



# “Pure” versus “Applied” Psychology: An Historical Conflict between Edward B. Titchener (Pure) and Ludwig R. Geissler (Applied)

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## Abstract

There have been three significant breakaways from the American Psychological Association (APA) as a result of its emphasis on professional practice as opposed to “pure” or scientific psychology. In the first, Titchener organized “the Experimentalists” in 1904 (renamed “Society of Experimentalists,” 1929) as an alternative to APA. Following that, the Psychonomic Society (1959) and American Psychological Society (1989; renamed Association for Psychological Science, 2006) broke away from APA. Titchener’s conflict with Ludwig Geissler might be read as a case study of some of the early issues associated with such breakaways. For better understanding of Titchener and Geissler, biographical sections are included with more about Titchener as he is more prominent in the history of psychology literature. Their primary conflict, a private one, was revealed in 14 extant letters between Titchener and Geissler. Titchener was persistently critical of applied psychology. Geissler, Titchener’s student, was the principal founder of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. A secondary conflict involved Titchener’s persistent effort to convince Geissler to leave his position in Virginia and return “East, up into the center of things again.” Geissler (1923) eventually responded with a critique of Titchener’s structuralism. In spite of several longstanding disagreements, the two maintained a cordial professional relationship, and in the end, Titchener showed increasing respect for applications of psychology.

**Keywords** Applied Psychology · Journal Applied Psychology · Pure Psychology · Theoretical Psychology

## Introduction

This article emphasizes the conflict between the pioneering American psychologist, Edward B. Titchener, who strongly advocated “pure” scientific psychology as he perceived it while strongly opposing applications of psychology by one of his students, Ludwig Reinhold Geissler, the principal founder of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (JAP; Thomas, 2009). Supplementary information before and after the account of the conflict is provided for a better overall view of each man and his values.

Regarding the conflict, this article is best read as a case study of a conflict based on Titchener’s distress with Geissler’s move to applied psychology. Before that, as will be shown, their relationship was much closer. Their conflict was manifested in private correspondence between 1911 and

1923. Heretofore, there has been no public acknowledgement of their conflict.

It is a useful case study because it is representative of the conflict between scientific and professional psychology that has been with American psychology almost from the beginning of psychology in America. The first significant person to initiate conflict with the American Psychological Association (APA) appears to have been Edward B. Titchener. The APA began in 1892 with Titchener as a founding member. Titchener soon expressed opposition to what he perceived to be the diminishing quality of the presentations, and he resigned shortly thereafter (Boring, 1927, p. 496). He rejoined in 1910, possibly because his student Walter B. Pillsbury was APA president that year (Dallenbach, 1961). However, it is believed that Titchener never attended an APA meeting after 1897 (Boring, 1927, p. 496).

Reacting against APA, Titchener organized “the Experimentalists,” which after Titchener’s death became the “Society of Experimental Psychologists.” This, according to Dewsbury and Bolles (1995), appears to be the first split from APA due to dissatisfaction with the emphases in the APA on professional practice as opposed to scientific psychology.

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Dewsbury and Bolles's (1995) emphasized the founding of the Psychonomic Society in 1959 as a second related reaction against the APA. Cautin (2009a, 2009b) described a third break from APA, the American Psychological Society, which was founded in 1988 and renamed the Association for Psychological Science in 2006 (Cautin, 2009a, 2009b), Citing, but not quoting, Dewsbury and Bolles (1995) Cautin (2009a, p. 211) wrote:

The history of the APA is replete with examples of breakaway groups . . . . Although it is to some extent an oversimplification, it can be said that the tensions and divisions have been between research and academic psychologists and those engaged in clinical practice. . . .

"Clinical" may be a bit too narrow, as there are other ways to "sell" psychology, and the "giving away of psychology" became a motto for the Association of Psychological Science.

Many science-oriented members remained in APA following the major 20<sup>th</sup> century splits, mostly due to their memberships in and support for some of APA's science-oriented Divisions. It appears that the APA will remain predominantly an organization whose majority membership will emphasize professionalism. An unorganized movement seemingly opposing APA's values today is represented by the increasing tendency of those who are educated in psychology departments to ally with organizations closer to their specific interests, such as the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) and the Society for Neuroscience. Even the terms "psychology" and "psychologist" are largely being limited to those who sell their services, leaving who were psychologists in most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to become "behavioral neuroscientists," "I/O psychologists," etc.

## Context and Caveats: Titchener–Geissler Conflict

### Context

There are known to be 14 extant letters between Titchener (11 letters) and Geissler (3 letters). All letters are archived in the Titchener Correspondence at the Cornell University Library and among the Ludwig R. Geissler papers in the University Archives maintained in the University of Georgia (UGA) Libraries' Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Thirteen of the 14 letters were at Cornell, and 13 were provided to this author by Geissler's granddaughters. Cornell had one letter Geissler's granddaughters did not have (Titchener, 1922), and the granddaughters had one letter (Titchener, 1909) Cornell did not have. Now, both Cornell and UGA have all 14 letters. Only four letters (Geissler, 1923; Titchener, 1911, 1913; Titchener, 1923a, 1923b) bear strongly on the

Titchener–Geissler conflict, but some consideration will be given to Titchener's (1916a, 1916b) that were associated with Geissler's editorship of *JAP*.

Overlapping with the pure versus applied conflict was Titchener's expressed discomfort with Geissler's proposed move to the University of Texas (Titchener, 1911), which for reasons unknown to this author did not occur. Titchener (1923a) also tried to persuade Geissler to leave Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Virginia and come back East, which also did not occur for reasons provided by Geissler (1923; see below).

The geographic location issue triggered Geissler's (1923) angry response to Titchener (1923a) because Titchener did not refer to Geissler's interest in applied psychology. Titchener wrote that a return from Virginia to the "East" would have the advantage of bringing "you [Geissler] up into the center of things again, and so throwing you into relationships with a number of psychologists of your own rank and standing." That clearly angered Geissler (1923), and he expressed a strong defense of R-MWC together with vigorous opposition to Titchener's approach to psychology (i.e., structuralism; see below).

### Caveats

Unless other correspondence between Titchener and Geissler is found to indicate otherwise, it appears that Geissler withheld his feelings until 1923 regarding Titchener's persistently (1911–23) critical comments about applied psychology and Titchener's admonitions that Geissler not go Southwest (University of Texas) nor stay in the South (Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Virginia). Titchener repeatedly urged Geissler to return up East where, in Titchener's opinion, the most important psychology was being done.

Although there is an abundance of published biographical information about Titchener, as far as this author knows there are only three published articles with biographical information about Geissler. Two are two-page articles, one an obituary (Dallenbach, 1933) with two egregious errors (noted below), and one an encyclopedia entry with one error (Thomas, 2012; the entry stated that Geissler was in Detroit, Michigan, in 1911, when he was in Cleveland, Ohio). Thomas (2009) includes the most biographical information about Geissler, but the article's emphasis is on Geissler's role in founding the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Thomas (2021a) is an accessible, biographical chapter about Geissler with emphasis on his membership and presidency in 1929 of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SSPP).

**Explanatory note** The author's awareness of Geissler began around 2005 when he was asked by the SSPP's historian, James L. Pate, to write a biographical chapter about Geissler for planned volumes (in progress) about past presidents of the SSPP. This author was unable to find any published

biographical sources except Dallenbach's (1933) two-page obituary of Geissler. The author was fortunate to locate Geissler's two granddaughters, Barbara Noel Dowds and Ruth Noel, who gave him a box (file box, approximately 10" x 12" x 16") of data about Geissler, including such materials as his PhD diploma from Cornell University. From time to time they discovered other related items and sent them to the author. The author is deeply grateful and indebted to the granddaughters for their generous gifts. The materials were in the author's possession for several years until, with the granddaughters' permission, they were donated to the University of Georgia Libraries' Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which by then (2012) was in a new state-of-the-art archival building.

### Biographical Information: Edward Bradford Titchener (1867–1927)

Boring (1927, p. 489), the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most recognized historian of psychology and Titchener's PhD student, described Titchener as "the dean of experimental psychology in America." Titchener earned an AB from Oxford University in 1890 under the renowned physiologist, John Scott Burdon-Sanderson, to whom Titchener dedicated his most systematic book, *A Text-Book in Psychology* (1910). Titchener earned his PhD under Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) in 1892. He accepted a position at Cornell University in 1892 where he remained until his death in 1927.

Wundt is widely acknowledged as the founder of psychology as an independent scholarly discipline. Criteria used to assert that Wundt was the "founder" were compared closely by Harper (1950), who proposed that equal credit might be given to William James (1842–1910). However, James shifted to philosophy, whereas Wundt remained a steadfast psychologist, especially but not exclusively an experimental psychologist. Titchener brought Wundt's emphasis on pure, theoretical, experimental psychology to the United States when he came to Cornell in 1892. For many more biographical details about Titchener, see Boring (1927, 1929, 1950).

There is no doubt that Burden-Sanderson and Wundt shaped Titchener's strongly held view that psychology must be based on scientific method, experimentation, and theoretical reasoning. Equally strong, at least in the beginning, were his views that psychology should be a "pure" science (see Table 1, below) and that those who advocated professionalism or applications of psychology must be opposed vigorously. Hereafter, professionalism and applications of psychology such as industrial and organizational psychology (I/O) will be combined in the phrase "applied psychology".

As noted above, in 1904 Titchener organized a group known as "the Experimentalists," which after his death became the Society of Experimental Psychologists (Dewsbury

& Bolles, 1995). Titchener insisted that the Experimentalists be a forum for discussions of purely experimental and theoretical psychology (O'Donnell, 1979). Titchener became somewhat infamous for his opposition to women psychologists attending meetings of the Experimentalists on the grounds that men (and presumably not women) liked to smoke and that women would inhibit frank discussion (Proctor & Evans, 2014). See Thomas (2019a) for Christine Ladd-Franklin's fiery opposition to Titchener's attitudes about women attending meetings of the Experimentalists.

It is ironic that Cornell was the only major U.S. university in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to allow women to earn PhDs. Titchener supervised the first woman to earn a PhD in psychology in United States, Margaret Floy Washburn (1894), as well as 20 other women (Proctor & Evans, 2014). Titchener supervised a total of 56 PhD students, who are listed in chronological order at the end of Boring's (1927) memorial tribute to Titchener.

### Titchener's Structuralism

In the latter decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychologists were divided on what they believed psychology's emphasis and approaches to investigation should be. Titchener's structuralism emphasized that psychology was the scientific study of consciousness by trained observers and that its primary method was introspection to identify the elements and compounds that comprised consciousness (Titchener, 1898). In general, observers were his students helping one another, and in at least one case, Celestia S. Parrish (1895), Dr. and Mrs. Titchener served as two of Parrish's seven observers.

Heidbreder's *Seven Psychologies* (1933) provides the best early account of the different systematic approaches. Titchener opposed the approaches of the other six psychologies identified by Heidbreder, especially behaviorism. No doubt that was because John B. Watson (1878–1958) launched behaviorism with a primary emphasis on the unreliability of Titchener's structuralism regarding the study of consciousness by introspection (Watson, 1913). Item 1 in Watson's summary (1913) began:

Human psychology has failed to make good its claim as a natural science. Due to a mistaken notion that its fields of facts are conscious phenomena and that introspection is the only direct method ascertaining these facts, it has enmeshed itself in a series of speculative questions which, while fundamental to its present tenets, are not open to experimental treatment. (p. 176)

Titchener (1914) responded vigorously to Watson, beginning with a strong case that Watson had overlooked a long history of opposition to introspection by philosophers of

**Table 1** Graphic transcribed from Geissler (1917, p. 48)

| General or Pure or Theoretical Sciences                                                                                                                                                                             | Practical or Applied Sciences or Technology                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aim                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| To extend and improve human knowledge                                                                                                                                                                               | To extend and improve the condition and phases of human life and conduct                                                                                                                                                    |
| Standpoint                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Of objectivity or universal validity expressed in scientific laws                                                                                                                                                   | Of subjective particularity or individual interest in utility                                                                                                                                                               |
| Scope                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Depends upon inherent similarity of all facts of a science or aspect of knowledge                                                                                                                                   | Depends upon inherent frequency of factors composing concrete events                                                                                                                                                        |
| Problem                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| To discover or establish instances of universal similarity or validity, To trace their origin or development, To explain their casual connections                                                                   | To analyze situations and responses (or events) into variable and constant or essential and unessential components, To trace their interrelations, To modify these component so as to produce same results more efficiently |
| Method                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Observation and experimentation identical as to comparison, repetition, accumulation, modification, elimination, measurement, different as to simplification, isolation, abstraction, induction, and classification | Observation and experimentation identical as to comparison, repetition, accumulation, modification, elimination, measurement, different as to differentiation, separation, correlation, deduction, and standardization      |

science such as Auguste Comte and of advocacy that the study of what would become psychology be based on the study of behavior. According to Titchener (1914, p. 5),

... Watson’s behaviorism is neither as revolutionary nor so modern as a reader unversed in history might be led to imagine; and that as psychology has weathered similar proposals in the past, —and, I hope and think has benefited by the storm, —so also it may weather and be benefited by the latest trial of its staunchness.

Another strong point against Watson made by Titchener (pp. 10–11) was:

Watson . . . denies that there are centrally initiated processes, and proposes to find the behaviorist equivalent of thought in movements, chiefly, of the larynx. . . . he finds the behaviorist parallel of affective processes in tumescence and shrinkage of the organs of sex.

This is not the place to continue Titchener’s detailed rebuttal of Watson, but because a major focus of this article is Titchener’s opposition to applied psychology, the following from Titchener (1914) is relevant here.

Only those “branches of psychology which have partially withdrawn from the parent,” and which are consequently less dependent upon introspection, —experimental pedagogy, the psychology of drugs, the

psychology of advertising, legal psychology, the psychology of tests, and psychopathology, are vigorous growths. The complete elimination of introspection from these disciplines make their results still more valuable. . . . (Titchener, 1914, p. 7)

The “Closing Remarks” (below) will show that Titchener’s emerging acceptance of applications of psychology as described here developed as time passed to an even more accommodating view of the relationship between applications of psychology and scientific psychology.

Nevertheless, applied psychology and behaviorism were seen by other historians as equally objectionable to Titchener at the time of his death. The first paragraph in Boring’s (1987) 23-page tribute to Titchener upon his death was sufficiently compelling that the following portion was quoted by Heidbreder (1933, p. 114):

The death of no other psychologist could so alter the psychological picture in America. . . . [H]e was a cardinal point in the national systematic orientation. The clear-cut opposition between behaviorism and its allies on the one hand and something else on the other, remains clear only when the opposition is between behaviorism and Titchener, mental tests and Titchener, or applied psychology and Titchener. His death thus, in a sense, creates a classificatory chaos in American systematic psychology.

Heidbreder (1933) credited Titchener for his steadfast advocacy of the scientific method and that psychology should be a science. She also noted that Titchener was a consistent reductionist who believed that in theory all psychological concepts and processes reduce to the fundamentals of chemistry and physics (see more about material Reductionism in Thomas, 2019b).

### Informative Examples from a Few Titchener Students other than Geissler

Margaret Floy Washburn, Titchener's first PhD student (1894), is best remembered for her book, *The Animal Mind: A Text-book of Comparative Psychology* (four editions, 1908–36), which is about as far from structuralism as one might be. The animal mind could be studied only by observing behavior and inferring mental processes from behavioral observations. For more about Washburn, including her indifference to Titchener for as long as he lived, see Scarborough and Furumoto (1987).

Titchener's second PhD student, Alice Julia Hamlin (PhD, 1896), "made a career in marriage" (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987, p. 162), which implies that she did no further academic work.

Walter B. Pillsbury (Titchener's third PhD student, 1896) published *Essentials of Psychology* (1911), which defined psychology as the study of behavior two years before Watson's (1913) manifesto on *Behaviorism* (Ballantyne, 1999; Dallenbach, 1961). Dallenbach described Pillsbury's systematic position as being aligned with James Roland Angell and Harvey Carr's functionalism.

Isaac Madison Bentley (Titchener's fourth PhD student, 1898) earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Kansas, where he was greatly influenced by Hardy Kirke Wolfe, another of Wundt's American PhD students (PhD, 1886; Tinker, 1932). When Bentley enrolled for the PhD with Titchener, only three years his senior, "Bentley regarded Titchener, then and throughout his life, more as a fellow student and colleague than as a revered professor or an intellectual mentor" (Dallenbach, 1956, p. 172).

Guy Montrose Whipple (PhD with Titchener, 1906) is best remembered for his book, *Manual of Mental and Physical tests* (Whipple, 1910). In one of Titchener's letters where he expressed disdain for Geissler's interest in testing, Titchener (1913) paradoxically recommended that if Geissler continued his interest in testing, he should get advice from Whipple. It is apparent that Titchener was unaware that Geissler had contributed two tests to Whipple's book (see more in Geissler's biography section). Finally, among these few examples, John Wallace Baird (PhD with Titchener, 1902) was a cofounder with Geissler of the *Journal of Applied Psychology (JAP)*. Baird died 2 years after *JAP*'s founding, and his only article,

"The Legibility of a Telephone Directory" was in the first issue (Baird, 1917).

Titchener's most devoted and influential student, Edwin G. Boring (PhD, 1914), came 5 years after Geissler. Boring was the most important historian of psychology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, largely due to his textbook, *A History of Experimental Psychology* (Boring, 1929, 1950). Boring's textbook was dedicated to Edward Bradford Titchener. For several decades in the 20th century, the textbook used in a history of psychology course was likely to be Boring's.

### Biographical Information: Ludwig Reinhold Geissler (1879–1932)

Geissler was born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1879. His parents were Friedrich Wilhelm Geissler (1836–1915), a physician, and Friederika Emma Dietzmann (1844–1881), who died either during or a few days after childbirth. This author is unaware of evidence that being born in 1879, having attended some of Wundt's lectures, and apparently spending some time in Wundt's laboratory influenced Geissler, although it is reasonable to infer that it did. Hereafter, any time the author writes regarding Geissler, "This author is unaware . . .," it should be understood that he has taken into account years of examination of Geissler's papers before they were donated to the University of Georgia's Hargrett Library.

While studying for his doctorate at Cornell, Geissler met and married Sarah Marie Steele, a native of Canada. They had two children, Feliz Dietzmann Geissler and Virginia Geissler Noel (B. N. Dowds, personal communication, May 14, 2007). Virginia Noel was mother of Geissler's granddaughters Barbara Noel Dowds and Ruth Noel who, as noted above, provided the Geissler papers to this author.

After attending public schools in Leipzig, Geissler enrolled in the king of Saxony's teaching seminar in Loebau, Germany, where he earned a teaching certificate that also qualified him for admission to the University of Leipzig. He never enrolled, but he attended some of Wundt's lectures, and according to family history Geissler spent time in Wundt's laboratory (B. N. Dowds, personal communication, May 14, 2007).

Dallenbach (1933) erred when he wrote that Geissler came to the United States as a child with his parents. His parents never came to the United States. Indeed, his mother died years before Geissler arrived in Texas on September 5 1902 (Thomas, 2021a) at age 23 to join his brother George and sister Martha (B. N. Dowds, personal communication, May 14, 2007). This author is unaware of why Geissler's siblings were in Texas. Geissler learned English and for financial income taught piano and German from 1902 to 1905. He enrolled at the University of Texas in September 1903 (B. N. Dowds, personal communication, May 14, 2007) where in 1905 he earned a baccalaureate degree in literature.

Geissler enrolled at Cornell in 1905 to study with Titchener. Geissler and Titchener had a close relationship during and for a time after Geissler's graduate study with Titchener. For example, they published Wundt's bibliography together (Titchener & Geissler, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911). There is no doubt that their close relationship was fostered in part because Geissler was fluent in German as was Titchener. Further suggesting their close early relationship was a cordial letter Titchener (1909) wrote to Geissler during Geissler's trip to Leipzig while they were compiling Wundt's bibliography. All Titchener's letters applicable to this article were typed and single-spaced. The letter now being considered was approximately 1.5 pages. Early in the letter Titchener wrote, "I am especially glad that you caught Wundt. Why the dear old gentlemen should suppose I was coming over, I don't know. I wrote to tell him I was not!"

Later in the letter Titchener made some effort to persuade Geissler there was no reason to be concerned about Wirth's criticism of Geissler's (1909a) dissertation research on attention. For example, Titchener wrote, "It [Wirth's criticism] is very long and involved and few will read it anyhow: but, apart from that, where he corrects you, your mistake was due to his own obscurity of writing."

Geissler and Wilhelm Wirth (not to be confused with Wilhelm Wundt) had published disagreeing views on the subject of "attention"; see Geissler (1909b, 1910), which include references to Wirth's articles in German journals.

Further suggesting their close relationship, Titchener asked Geissler to make arrangements with his mother in England so that Geissler could bring to him "an old silver watch of his grandfather's."

After receiving the PhD in 1909, Geissler remained at Cornell until 1911 as an instructor. During this time, he assisted Whipple in the preparation of his *Manual of Mental and Physical Tests* (Whipple, 1910), the first book of its kind in the United States. Geissler was responsible for "Test 24 "Range of visual attention" and Test 30 "Simultaneous disparate activities," both in the chapter "Tests of Attention and Perception" (Thomas, 2021a). Geissler also taught a course, "Lecture Notes in Systematic Psychology of Association of Ideas." His handwritten notes (85 pages) may be seen in the Geissler Papers at UGA's Hargrett Library.

Beginning in 1911, Geissler's shift to applied psychology began in earnest. That year, he held a 1-year research-psychologist position at the National Electric Lamp Company in Cleveland, Ohio, where he studied the effects of levels of illumination on mental efficiency while reading or performing close-detail work (Cobb & Geissler, 1913). Geissler (1913) also published an article that year on color saturation in the Titchenerian tradition of "pure" scientific psychology.

From 1912 to 1916 Geissler was associate professor at the University of Georgia (UGA) where he continued to conduct research in applied psychology. For example, working with

merchants in Athens, home of UGA, he investigated the effects of advertising. This work was published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Geissler, 1917a). Throughout his career, Geissler published both "pure" and "applied" psychological research. A few more examples will be included below, but for a more extensive list of Geissler's publications, please see Thomas (2021a).

## Founding the Journal of Applied Psychology (JAP)

While on the faculty at the UGA in early 1916 and in conjunction with the proposed new journal, the *JAP*, Geissler began inviting the first 19 cooperating editors such as Hugo Munsterberg, a well-known advocate of applied psychology. An untitled note on page 99 signed "The Editors" in the first issue of the *JAP* reported that Munsterberg had died unexpectedly on December 16, 1916, while lecturing before a class at Radcliffe and that Munsterberg had agreed to be a cooperating editor of the *JAP*. A memorial article about Munsterberg was also published in the first issue by William Stern (1917).

Geissler enlisted the aid of G. Stanley Hall and John Wallace Baird in establishing the *JAP* (Thomas, 2009), likely because Hall had founded several journals and was president of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts (Sanford, 1924), where publishing a journal was more feasible than at UGA. History of psychology textbooks before Thomas (2009) only credited Hall with founding the *JAP*.

In fall 1916, Geissler relocated to Clark University, and the first issue of the *JAP* was published in March 1917. Hall, Baird, and Geissler were listed as founding editors who had provided funds to start the *JAP*. Hall and Baird published one article each in the first issue (Hall: "Practical Relations Between Psychology and War"; Baird: "The Legibility of a Telephone Directory"), but it was Geissler (1917b) who wrote the article, "What is Applied Psychology?," which essentially defined the field and that might well serve to define the field of applied and industrial/organizational psychology today. Also in the first issue, he published Geissler (1917a) and four book reviews. The evidence is clear that Geissler served the role of editor-in-chief or managing editor, although he did not have either title, nor did Hall or Baird (Thomas, 2009).

Worth noting regarding the first issue of the *JAP* is that Water Dill Scott, one of *JAP*'s cooperating editors published an article (Scott, 1917). Scott earned his PhD with Wilhelm Wundt in 1900 (Lynch, 1968). Lynch reported that Scott was a preeminent applied psychologist best remembered for his work in the psychology of advertising and in personnel selection, including selection of officers on behalf of the U. S. Army during World War I. On June 1, 1916, Scott became "the first American professor of applied psychology" while a visiting professor at Carnegie Mellon University (Lynch, 1968, p. 158).

In the *JAP*'s second year, Geissler published an article titled, "A Plan for the Technical Training of Consulting Psychologists" (Geissler, 1918). Thomas (2009, p. 399) summarized this article as follows:

Arguing that systematic training programs to prepare one to be an applied psychologist were essentially non-existent and badly needed, Geissler outlined a program of study for undergraduates that would qualify one to become an "assistant consulting psychologist," a master's program to become a "consulting psychologist," and a doctoral program to become an "expert consulting psychologist."

As noted, Hall was president of Clark University when Geissler relocated there in 1916 to launch the *JAP*. However, in 1919, and largely due to World War I, Clark University experienced financial difficulties that led to reductions in the number of faculty members and the resignation of Hall as president (Koelsch, 1980, 1987). With so much uncertainty about his future at Clark, Geissler began to seek a position elsewhere, and he found one at Randolph-Macon Woman's College (R-MWC) in Lynchburg, VA.

Meanwhile, Koelsch (1980, 1987) and Pruette (1926) reported that Clark University's new president, Wallace Atwood, a geographer from Harvard University, was taking draconian administrative actions, one of which led to a professor's suicide. An act by Atwood that deeply affected Geissler was that Atwood refused to allow Geissler to take the *JAP* with him to R-MWC. Geissler fully expected to do so. In correspondence with E. B. Crooks at R-MWC, Geissler (1920) had asked if provision could be made to enable him to bring the *JAP* with him. Geissler's expectation was validated by Hall (1920) when he wrote:

It is quite possible that wherever he [Geissler] goes he will take the Journal of Applied Psychology with him, of which he has been practical editor, although I am the figure-head editor. He began with nothing and has made it pay already.

Baird died in 1919, and Geissler's and Hall's editor roles with the *JAP* ended involuntarily after volume 4. They were replaced by James P. Porter, who had remained at Clark for 2 years at Atwood's request, and William F. Book of Indiana University. After 2 years Porter relocated to Ohio University, taking the *JAP* with him. Porter and Book edited the *JAP* through volume 11. Porter soon had sole ownership of the *JAP*, which he kept until 1943. He offered to sell the *JAP* to two faculty members at Ohio University, but they declined (Klare, 1991), and soon the American Psychological Association purchased the *JAP* (Thomas, 2009, p. 399).

## Pure Compared to Applied Psychology

An excellent comparison of pure versus applied psychology was summarized in a one-page graphic in Geissler's (1917b), "What is Applied Psychology?" In five categories, Geissler presented a side-by-side comparison of "General or Pure or Theoretical Sciences" and "Practical or Applied Sciences or Technology." Table 1 was transcribed as seen in Geissler (1917b, p. 48). The "Pure" column comports well with Titchener's (1910) section, "SUBJECT-MATTER, METHOD, AND PROBLEMS OF PSYCHOLOGY."

Titchener's (1911) letter expressed opposition to Geissler for considering a position at the University of Texas and for embracing applied psychology. The following selections from Titchener's letter show both. Regarding the possibility of Geissler's going to the University of Texas, Titchener wrote beginning on page 1:

If a bona fide offer comes . . . then you will have to consider the following things:

- (1) The practically final exchange of psychology for applied psychology;
- (2) The renouncing for ten years at least of decent research work . . .

For (1) it may be said that you have been interested in application; that the applied side is booming, while the pure side offers few prospects at present; that reputation comes more easily on the applied side; that there is more money in it. Against (1) it may be said that you have made a very good beginning in pure scientific work, and have a talent for it; and that application at present is mostly premature, and that his work must be undone later done over again.

Continuing to argue by implication against the University of Texas, Titchener wrote: "Against (2), that the state universities are horribly crude and very provincial in their outlook; that at least a generation must pass before they count in the world of science. . . ."

This might be the place to note that most of the time Titchener appeared to write as a father might who wanted what he perceived to be best for a wayward son.

For reasons unknown to this author, Geissler did not go to Texas. In fall 1912, he took a position he held until fall 1916 at UGA. Titchener wrote five letters while Geissler was at UGA, including one that was extremely critical of applied psychology. Titchener never expressed opposition to Geissler being at

UGA. It is possible that Titchener felt he had said enough about state universities (Western and now Southern) in his 1911 letter. Titchener likely knew that Geissler was working in a new building with several rooms specified for psychological research. Further, in 1902, Oscar Straus, a well-known philanthropist from Georgia, donated \$8,000.00 to equip the psychology laboratory at UGA (Zeigler, 1949). It seems likely that the equipment purchased was modeled on Titchener's laboratory.

Celestia Parrish (PhB, 1896, with Titchener; emphasis added) established the first psychology laboratory in the South at Randolph-Macon Woman's College (R-MWC; Lynchburg, VA) in 1894. It was based on her experience in Titchener's laboratory as his student (Montgomery, 2018; Thomas, 2006). Parrish relocated to the State Normal School in Athens, Georgia, in 1901 (colleges to educate teachers then were known as "normal schools"). She taught child psychology several summers at UGA while she was at the State Normal School. Given her experience equipping a laboratory at R-MWC, it seems likely she contributed to equipping the psychology laboratory at UGA with the funds Strauss provided. Parrish also established a Titchenerian laboratory at the State Normal School with funds donated by George Foster Peabody (Montgomery, 2018). Supporting this circumstantial case that Parrish may have had a hand in equipping UGA's psychology laboratory, Austin S. Edwards, another of Titchener's PhD students (1912) and Geissler's successor at UGA, compiled a list of equipment purchased by Parrish, which may be seen among A. S. Edwards's papers in the UGA's Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

In his 1913 letter, Titchener advised Geissler about how he should deal with his superiors in the administration at UGA. Titchener (1913, p. 2):

... and I should have liked to see your new dept. take a vigorous stand on behalf of scientific psychology. I believe sincerely that if such a stand is made, the authorities are willing to allow the professor to abide by it, and to give him a fair chance to show his mettle. On the other hand, once you begin with application, you have the pressure always on you to produce-quick and to produce- useful; and you will find it very difficult to have one set of students doing that work, and another set doing the slower and more continuous work of straight psychological investigation. ... and I think you are wasting your ability if you don't do it. You would say that progress will be slow, as in all pure science, but that the results, when they come, will be all the more solid.

There will be more below from Titchener's (1913) letter criticizing Geissler's preference for applied psychology, but it is appropriate to report that Austin S. Edwards (see above) in

1921 successfully petitioned UGA's chancellor to return psychology to the Franklin College (today, the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences) from the College of Education where psychology had been relocated in 1908. Edwards believed the College of Education neither appreciated nor supported psychology as a science (Young, 1985). Edwards also founded the Psychology Clinic as part of the psychology department in 1930, which continues today, and Edwards served on the board that developed Georgia's licensing law and received the first license in applied psychology in the state of Georgia (Thomas, 2021b).

Titchener's, 1913 letter continued his attack on applied psychology. On page 1 Titchener addressed Geissler's interest in testing: "If you decide to work this way, I should certainly get backing from Whipple. [Perhaps, Titchener was unaware that Geissler had contributed to Whipple's, 1910 *Manual of Mental and Physical Tests*.]" Titchener continued: "Personally . . . I shall be sorry to see you go into test work. You have the training and ability for straight theoretical work, such as very many of our expl. psychologists have not. . . ." Titchener again expressed his disdain for applied psychology, this time sarcastically.

We have not decided [at Cornell] on a Seminary topic; but I have curiously enough in view of your letter [letter is not in the Cornell or UGA collections] been thinking of Application! That is a study of the concept of Application, and of the various meanings which may be given to Applied Science; with a consequent classification of work done, and a differentiation of attitudes, methods, etc. Last year we took up Functional Psychology, and gave the men an intimate knowledge of *what that pretended to be and really is*; so they might have a positive basis for choice. This year I have thought that a *like study of Application might be serviceable to them* in view of the situation they will have to meet when they get out into positions. [emphasis added]

It is reasonable to conclude that Titchener also meant to consider what applications "pretended to be and really is."

Titchener's (1916a, 1916b) letters might have offended Geissler, although a benign interpretation is reasonable. These letters occurred in the context of Geissler's editorship of the *JAP*. Three months before the first issue of the *JAP* was published, Titchener (1916a) wrote:

I have been meaning to write about your journal. I wish you all manner of luck, and there is room for such a journal if you keep its tone high enough and don't fall to the common level. I would gladly subscribe if I could,

but I am subscribing to too many things already. . . . But I have a paper that may possibly do for you.

The paper was not Titchener's but one by A. B. Fitt of South Africa. Fitt had submitted it to the *American Journal of Psychology* (*AJP*) of which Titchener was then associate editor and had asked Titchener to try to find a place for it elsewhere if the *AJP* could not take it. Titchener explained that it would cost the *AJP* about \$20–\$30 to publish, owing to tables, figures, and mathematical formulae, which Titchener deemed too costly for the *AJP*. Titchener ended his letter, "But if you are wealthy enough to publish it, it would be quite a feather in your cap."

Geissler apparently replied and asked to see the manuscript, because Titchener (1916b) responded:

I am sorry but I am not authorized to submit the MS to an editor, for judgment on its merits, until after the question of costs has been settled. If you promise to publish free of cost to the author, provided that you find the article good enough for you, then of course I can send it.

Titchener continued to say that he was also considering "Watson's new Journal" before closing, "Meantime, them's my orders."

It is reasonable that Geissler wanted to see Fitt's manuscript to assess whether the *JAP* could afford its tables, figures, and mathematical equations as well as to assess whether it was right for the *JAP*. Perhaps editorial practices differed then, but it is hard to imagine an editor today responding with equanimity to such a proposal. We may never know whether Fitt set the constraints Titchener enforced nor how Geissler felt about Titchener's actions regarding Fitt's manuscript. It may be that Titchener simply honored Fitt's constraints and that he meant no offense to Geissler. Fitt's manuscript was published elsewhere (Fitt, 1917).

In any event, it is not difficult to imagine how the cumulative effect of Titchener's (1911, 1913, 1916a, 1916b, and 1923a) letters over the years might have pushed Geissler beyond the point of polite reply.

## Geissler Finally Fires Back

Titchener (1923a) did not comment further about his opposition to Geissler's interest in applied psychology, but he continued urging Geissler to leave R-MWC and come back up East where he could be "up into the center of things again." A position had opened at Clark University which Titchener was urging Geissler to consider. This apparently triggered Geissler's (1923) angry response.

There are . . . several strong reasons why I would not consider the place [Clark University]. . . . [F]irst . . . Pres.

Atwood and I are incompatibles, on account of the despicable treatment he gave me in connection with the *J. Appl. Psych.* . . . [S]econd . . . New England or the East is no longer the center of things psychological, for me. If I had thought so, I would have accepted the Wellesley offer two years ago. . . . In the third place I would consider it folly to board a sinking vessel after I had once safely departed from it . . . and I do not consider it any honor. . . . Other reasons have to do with climate, health, living conditions, etc.

Geissler noted that despite Titchener's low opinion of "our Southern schools," he had found them to provide supportive environments that compared favorably with most of the northern schools with which he had personal experience.

Geissler (1923) continued by attacking Titchener's psychology:

Likewise, my views of Psychology, to continue my confessions, have undergone considerable changes, and "Eastern" or structural psychology looks less formidable to me now. This does not mean that I have embraced functionalism or behaviorism or psycho-analysis or anything else of the kind. It does mean that I am searching for a deeper, more fertile understanding of mental life, more inclusive at least of any single modern tendency in present psychology. To gain such a more synthetic view-point I have as good an opportunity here as anywhere, and that is another big reason why I am in no hurry to change. And I have had actual offers from other places.

Perhaps you think I might be lost to Experimental Psychology and research, especially as I have not turned out anything in recent years, and so would offer me a chance to publish minor studies in your Journal, as you did not think me good enough for anything else Clark did have something worthwhile to offer. [This slightly confusing sentence is quoted accurately.] So I may just as well tell you that I anticipate no glory from adding to the present array of structural psychological investigations. They look so futile and puny, so self-sufficient and yet so insufficient to me that I would not care to indulge in them. I would rather not be associated in print with that sort of output, even though I may never be able to arrive at some bigger concept of psychology. I can anticipate auditorily all of your objections and poo-hoos, and yet I believe that you yourself are not really satisfied with present systemic psychology, but you feel duty bound to try out the system to see how much it will bear. You may call my attitude destructive radicalism, if you please, although I have kept it to myself so far, because I am looking for constructive principle; but to

me it is merely dissatisfaction with modern psychology which has come to the breaking point, because we are too deep in the woods to see anything but trees and “shrubbage.”

Geissler’s long last paragraph shifts more towards how good things are for him at R-MWC including funds for equipment, books, good students, good weather, etc.

## Aftermath

Four letters were exchanged between Titchener (three letters) and Geissler (one letter) after Geissler’s (1923) angry letter. Titchener (1923b) wrote later that year to ask Geissler if he would be willing to prepare an index for one volume of the *American Journal of Psychology* (*AJP*; Titchener was associate editor 1895–1920 and editor 1921–25), and he did not refer to Geissler’s (1923) letter. Geissler (1924) agreed to prepare an index for one volume of the *AJP* and requested that Titchener provide an example of how the indexing should be done. Geissler’s letter was a full page, typed, single-spaced, and other than addressing the issue of indexing the *AJP* volumes, Geissler mostly expressed his appreciation to Titchener for permission to use of some of his published materials and projection slides in the preparation of some of his instructional materials at R-MWC. In short, it was a cordial letter between professional colleagues with no sign of any bitterness. Titchener’s (1925) last known letter to Geissler was relatively brief and might be worth quoting in full to illustrate the cordiality and professionalism that continued between the two.

Very many thanks for the sample sheet of your loose-leaf Manual. I see that you are sticking to the classical experiments, and I have no doubt that in your case that is a wise thing to do. I should like myself someday to get out a set of experiments that should bring the practice of the laboratories up to the level of modern knowledge; there are a large number of recent things that ought to be taken over into laboratory practice. Meantime the older work furnishes admirable drill for beginning students. (Titchener, 1925)

Two years later, Titchener’s “untimely death” (Held’s preface to Titchener, 1929, p. vii) prevented further correspondence.

## Titchener, 1929

Based on Boring’s (1927) tribute to Titchener upon his death and Heidebreder’s (1930) summary remarks, he was as well-remembered for his advocacy of structuralism as he was for his opposition to mental testing, applied psychology, and behaviorism. However, published posthumously, Titchener’s

(1929) *Systematic Psychology: Prolegomena* (*SS:P*) reflected a changed attitude towards applied science and technology. Titchener’s colleague at Cornell, H. P. Held, began the preface to *SS:P* as follows.

In the early summer of 1917, Professor Titchener began writing his *Systematic Psychology*, —a book long projected. There was to be a first volume of *Prolegomena*, and as many subsequent volumes as the systematic setting for of the facts of psychology required. The book was to be his final word on the establishment of scientific psychology.

Held continued to describe in some detail the efforts Titchener made on this work and the distractions that slowed him. In the end, only the *SS:P* was in a sufficiently final form to be published. The book considered to be Titchener’s most systematic book during his lifetime was *A Text-book of Psychology* (Titchener, 1910). Regarding Titchener’s changing view of applied psychology and technology, it will be useful to compare the 1910 *Text-book* with the 1929 *SS:P*.

Institutional science, then, is descriptive and not explanatory; it stops short of the “why” of things. It is also—we have noted that the word “description” enters the double protest—“pure” or theoretical and not “applied” or practical; it stops short of the “use” of things. Yet pure and applied science are, in fact, closely related and the relation is everyday becoming closer. What is the mark of difference, and how does difference consist with this relation? (Titchener, 1929, p. 65)

On pages 68–69, Titchener discussed at some length similarities and differences between pure and applied science.

There is first of all, the common bond of logic. Whenever the man of science plans an experiment, whenever he tries to give his facts a systematic setting, he uses the same logical rules as the technologist; nay more, when he writes a hand-book or text-book for information or instruction, he becomes in so far forth a technologist. There is, secondly, the likelihood that any long continued bit of work, scientific or technological, will invite a shift of attitude. The physiologist, anxious as professor to demonstrate a scientific law to his classes, invents the ophthalmoscope; the pathologist searching for an antitoxin and finding that the chemists cannot tell him what he wants to know, becomes involved in purely scientific investigation. And there is, thirdly, the need of technology itself.

Any technology that holds steadily aloof from science must inevitably stagnate; and an instinctive submission to this law sends the technologist, however skeptical his

mood may be, to talk things out with his scientific colleague.

The term “applied science” does not appear in the index of Titchener (1910), nor does any discussion comparable to the above. Thus, Titchener’s attitude toward applied science evolved and revealed greater acceptance of a legitimate role for applied psychology. It may be recalled that in the 1923 letter that triggered Geissler’s angry reply (Titchener, 1923a), Titchener had not made further disparaging remarks about Geissler’s interest in applied psychology, rather it was the location issue that triggered Geissler’s response. Nevertheless, the author is unaware of any evidence that Titchener had written after 1913 to Geissler to suggest that Titchener’s attitude about applied psychology might be changing.

### Geissler, 1929

After having served 2 years on the governing Council of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SSPP) and three as secretary-treasurer, Geissler was elected to serve as president of the SSPP in 1929. His presidential address, “The Objectives of Objective Psychology,” at the annual meeting in March 1929, was published in the *Psychological Review* in September 1929. It is an article that might serve scholarly minded psychologists well today.

Wryly, Geissler (1929, p. 353) noted,

[Having] . . . decided, since I could not have my own way of abolishing the custom of presidential addresses, that I could at least have my own Objective in obeying this custom. But as I know so little about the nature of objectives in human actions, I decided that this would be a good reason for talking about it glibly, hoping that in doing so, I might find out what is meant by the term.

Geissler began to grapple with the meaning of “objective psychology” by considering Dunlap (1927) and Dashiell’s (1928) *Fundamentals of Objective Psychology*, and then adding his critical perspectives. Geissler ranged widely citing philosophers such as Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, and Kant, and Pearson’s (1892) *The Grammar of Science* before turning his attention to scientists in other disciplines including biology, chemistry, geology, physics, and physiology. There are too many excellent quotations to select, but his closing remarks about measurement demonstrate the depth of Geissler’s critical thinking.

Geissler wrote that psychology, like physics, often had to deal with immeasurables.

From our study of the aims of other sciences, we find that even the most exact of them do not make

measurement as such as aim in itself. . . . The force of a fruitful idea, such as Einstein’s theory, can never be calculated in terms of ergs, and yet it may accomplish more than the largest engines that can be constructed. The greatest physicists themselves well recognize this fact; why should psychologists apologize for dealing with such immeasurables? (Geissler, 1929, p. 174)

### Closing Remarks

Three major breakaways from the APA were due to the APA’s increasing emphasis on professional practice as opposed to pure or scientific psychology (Cautin, 2009a, 2009b; Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995). These were Titchener’s “the Experimentalists” 1904 (renamed the Society of Experimental Psychology two years after his death, 1929), the Psychonomic Society (1959), and the American Psychological Society in 1988 (renamed the Association for Psychological Science in 2006). Titchener’s conflict with Geissler regarding “pure” (Titchener) versus “applied” (Geissler) psychology is a case study representing the conflict between scientific psychologists who were dissatisfied with the APA’s increasing advocacy of professional psychology and perceived neglect of scientific psychology. To be fair, in his final years Titchener gained greater respect for applied psychology (e.g., Titchener, 1929) and Geissler never opposed pure psychology. Geissler’s last major article was consistent with pure theoretical, methodological scientific psychology (Geissler, 1929).

Titchener’s place in history is among the giants who founded and established scientific psychology in the United States. Geissler’s place in history is likely to be limited primarily to the role he had in founding the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and, perhaps, his foundational article in the first issue of the journal, “What Is Applied Psychology?” (Geissler, 1917). Given his broad perspective and powerful intellect as revealed in Geissler (1917, 1918, 1929), one can only wonder how much greater his place in history might have been had Clark University President Wallace Atwood not “stolen” the *JAP* from him in 1920.

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