a view not widely accepted at the time (White, 1992). Murray's next significant step back to Harvard occurred when he deferred his surgical internship to complete a Master's degree in biology. Murray's thesis was the role of calcium in the cardiac development of rabbit embryos. He finished his research in January of 1920. His surgical internship did not begin until September. Murray found a summer position as a research assistant in Lawrence J. Henderson's (1878-1942) bio-chemical laboratory at Harvard. Henderson was one of the leading biochemists of the early 20th century, as well as a philosopher and sociologist (Triplet, 1983). It is crucially important to understand Henderson's influence on Murray's development as an experimental scientist.

Murray and Lawrence Joseph Henderson

Henderson's obituary, written by the famous Walter Cannon (1943) for the National Academy of Sciences, was 30 pages long, replete with Henderson's achievements, publications, societies, and honors. Henderson entered Harvard in 1894 when he was 16, after he received a B.A., he entered Harvard Medical School in 1898, receiving his M.D. in 1902. Then after two years of study in Europe, he returned to Harvard as a lecturer in biological chemistry (Hankins, 1997). What sets Henderson apart is, he practiced the holistic theories and methods of biological science attributed to the famous French physiologist Claude Bernard, who conceptualized physiology as the holistic investigation of levels of interdependent relationships within organisms and between the organisms and their environment (Triplet, 1983). While assisting Henderson, Murray investigated the dynamic equilibrium of blood, which consisted of experiments where the results were illustrated with an innovative graphical display of the relationships between seven blood compounds showing their interdependency (Hankins, 1997). The opportunity to work with Henderson placed Murray at the cutting edge of experimental physiology with the opportunity to work in the best laboratories.

Under Henderson's influence, Murray's understanding of science diverged significantly from Boring's historical model of science based on 19th century methods. The difference can be thought of as the difference between a physics-mechanistic based model for psychology science vs. a biological based model of science, or perhaps a cause and effect controlled experimental model vs. a dynamic process model, where the process was the object of interest. The argument for process was, the physics model of science was inappropriate for biological science due to the complex interactions among organs that could not be experimentally controlled. Murray's understanding of science was based on the biological model, which was significantly

different from the historical precedent that Boring used to define his experimental program.

In the fall of 1920, as Murray began his surgical internship, he continued to investigate the blood chemistry of patients following surgery. Following that work, in 1923 Murray became a research assistant at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. In that role he investigated developing chicken embryos, research important for understanding the development of organisms. Between 1923 - 1925 Murray contributed to articles published under general title of 'physiological ontogeny' (Triplet, 1983). Murray's path to psychology then included a developmental component.

With regard to the psychology of the scientist, while working at the Rockefeller laboratory, Murray observed arguments between scientists who studied the same problems with the same methods. They observed the same results, but then fought over the interpretation. Boring's (1927, 1929a) historical based theory of scientific progress attributed these frequent conflicts to universal personality traits and shared social pressures. Murray, by chance, read Carl Jung's recently published book, *Psychological Types, or The Psychology of Individuation*. Jung (1923) suggested to Murray that underlying the conflicts between researchers was a psychogenic process analogous to an organism's physical development. Understood in the context of psychological development, the mature individual personality was left with a uniquely biased interpretation of events. Not all minds processed objective reality in the same way. In brief, *Psychological Types* introduced Murray to his future research.

At Rockefeller, Murray's research was based in part on the work of Frederick Hopkins (1861-1947), Cambridge University's Nobel Laureate Professor of Biochemistry. In 1924 Murray's research occasioned the opportunity for him to complete a PhD at Cambridge University's Trinity College Biochemical Laboratory. While in England, during Easter vacation of 1925, Murray visited Carl Jung in Switzerland with the intention of discussing his theory of psychological types. This visit with Jung proved life-changing, Murray decided to become a psychotherapist and research psychopathology.

Meanwhile back at Harvard, Prince's plan for a psychological research clinic was moving forward. The plan included an assistant, and Henderson persuaded President Lowell to hire Murray for that position. Although Prince was concerned about Murray's qualifications, the role was undefined because the position never previously existed. Murray was a medical doctor, he was an accomplished experimental physiologist, and he expressed interest in psychopathology. That was enough. In April of 1926, Murray returned to Harvard when President Lowell offered him the position, Research Fellow in Abnormal and Dynamic Psychology at a salary of \$1,800 (Anderson, 1988).

This extensive review of Murray's intellectual development was intended to emphasize the fact that he had distinguished himself in prestigious laboratories under the direction of acclaimed scientists. And it is important to know that Murray arrived at Harvard with the continued support of influential people, both within the Harvard community and without. Henderson continued influencing Murray's intellectual development, and it is worth noting that Henderson was the president of the history of science society. From either point of view, precedent or progress, Murray was not in any way naive about science.

Conflicting Visions of a Psychological Science

Despite receiving requests for PhD's who could teach industrial and educational psychology, Boring rejected applicants seeking degrees in applied fields (O'Donell, 1979). To suppress applied psychology within the American Psychological Association, Boring and his allies took control of the executive council, and they used the council to restrict membership. During the 1920s, APA committees were chaired by Boring, and his authoritative history of experimental psychology helped influence the way people saw psychology (O'Donell, 1979).

When Boring was president of the APA in 1928, Robert White (1987) was a psychology student at Harvard. White said that he was introduced to psychology with Wundt, Ebbinghaus, and others who thought that philosophical ideas could be settled by experiments involving the elements of consciousness. Boring's program focused on nonsense syllables in memory, just noticeable differences among sensations, reflexes of decerebrate frogs, and the conditioned responses of dogs in laboratory harness. "At a weekly colloquium, a paper was read, and the discussion quickly went from substance to method, which was followed by intense legalistic arguments over whether the point was proven," (White, 1987, p. 4). In White's opinion, Boring's graduate student meetings were meaningless forensic games.

Although the Psychological Clinic was technically under Boring's administration, Prince communicated directly with President Lowell. The Clinic was in its own building, and it functioned autonomously. Prince lectured to large classes of medical and psychology students, giving them a passion for psychology and a sense of experimental methodology (Murray, 1930). In spring of 1928, Prince's health failed. To succeed Prince, Boring wanted someone that fit his ideal for an experimental psychology program; however, Murray's medical degree met the criteria for Prince's endowment, and he was familiar with the Clinic's operation. It was expedient for President Lowell to appoint Murray Director of the Harvard Psychological Clinic beginning with the 1928-1929 academic year (Triplet, 1992).

In 1928, Boring was President of the American Psychological Association, and he was on the executive committee hosting the 1929 International Congress of Psychology held at Yale University. The Congress presented an opportunity for American psychology to demonstrate its achievements to the world. Karl Lashley (1890-1958) was the 1929 president elect of the APA, and he delivered his presidential speech to the international assembly. On this special occasion, Lashley chose to criticize reflex neurology, which was the empirical foundation for the trending American psychology of Behaviorism, empirically based on the conditioned reflex. Lashley had achieved his notoriety as a research scientist with vivisection experiments in the manner of 19th century physiology; that is by damaging and ablating rats' brains while subjecting them to learning tasks (Weidman, 1999). This was laboratory science accompanied with experimental control and statistical analysis, science that Boring approved of. In 1930 a position opened at Harvard for a psychologist, Boring wanted Lashley, but Lashley declined, and the philosophers insisted on hiring Allport, a humanist psychologist.

In 1935 after Conant's reorganization, Boring, now chairman of the newly formed Psychology Department, succeeded in hiring Lashley.

Lashley was hired to advertise Boring's laboratory based experimental program and to play the role of Conant's prestigious figurehead that would distinguish Harvard science. Lashley arrived with views of his own, he wanted to cut all social research from the psychology program. At first, Lashley's extreme views of science made him one of Conant's favorite advisers, but that would not last (Triplet, 1983). Lashley criticized Allport's research, and he questioned the value of Boring's, but most of all, Lashley could not abide Murray.

Murray Must Go

For students who wanted a socially relevant psychology, Murray's Clinic was a place where new ideas could be debated and novel research conducted in a supporting atmosphere. The Clinic's library was a popular place for study, for seminars, colloquia, for lunch and parties. Nevitt Sanford, at a symposium held in Murray's honor at the 1978 said: "... (the Psychology Clinic) presented a kind of civility that has long since been lost,... diversity of point of view among people in the same department was still valued, as a means for finding truth.... Under Murray's direction, "... the Clinic gained a reputation within the Harvard community as a socially vibrant, intellectually invigorating center of learning" (Triplet, 1983, p 156).

Boring was jealous of Harry's charisma and resentful of his privileged lifestyle (Robinson, 1992). Practically everything associated with Murray and the Clinic irritated Boring. Triplet (1983) identified three major sources of Boring's ire: Murray lacked psychological credentials, Murray used an interdisciplinary multifaceted approach in his research, and then, Murray was committed to a dynamic psychoanalytic orientation that Boring considered unscientific. And when Boring instructed him not to allow non-university people to conduct research, Murray enrolled the members of his research team as part-time students.

Also, Murray furnished the Clinic with antiques and art. And during the Great Depression, when Boring felt compelled to teach summers for the extra money, Murray retreated to his private estate leaving graduate students to teach his classes. While Murray presented himself as a carefree affable wealthy man, Boring posed himself as a working class hero who labored continuously. In retrospect, Murray's productivity during his transformation in the 1930s points to a reality of continuous hard work, labor that Boring failed to recognize. Finally, when accommodation and diplomacy would have been the easiest way to deal with his critics, Murray published *Psychology and the University*.

Psychology and the University

Murray (1935) aggressively confronted his critics with *Psychology and the University*. While Boring's ideal for a scientific psychology was solidified in history, Murray's vision for psychology was dynamic, progressive, and in the future. Murray argued that there was a need for a psychology of human nature because all the social institutions were determined by the interaction of human needs, sentiments, and beliefs. They were the proper subject-matter of psychology.

Psychology was as necessary to the social sciences as chemistry was necessary to physiology. And currently, if psychology described how people think and what they do, then no science of psychology existed.

Addressing psychology's history, Murray said that sixty years ago psychology adopted the experimental attitude of physics and developed a methodology of isolated fragments that contributed to the idea of a human being as a consciously receptive mechanism. This was destined to produce encrusted specialists, when the role of universities was to discover new facts and develop new theories. Academic psychologists had failed to contribute the kind of answers that society needed; psychoanalysts on the other hand had elaborated a dynamic representation of human nature based on the concept of interacting forces at the center of the personality.

Murray argued that the following changes to the psychology program were needed: courses in child psychology, courses in psychopathology and psychotherapy. Motivation and development should take a primary position in the program. And, psychology should establish relations with the allied disciplines of physiology, sociology, and anthropology. One addition to the psychology faculty deserved special consideration, the psychotherapist. Murray argued that an adequate science of psychology could not be developed without including abnormal phenomena. At present, Murray believed that the circumstances were favorable for progress, and if the university was to maintain its prestige, it must change.

Prior to publication, Murray circulated a copy for feedback. Boring was apoplectic, he confronted Murray and threatened him: If Murray published this, he would never be welcome at the American Psychological Association. However, Allen Gregg of the Rockefeller Foundation was encouraging. Murray published. He said that he published for the sake of those psychologists who shared his opinion but were not free to express their views (Triplet, 1983).

Murray's Clinical Apprenticeship

Murray arrived at the Psychological Clinic as a medical doctor with a PhD in bio-chemical physiology, who was only recently inspired to research psychopathology. Murray was then supervised by a world renowned authority in psychopathology, Morton Prince. Prince focused on innate and acquired dispositions, automatisms, complexes, conflict, repression, meanings, symbols, memories, and suggestion. With experiments, Prince operationally defined and supported existing concepts. In 1905 Prince published his experiments in *The Dissociation of Personality*, and in 1906, he founded the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. In 1914, he published *The Unconscious*, which featured his application of scientific method in psycho-pathological research. Unfortunately just as he was gaining recognition, "Freudian psychology had flooded the field like a full rising tide, and the rest of us were left submerged like clams buried in the sands at low water" (Murray, 1956, p. 293). The point is, just as Murray received his training in experimental physiology from a renowned scientist, he also received mentoring in psychology from a world recognized expert. When Prince's health failed in 1928, Murray was prepared to complete and published Pierce's on-going research.

Murray's Science for Psychology

In review, inspired to pursue research in psychopathology after one visit to see Carl Jung, a 34 year old physiologist without psychological credentials, or relevant psychological training, was hired as an assistant in an unorthodox research program forced upon academic psychology. Then after a brief apprenticeship, against the wishes of the chairman of psychology, he became the director. Then, on his own initiative, in direct conflict with the psychology department's influential chairman actively trying to get rid of him, only seven years after taking up psychology, he envisioned a radical new research subject and method. He managed to organize a complex study of human nature with a diverse team of researchers who held different points of view, and he also proceeded to publicly argue for significant changes in goals and methods that would change the identity of academic psychology. Today Murray's suggested changes are standard practice. It remains to be seen what he brought to psychology.

For Triplet (1983), the following report marked Murray's emergence as an independent research psychologist. Submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation: *Researches Conducted at the Harvard Psychological Clinic During the Year 1933*, therein Murray reported that the members of the Clinic had collaborated in an investigation of the total personality. Each researcher used a different type of experimental stimulus-situation, or an environmental pressure, that was designed to bring out a different aspect of personality. Individually, researchers each tested the same subject. Afterwards the individual subject's reactions to the many varied situations were compared, this made it possible to construct an abstract portrait of the subject.

In his *Explorations in Personality*, Murray (1938) identified the major influences that contributed to his science of personality: Morton Prince, Sigmund Freud, Lawrence J. Henderson, Alfred N. Whitehead, and Carl G. Jung. Prince established the research clinic for psychopathology; Freud contributed dynamic unconscious motivation with an emphasis on early development; Henderson contributed the holistic theory of organisms and the standard for experiments; Whitehead contributed the intellectual foundation for an organism based science; Jung contributed suggestions for investigation. From 1934 to 1936, with the acknowledged contributions of numerous collaborators, Murray developed a multifaceted empirical investigation of personality (Murray, 1938, 1967).

Murray's Science for Human Nature Personality

For a science, Murray required a conceptual scheme and given his education it would naturally be a holistic system, which requires explanation. The soul of clarity is contrast, and Boring's ideal for experimental psychology serves as the comparison. In Boring's history, experimental psychology emerged from 19th century physiology, which was based on a physics model of science applied to anatomy, the biology of parts. It did not work well on fleeting vital processes. The alternative was the holistic model of biological science attributed to Claude Bernard (1927), which led to Pavlov's discovery of the conditioned reflex. Pavlov's conditioned reflex was a concept, an abstraction to explain a function of secreting digestive glands.

The secretion was attributed to an unobserved neurophysiology of the brain defined by the conditions in the immediate situation of a normally functioning subject. In contrast, Lashley made his reputation on the vivisection of rats' brains. Pavlov criticized Lashley's research as a confounded dead end. Due to the complexity of the brain structure, there was no way of knowing how the organism 'as-a-whole' was effected (Clark, 2024). Likewise, remember Murray's criticism of Boring's ideal, approximately sixty years ago psychology copied the isolated parts methodology of physics and the result was the human being as a receptive mechanism. Also remember Boring's colloquium that White thought were but forensic games.

In contrast, Murray's holistic approach to experimental psychology envisioned interactive systems of mental processes attended by subordinate organic processes (Triplet, 1983). This amounted to hierarchically organized levels of mental processes that functioned purposefully to achieve physical, psychological, and social equilibrium. Murray incorporated a psychoanalytic understanding of personality, which included unconscious motives, and a developmental understanding of the mature personality. However, survival ultimately depended on behavior; behavior was manifest by the 'organism-as-a-whole' while making adjustments to its environment. Behavior determined well-being, as well as the survival of the species. Murray believed that psychology could not progress without recognizing motivation.

Academic psychology expressed motivation as 'reflex or drive,' these abstractions hid a tired old debate between 'morphic factualism' (observed anatomy) and 'ergic conceptualism.' The term ergic, borrowed from biology, represented a hypothesized entity that was the dominate motivating process initiating and directing the organism. This principle anchored Murray's scheme to an empirical object, the purposeful behavior, an organized event that resulted from a need (Triplet, 1983). Representing the ultimate reality, need was observed in purposeful behavior directed to achieve specific results. Need was the conscious, or unconscious, instruction that organized and directed behavior. Personality was the succession of interdependent needs underlying the organism's goal seeking behavior.

Murray also included the environment in motivation. If the immediate motivation came from the environment, Murray called it a 'press.' Murray's resulting 'need-press' schema defined personality with a dominate center controlling a hierarchy of processes interacting within an environment. The synthesizing concept of the 'needs-press' analysis of personality was referred to as a 'thema,' a concept related to Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of organism (Triplet, 1983; Laughlin, 1973.) The goal for experimental psychology was to discover the variables that combined to determine behavior.

Murray's Multiform Method

Murray required research methods that would address the complexities of personality 'as-a-whole' in individual subjects. His solution was: a) subjects were to be studied in a variety of situations by different researchers using the appropriate experimental techniques. The testing situation was to be as life-like as possible, and the subjects would not know the true purpose of the experiment;

(B) each experiment was observed by a hidden researcher to provide a means of obtaining an estimate of reliability of the primary researcher's collection and interpretation of the data; (C) the subjects would be given an opportunity to express their own reactions after the experiment was over, in order to elicit data that might not otherwise have been uncovered (Triplet, 1983). Murray believed that the best guarantee of validity came from pooling the judgments of a number of experienced researchers, a Diagnostic Council. This achieved converging information about the total personality, converging information was the goal.

In the mid-1930s, Murray recruited fifty subjects. For over two months each subject contributed approximately 35 hours to experiments at the rate of three to four hours a week. Subjects began by writing an autobiography, then they were interviewed by the diagnostic council for a first impression. Structured interviews followed, they included childhood memories, family relations, sexual development, and current personal problems. This included a relaxed interview to elicit information that may have been missed. There were questionnaires that addressed attitudes, abilities, special aptitudes, and aesthetic experiences. Behavioral responses to various stimuli were measured, the subject's predictions of future success were recorded, and their levels of aspiration, their tendency to repress memories of failure, and their ethical standards. Finally, projective tests were used to uncover repressed needs and feelings. Altogether, data was obtained from forty procedures. The individual researchers presented their data, the results were discussed, interpreted, and finally integrated by the subject's assigned personographer into a biographical account of the subject's life history, which for Murray was the subject's personality. This 'multiform method' of personality assessment, Murray considered his greatest intellectual achievement.

Conant's Decision

A divided Harvard faculty waited as Conant vacillated over Murray's future. While Conant's goal was scientific excellence based on merit judged by experts, Murray's research involved a value judgment about psychological science that could not be agreed on (Robinson, 1992). Lashley, Harvard's preeminent scientist-psychologist was adamant that Murray be exorcised, and if not he would return to the University of Chicago. On the other hand, if Murray was denied promotion, Allport was leaving for Clark University. Also, Dr. Stanley Cobb, Professor of Neuropathology at Harvard Medical School, Director of the neurological unit at Boston City College, and Chief of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital, was negotiating with Alan Gregg, the Director of the Medical Sciences Division of the Rockefeller Foundation. They planned to make Harvard the leading psychiatric center in the United States, and their plan included Murray and his Clinic. Along with the influential medical school, the Department of Philosophy supported Murray. For Boring, to lose either Lashley or Allport would draw unwanted national attention, and to lose Murray would risk alienating his program from the important members of the Harvard family. Whatever his reason, Boring chose diplomacy and suggested to Conant that he promote Murray to Associate Professor without tenure and give him two five year appointments to prove his

scientific worth. It was then a matter of funding.

Conant's dilemma was finally resolved on 12 March 1937 by Alan Gregg. Gregg told Conant to reassure Murray that he was staying and to tell Lashley to get used to the fact. Conant interpreted Gregg's intervention as a sign of Rockefeller's continued financial support for the Clinic. On 17 March 1937 Conant appointed Murray to Associate Professor with two five year appointments (Robinson, 1992).

In 1938, Murray published *Explorations in Personality*, the comprehensive work of the Harvard Psychological Clinic. On the cover, the inscription: "Let not him who seeks cease until he finds, and when he finds, he shall be astonished." It was reviewed in *The American Journal of Psychology* by Elliot (1939), titled "The Harvard Explorations in Personality." Note: Elliot's title implies Harvard psychology was a unified program, that must have upset Boring. Elliot began his review in a critical mode. He called Murray's book a bewildering report of an attempt to formulate a dynamic theory of personality, an attempt to construct new concepts for isolating the variables of personality, and the attempt to bring together experimental psychology with the empirically dubious Freudian psychology.

Although the authorship was credited to the workers at the Harvard Psychological Clinic, some 27 contributors, Elliot argued that it was the work of one person, Murray. Murray was responsible for the ideas, and Murray's ideas were expressed with no consideration of alternative views. After listing numerous failures to conform with the standards and practices of academic psychology, Elliot concluded that Murray operated detached from psychology outside of Harvard (again implying Murray represented a unified program), and in so far as Murray derived little from academic psychology, so far in 1939, Murray had contributed little to psychology.

Then Elliot suspended his role as critical reviewer, "Even a skeptic cannot withhold his admiration for the intuitive artistry with which the method is carried through... " And (Elliot, 1939, p 459-460) "The result is a bold and brilliant piece of work. The present reviewer, believing that American psychologists can take care of themselves, has felt a strong temptation to set the book up in an entirely favorable light as a first rate creative achievement... we glimpse deference to what most investigators understand as the real meaning of scientific work, a precise methodology collectively devised and pragmatically but impersonally evaluated." Elliot recommended *Explorations* as required reading for psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, social workers, and for those psychologists whose field was personality psychology.

By phrasing Murray's work as Harvard psychology, was Elliot's praise for Murray also a veiled poke at Boring?

Brewster-Smith described reading *Explorations* as a student at Stanford University in 1939, "The contents were engrossing, unlike any psychology we had read... we students hastened to read the book without anybody's assigning it. Its rich array of conceptual and empirical strategies for studying the depths and heights of personality drew us to psychology with a magnetism..." (Brewster-Smith, 1990, p 537).

In 1962 the American Psychological Association awarded Murray its Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award, this award recognizes psychologists who have made distinguished theoretical or empirical contributions to basic research in psychology. In 1969 Murray received the American Psychological Association's Gold Medal Award

for lifetime achievement, given to a psychologist in recognition of a distinguished and long-continued record of scientific and scholarly accomplishments.

Conclusion

Strong competing forces at Harvard University in the 1930s influenced today's academic psychology. Scientific progress, institutional prestige, and personal ambitions compounded to define modern psychology. Although this can be read as an institutional history of Harvard, the history of science is a history of ideas, and ideas are the products of individual minds. Explanations of progress in science necessarily include the psychology of scientists, and the elements of this struggle are illustrated in a story of the beliefs and ambitions of personalities.

Conant was committed to excellence in research science. In sympathy with Conant, Boring's goal was to use his position to make psychology a pure laboratory science. Murray challenged the authorities' conventional understanding of experimental psychology based on historical precedent. In direct conflict with institutional research practices, Murray introduced the biological model of science to study an area of psychology foreign to Boring's program. Each actor in this drama was committed to their own idea of science and personal ambition. Ironically, the outcome of this event in the history of psychology was not determined by evidence objectively obtained by the perfect method, it was determined rather by what influential actors with money wanted knowledge of, human nature. That was why Murray succeeded in introducing important changes to psychology's institutional identity, changes that led to progress in psychology during the second half of the 20th century.

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