

# THE EASTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION: 1896-1960

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WHEN in 1960 the Eastern Psychological Association held its "thirty-first" Annual Meeting, its true age represented far more than three decades. To be sure, this was the thirty-first meeting should one calculate the existence of the association as beginning in 1930. In that year a group of 240 psychologists attended a meeting at New York University and unanimously passed a motion which stated that there was a scientific and professional need for an association representing the psychologists of the New York area. This motion, however, represented the culmination of many years of interest and activity during which time psychologists had been meeting together in formal association. Robert S. Woodworth has painstakingly retraced the history of EPA from its beginnings through 1930. The following section draws heavily on his historical account of the early days of the organization (Woodworth, 1953).

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK BRANCH (1896-1929)<sup>1</sup>

"In its beginnings," Woodworth says, "the Eastern Psychological Association is nearly as old as the APA itself, both dating from the last decade of the 19th century." Soon after psychological laboratories had been established in Columbia and New York Universities, a group of local psychologists and other scientists petitioned the New York Academy of Sciences to "broaden its traditional coverage" and admit the sciences concerned with human behavior. Subsequently, on April 27, 1896, a Section of Anthropology, Psychology, and Philology was organized. A subsection of Anthropology and Psychology was authorized and immediately began to hold scientific meetings. The subsection soon became, and remained for many

<sup>1</sup> All quotations in this section of the history are taken from a report, *Early History of the New York Branch*, written by Robert S. Woodworth in November 1953. The complete report is on file in the office of the present author. Subsequent quotations and citations are from the records of EPA Secretaries under the dates mentioned in the text unless otherwise indicated.

years, a Section of Anthropology and Psychology. Three meetings each year were devoted to Anthropology and three to Psychology. The academy not only aided in publicizing these scientific meetings, but it also provided a central meeting place for them. The active officer of the section was the Secretary; Livingston Farrand of Columbia served in this capacity in 1896, and Charles B. Bliss of New York University in 1897.

Woodworth points out that dues were rather high for many of the young psychologists in the city and in addition, there was a growing desire for a more inclusive organization. Thus, at the tenth Annual Meeting of APA, held in Chicago in December 1901, the following action was taken:

The Council also recommended that members of the American Psychological Association living in any center may, with the authorization of the Council, organize themselves into a local section for the holding of meetings. This recommendation was adopted and the establishment of branches in New York, Cambridge and Chicago was authorized.

The prime mover in getting both the Academy Section and the APA Branch authorized and in active operation was none other than James McKeen Cattell. He was also a frequent contributor of scientific papers for the first decade and more, and he encouraged his juniors and students to participate. Yet it cannot be said that he "dominated" the meetings which were rather like the typical APA meetings, though the papers were often informal and preliminary reports, and the attendance at first was small.

Edward L. Thorndike chaired the first recorded meeting of the New York Branch, on February 23, 1903. James E. Lough of New York University was the Secretary, and this meeting, as many of the subsequent meetings, was announced as a "joint meeting of the Branch and the Academy Section."

According to Woodworth's account the New York Branch flourished from the outset. Usually there were three meetings each year, with afternoon and evening sessions as well as an informal dinner.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Brief accounts of these meetings appeared until the time of World War I in *Science*, the *Journal of Philosophy*, or the *Psychological Bulletin*.

Although most of the meetings were held in New York, Woodworth cites at least four occasions when meetings were held outside of the city: two at Yale in 1903 and 1907, and two at Princeton in 1906 and 1914. Contributors to the program came from as far away as Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, as well as nearer, yet still "outlying" locales as Harvard and Pennsylvania.

Although many of the papers presented at these meetings were informal in nature, some consisted of preliminary reports of well-known research. Woodworth cites several:

Cattell's measurement of scientific merit, Hollingsworth's and Strong's studies of advertising, and the Kent-Rosanoff study of association frequencies. In meetings held at Columbia University, Titchener in 1908 presented his "Laws of Attention" and John B. Watson in 1913 came forth with his manifesto, "Psychology as the behaviorist views it."

From all accounts the branch, during these early days, was loosely organized. It had no constitution or bylaws. The Secretary, who was elected on a yearly basis, was responsible for preparing the program and for distributing advance copies of the meeting programs.

As for a chairman sometimes the Branch elected one, sometimes it borrowed one from the Academy Section, and often the Secretary simply arranged to have some member preside at the current meeting.

Such arrangements were sufficient for a while, but as the number of psychologists in the area began to increase, and more and more people became interested in the activities of the branch, a new organization became necessary. "Fortunately," says Woodworth, "new initiative became available to utilize the Branch as the nucleus of a larger and firmer organization."

#### THE EASTERN ASSOCIATION SINCE 1930<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 1930 there was an all-day meeting at New York University attended by psychologists from an area within a radius of 100 miles of New York City. Concerning this meeting Fryer (1940a) says:

Of 360 psychologists listed in this area, 240 attended and at the business meeting of this representative body

<sup>3</sup> Douglas E. Fryer has been a prime instigator of the writing of this history. His careful and comprehensive collection of data covering the years 1930-40 has been invaluable as a basis for this section of the history.

reorganization plans were approved by a motion unanimously passed stating that there was a scientific and professional need for an association representing the psychologists of the New York area and that those present would support wholeheartedly the program initiated in what came to be called the "First Spring Meeting." The name of the Association was adopted as before by vote of the business meeting as the New York Branch of the American Psychological Association, and the Council of the American Psychological Association, Inc., reaffirmed the recognition of 1901 of the Branch at its meeting on December 29, 1930.

Fryer regards this first spring meeting as "essentially a social expression of a need for a psychological association." He adds:

This rebirth of the association came about because a number of psychologists were interested enough in it to work for it and because a much larger number, and the majority of psychologists in the area, backed this effort.

During the 1930 meetings an executive committee was formed which was to serve until Bylaws were prepared and adopted. This committee was composed of H. C. Warren, Chairman; Douglas Fryer, H. E. Garrett, E. F. Kinder, Clark Hull, and A. T. Poffenberger. Like many committees one of its first functions was to appoint another one—this one to work on the organization of the new association. Its Chairman was S. W. Fernberger. The first President (Honorary) of the organization was R. S. Woodworth, and Howard C. Warren was elected to serve in this post during 1930-31. Fryer furnishes us with further details of this meeting.

Sidelights of the 1930 organization meeting included a smoldering conflict of ideas between "metropolitans" and "outlanders" over the meeting place of the Association. The Program Committee had solicited an invitation from Princeton for the 1931 meetings, but before it could be presented a motion was made from the floor that the Association meet the following year in New York City. By a close vote this was passed. The custom of alternate spring meetings outside of metropolitan New York was adopted by common consent beginning with the Third Spring Meeting in 1932 at the University of Pennsylvania. A registration fee of 25 cents for non-members attending spring meetings was voted at this business meeting. It was decided then that the Association should meet regularly in the spring for a full-day session. The Secretary was authorized to send announcements of spring meetings to all eligible psychologists whether or not dues were paid, which was according to early tradition, and this practice was continued until 1940.

In 1931 the new Bylaws were adopted. These Bylaws merit some discussion, for in them, and in

the reports of the thinking that led to their final format, resides much of the philosophy of EPA as it exists today. Some of the more pertinent decisions as written in Fryer's report (1940b) appear below:

(1) No discrimination should be made between pure and applied research in the programs of the Association. But it was to be understood that scientific papers meant experimental results.<sup>4</sup>

(2) Scientifically interested persons who were not qualified for membership such as graduate students, laboratory assistants, and technicians were to be welcomed at annual meetings.

(3) Where possible, scientific papers by graduate students were to be included in the program of the Branch when introduced by a member.

These decisions have been re-emphasized in several subsequent board meetings.

The Bylaws were, as Fryer expressed it in his 1931 report as Secretary, "in the spirit of affiliation with the American Psychological Association and according to the traditions of the New York Branch." Furthermore, they defined the territory of the branch:

The New York Branch shall consist of persons who are Members or Associates of the American Psychological Association in good standing, located within a radius of approximately 100 miles of New York City.<sup>5</sup>

The basis for so defining the territory appears also in the Secretary's report for 1931:

. . . the present policy is not to increase the territory of the Branch beyond a workable area, yet to include all nearby psychologists who are isolated from other scientific contacts . . . .

This year (1931) there were 185 paid-up mem-

<sup>4</sup> A resolution which was approved unanimously at this meeting gives the details:

That no distinction be made in the scientific programs of the New York Branch between pure and applied psychology: that the Association emphasize the presentation of experimental (including mental measurement) research whether performed with pure or applied intent: that research performed with either intent be included in sections arranged according to scientific field of research. To avoid duplication of the activities of the Association of Consulting Psychologists it is recommended that papers dealing with consulting practice be presented at the meetings of that Association or some similar body.

<sup>5</sup> Article I, Section I, Bylaws of the New York Branch, 1931.

bers—a number which represented 60% of those qualified for membership as defined in the Bylaws.

Minor changes were made in the Bylaws in 1934, and in 1936 the name of the organization was changed to the Eastern Branch of the American Psychological Association.<sup>6</sup> The following year membership requirements were extended to include "persons who are members or associates [of the APA] in good standing and who are located in the eastern part of the United States or Canada." The "New York Branch" had truly expanded! During the same meeting of 1937, other signs of growth were reflected in the Bylaws. The title of Honorary President was changed to that of President. The Secretary was required to be bonded, and provision was made for an auditing of the books. At the end of this fiscal year the organization had a cash balance of \$609.10. (In 1930 the year had ended with liabilities of \$21.50, a sum which was generously loaned to the organization by the Secretary—a far cry from the later years when cash balances of well over \$5,000.00 have been on hand!)

In 1938 the term "Branch" was dropped from the name of the organization. It was now the Eastern Psychological Association. At the same time it was voted to discontinue the practice of publishing abstracts in the *Psychological Bulletin*. Abstracts from that time on were not available to the membership until the meeting of 1956, when abstracts again appeared; but this time they were in the printed program. Reports of the meetings have been published regularly in the *American Journal of Psychology* (1937-present), and proceedings have been published in the *Psychological Bulletin* (1931-45) and the *American Psychologist* (1946-present).

During the tenth meeting in 1939, two recommendations were approved. One was to the effect that 2-day meetings should be held in the future. The other established a committee to study once again the question of membership as well as the operation of EPA under its current Bylaws. The committee was headed by Fryer. He reported in 1940 and during the twelfth meeting the new Bylaws with some amendments were adopted. A

<sup>6</sup> An interesting sidelight to this change is mentioned in the Treasurer's report for 1937. Herbert Rogers reports an item of \$1.50 charged to obsolescence: 700 dinner tickets imprinted "N. Y. Branch" which were no longer usable!

paper by Fryer, *The History of the Association in Relation to the New Bylaws*<sup>7</sup> was made, at that time, a part of the Secretary's permanent records (Fryer, 1940a).

Fryer's paper listed a set of criteria which underlay the new Bylaws. First there was the criterion of *independence*: "The Association shall be independent in authority of other organizations." This was traditional. The second criterion was a reaffirmation of the purpose of the organization: "The Association's purpose of scientific report and discussion shall determine all the activities of the Association." The third criterion was concerned with membership and represented a break with tradition. Whereas membership privileges had been quite liberal hitherto, this criterion stated that: "Membership privileges shall be closed to include only (except in instances provided in the Bylaws) qualified and dues-paying members." The fourth criterion was concerned with the democratic process as it should be applied to the organization's affairs. "All business, including elections, shall be by democratic machinery and all action (except in certain instances contained in the Bylaws) shall be subject to majority opinion." The Bylaws as based upon these criteria stand much the same today.

Such subsequent changes as have been made in the Bylaws reflect no major changes in the basic philosophy of the EPA. Rather, these changes have been geared toward the effective functioning of an ever-expanding organization. For example, there have been changes in the membership requirements of the association to bring them in line with changes in the requirements of APA. There have been provisions for new committees, such as the Membership Committee which was established in 1946. There have been provisions made for amending the Bylaws by mail and stipulations for deadlines and techniques involving the mailing of materials to the membership.

#### BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE EASTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

From its inception the basic purpose of EPA has been to provide an opportunity for the reading of professional papers and the exchange of experimental data. This purpose shows up in the early

<sup>7</sup> The exact title of Fryer's report (1940b) was somewhat different but the title listed above was recorded in the minutes.

days of the New York Branch, but it did not appear in the Bylaws until 1940. Emphasis on this point appears many times in the subsequent records of the association.

The Program Committee's report for the year 1940 contains the following statement:

. . . it seems appropriate to report that it was the unanimous opinion of the committee that in the future, program committees should be empowered to reject abstracts for other reasons than failure to conform to the specifications stated in the Call for Papers. The committee believes that the number of rejections should be small, but that the Program Committee should be free to reject the few papers which appear clearly unworthy of presentation at a meeting of a learned society.

In the following year the Board of Directors voted that acceptance of the Program Committee's report—in which it was recommended that the committee be empowered to reject abstracts unsuitable for a scientific body—constituted sufficient ground for rejection of abstracts without further action by the membership. In 1947, while reporting for a Committee on Professional Ethics which had been chaired by Walter Miles, Harold Seashore reported to the Board of Directors that:

The Eastern Psychological Association is primarily a regional society of psychologists organized for the promotion and exchange of scientific research and professional thought . . . it does not seem appropriate to expand the present conception of the EPA to include *operating functions* more appropriately handled by other organizations, specifically by the national body or by the state associations.

Thus, the basic purpose of EPA was again affirmed. At the same time, the association did not establish a permanent Committee on Professional Ethics, but suggested that this should be a function of the Board of Directors.

During the same meeting the Board of Directors considered a request to publish and circulate a certificate of membership for members of the association which would be suitable for framing in a professional office. The reply of the board again is pertinent to the purpose of the organization:

Be it resolved that since the Eastern Psychological Association is a regional scientific association of psychologists, and since the Association exists primarily to conduct its scientific meeting and is little concerned with setting professional service standards, it would be inappropriate and undignified for the Association to publish a certificate of membership suitable for framing in a professional office.

Another reference to the importance of the scientific aspect of papers occurred in 1952, when the Board of Directors instructed the Program Committee to "Follow the policy of accepting papers on the basis of their scientific merit, rather than in terms of their estimated interest." This statement arose from a discussion (prompted by the Program Committee) at the board meeting. The discussion was concerned with the ever-increasing number of abstracts which were submitted to the Program Committee and the concomitant difficulties of trying to schedule so many papers in line with the basic philosophy that the association should be a paper reading organization. But just not *any* paper might be read! Experimental results and scientific merit have always been the basic criteria for acceptance of papers.

Another emphasis which shows up in the records of the association concerns the encouragement of graduate student participation in the meetings, thus affording them the opportunity to present research ideas to their colleagues and profit from an exchange of ideas and criticisms.

Somewhat related to this, perhaps, has been the association's interest in the occupational placement of psychologists. In earlier years a "clearing house" for placement was maintained.<sup>8</sup> Starting in 1952 the association has, with the cooperation of APA, maintained an active employment service during each Annual Meeting.

But paper reading has remained the underlying *raison d'être* for the association, and the number of papers presented at the meetings has shown a marked change over the years. In February of 1908 the meeting of the old "Section" included but two addresses. One was by Titchener, "The Laws of Attention," and the other was by Warren, "Feeling and Other Sensations." In 1929 a program in March presented three papers. One was by Thorndike, "The Absolute Zero of Intellect," another by Benjamin Harrow, "The Chemistry of

the Hormones and their Possible Origin," and a third by Franklin H. Giddings, "The Distinctive Data of Societal Psychology." In 1960, the Program Committee reported that it had scheduled 294 papers. In addition to these and the presidential address, eight symposia, seven special meetings, two invited addresses, and three films were presented. Also by this, the thirty-first meeting, the length of the meetings had been increased to two full-day sessions plus an early registration on the evening preceding the opening of the meeting.

A review of the nature of the papers which have been presented during the organization's history should reflect the changing course of psychologists' patterns of interests—if there has been such. However, such a review is difficult to conduct because of changes in terminology over the years and because different program committees have used varied criteria for assigning papers to sessions. One thing is clear, nonetheless. The meetings have consistently contained a nucleus of papers which might be classified as "general-experimental." Such papers have usually been the most numerous. Papers in the area of clinical psychology are next in frequency.

Another pattern that emerges from a review of past programs is the ever-increasing specificity of psychologists' interests. In the 1930 meeting papers were grouped into five sessions having the headings of Animal Psychology, Child and Genetic Psychology, Consulting Psychology, Experimental Psychology, and Applied and Industrial Psychology. In the 1960 meetings there were 35 paper reading sessions, and if one can judge from the titles assigned, each session represented a far more specific field of research than did any of the 1930 sessions. For example, in 1960 one meets such topical headings as Brain Stimulation, Interpersonal and Self-Description, Decision Making, Drugs and Avoidance Behavior, and Attitude Structure. There is no session that is labeled Experimental for such papers have been dispersed under many headings. Applied and Industrial has dropped out as a term, but we have Engineering and Military, and Industrial and Business. There is still a session labeled Child. Animal Psychology has become Animal Behavior, and Animal Brain Functions. Consulting Psychology has disappeared, but there are sessions labeled Clinical, Projective Techniques, and Psychopathology.

Despite its basic paper reading philosophy the

<sup>8</sup> In 1940 Gardner Murphy made a motion requesting that the Secretary of the association survey the feasibility of establishing a central clearing house of information regarding the training and professional interests of the membership. The preliminary survey indicated an overwhelming majority in favor of such a clearing house, and in 1942 a committee was appointed to act as the Clearing House Committee. The Clearing House was discontinued at the end of the fiscal year 1945, since it had been set up as a temporary agency until the Office of Psychological Personnel became more firmly established.

TABLE 1  
SUMMARY OF MEETING DATA, 1930-1960

Date	Location	Registration	No. Papers	President	Secretary-Treasurer	Membership
1930	New York University	240	31	Woodworth	Fryer	168
1931	Columbia University	290	24	Warren	Fryer	184
1932	University of Pennsylvania	181	32	Washburn	Achilles	187
1933	Yale University	276	44	Dodge	Achilles	189
1934	New York University	314	30	Cattell	Achilles	194
1935	Princeton University	279	43	Jastrow	Rogers	199
1936	Fordham University	276	39	Langfeld	Rogers	221
1937	Vassar	365	61	Fernberger	Rogers	268
1938	New York University	620	102	Lashley	Oberly	393
1939	Bryn Mawr	660	113	Dallenbach	Oberly	452
1940	Atlantic City	555	109	Wells	Helson	557
1941	Brooklyn College	633	73	Hunter	Helson	715
1942	Providence, Rhode Island	356	65	Murphy	Helson (s) Lanier (t)	747
1943	Hunter College	420	36	Allport	Abel (s) Lanier (t)	823
1944	Boston University	140	6	Heidbreder	Abel (s) Lanier (t)	847
1945	New York City	489	39	Garrett	Abel (s) Lanier (t)	870
1946	Fordham University	876	46	Boring	Abel (s) Lanier (t)	924
1947	Atlantic City	591	47	Anastasi	Hunt (s) Lanier (t)	990
1948	Temple University	933	87	Hunt	Scashore (s) Bousfield (t)	1,000
1949	Springfield	777	98	Klineberg	Scashore (s) Bousfield (t)	1,200
1950	Worcester	1,003	102	Cantril	Cofer (s) Bousfield (t)	1,320
1951	Brooklyn College	1,367	97	Hovland	Cofer (s) Ray (t)	1,780
1952	Atlantic City	1,168	130	Beach	Cofer (s) Ray (t)	1,967
1953	Boston	1,274	151	Miller	Lane (s) Ray (t)	2,251
1954	New York City	1,857	156	Schlosberg	Lane (s) Frederiksen (t)	2,487
1955	Philadelphia	1,325	149	Skinner	Lane (s) Frederiksen (t)	2,608
1956	Atlantic City	1,525	164	Graham	Lane (s) Frederiksen (t)	2,764
1957	New York City	2,300	195	Keller	Lane (s) Hackman (t)	3,084
1958	Philadelphia	1,768	203	Cook	Lane (s) Hackman (t)	3,151
1959	Atlantic City	1,650	218	Pfaffmann	Rush (s) Hackman (t)	3,303
1960	New York City	2,311	294	Gibson	Rush (s) Bruce (t)	3,315

Note: The figure for the number of papers presented excludes the presidential address and does not include symposia, round-tables, special meetings, film sessions, or invited addresses. All figures prior to 1942, except for 1938, were obtained from reports in the Secretaries' notebooks. All others were obtained from published proceedings.

membership has not been unaware of the "outside world." Such interests and awareness were indicated, for example, by a resolution, passed during the 1940 meeting, urging the Board of Higher Education in New York City to maintain its support of the appointment of Bertrand Russell as Professor of Philosophy in City College. The stand was taken in the face of considerable "popular" opposition. Again, the association's lack of "insularity" was attested by a statement of Helson's in the proceedings of the 1942 meeting—a meeting which was held during a feverish wartime period.

. . . what the meeting lacked in size it made up in other ways, particularly in the great interest in the relations of psychologists and psychology to the war effort. Both contributed and invited papers show that interest in war applications is great and psychologists are entering directly into war activities to an unprecedented degree.

In 1943 the association adopted a resolution supporting a colleague against "accusations and inadequate hearings" by congressional investigating committees. Copies of this resolution were forwarded to members of the United States Senate, members of the House Appropriations Committee, and to the press. During the 1945 meeting a resolution was passed which disapproved any quota system for any group in the field of psychology. In 1946 the organization went on record as "favoring immediate enactment of the current science legislation, Kilgore-Magnuson Bill, S. 1850." In 1949 the organization adopted four motions concerned with the issue of discrimination on the basis of race or religion. These motions, in essence, deplored the discriminative policies of a southern city which had offered to serve as host to EPA. The motions also reaffirmed a 1948 policy which stated that

EPA goes on record as being opposed to segregation for racial and religious reasons in any of its activities and that it establish a committee to implement this policy in the future.

(During the following year such a committee did indeed function, and eventually turned over its duties to the Board of Directors.)

Academic freedom again became an issue in 1950, when the association passed resolutions endorsing the 1940 statement of principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American

Association of University Professors, and furthermore, approved "the stand taken by psychologists and other faculty members of the University of California in opposition to a special oath for teachers denying political affiliation." In 1953 the organization again took a stand on the matter of academic freedom. A committee composed of Stuart Cook, Neal Miller, and Michael Amrine submitted a resolution that was unanimously passed at the business meeting. The conclusion of this committee's report states:

The Eastern Psychological Association wishes to call to the attention of our federal and state legislatures its concern for the effect of the current wave of accusations and insinuations upon the vitality of the country's scientific and educational resources. We urge these bodies as well as our university colleagues to join us in our efforts to strengthen the freedom of inquiry and expression which is basic to the protection of these resources and, consequently, to our national security. In short, we reaffirm our faith in the democratic principles of freedom WHICH HAVE MADE OUR NATION STRONG.

Thus, with its basic concern for the exchange of research ideas in psychology, the association has not been unaware of the world in which it exists. Concern for the dissemination of sound psychological research information, and a further concern for the atmosphere in which such research can be produced seem to be the two major themes of EPA. The "Branch" retains its roots yet it has grown. The data presented in Table 1 attest to its growth.

Growth always brings with it a multiplicity of organizational problems. EPA has faced many of these problems and is about to do so once again. This segment of the association's history must end, much as it began, with another committee, appointed in 1959 to re-examine the adequacy of existing Bylaws, administrative structure, and operating policies.

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