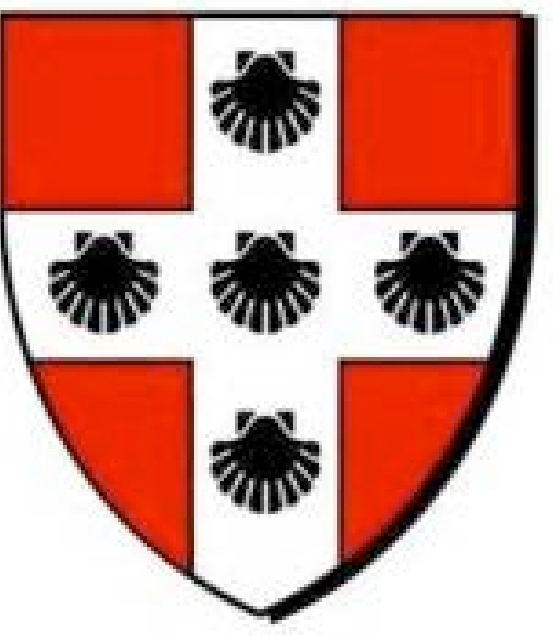


Inside the Lab: The American Psychological Association's 1960s Ethics Survey

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Introduction and Background

Following WWII, American laboratory psychologists found themselves dealing with real-world problems involving human subjects. However, in the historical narratives of this transformation of, the micro-dynamics of the laboratory itself remain nebulous. Who were the objects of the creation of psychological knowledge? How did the the psychological experiment shape claims about human nature?

It has been argued that limited subject pools have produced a limited view of human nature given experimental psychology's reliance on a specific subject pool: white, affluent college students in Western societies (Sears). In the 1960s, psychologists became increasingly concerned with laboratory relations and practices, including deception. Given the increasingly reflexive dynamic of psychology in the post-war era, the American Psychological Association (APA) undertook in the mid-1960s a survey of psychologists' opinions about research ethics (Stark).

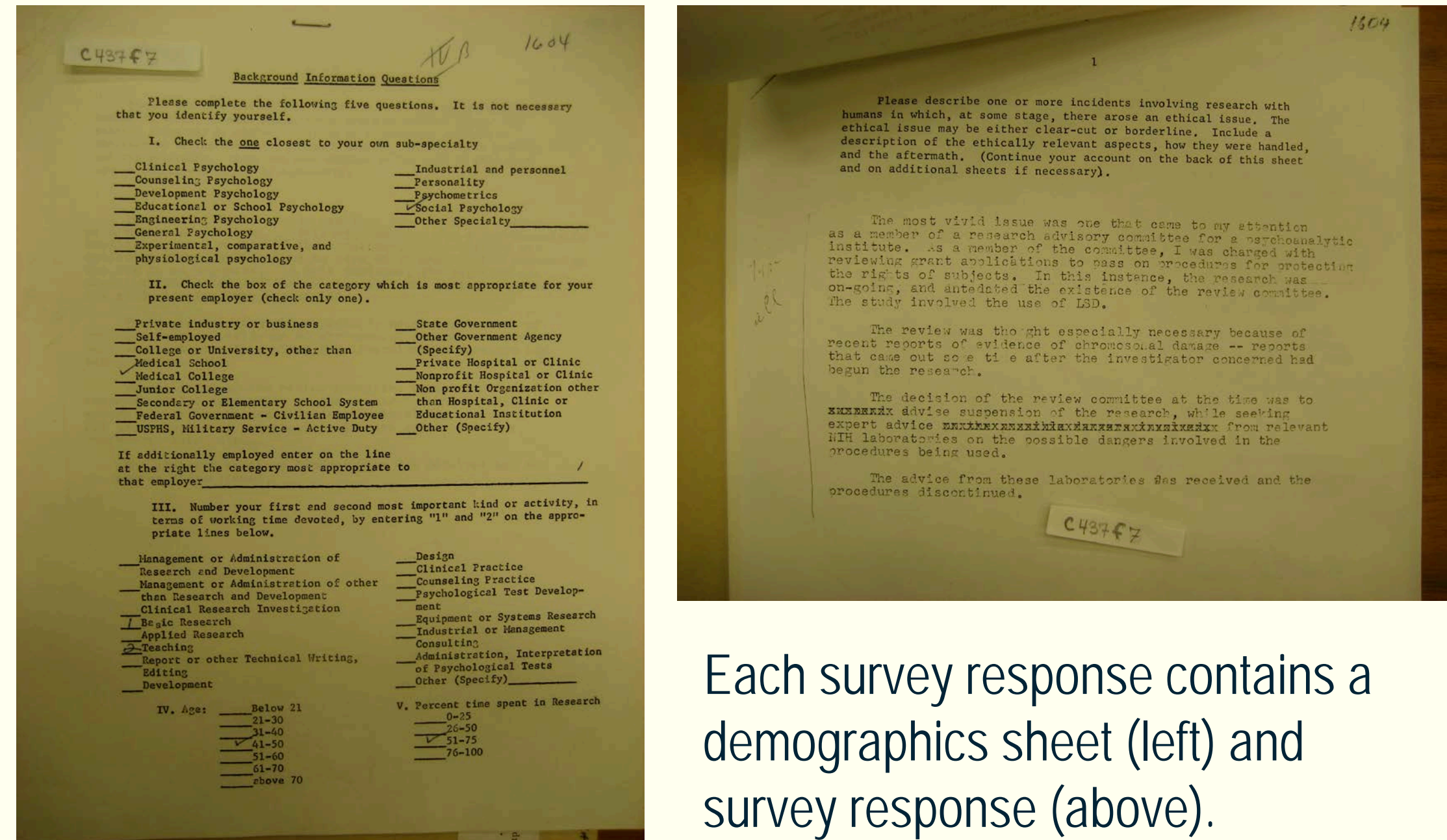
Building on the body of research on laboratory relations, this project serves as a first stage of understanding the relationships between experimenter and subject (Morawski). The traces of the subject in the laboratory have been confined through the mechanisms of experimentation, and this project may serve to illuminate the subjectivities at play that have shaped scientific claims.

Data Set

The data set consists of approximately 2,200 narrative survey responses, housed in the Library of Congress, by psychologists who were asked by the American Psychological Association in the mid to late 1960s, to describe ethical problems in their research. The collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data are rarely combined in a single project in psychology - the present project aims to explore the ways that qualitative and quantitative analyses can be executed together as mutually supporting perspectives. The value of quantification for historical data emerges from a renewed interest in cliometrics as a means to represent histories and understand the past using modeling and statistics (Michel).

There are many opportunities to submit these surveys to quantitative analysis. For instance, for respondents who described issues of subjects' privacy, how many entailed experiments? Clinical patients? How many described use of psychotropic or hallucinogenic drugs? And are there patterns in the descriptions of those subjects described as having mental disorders?

The Surveys



Each survey response contains a demographics sheet (left) and survey response (above).

APA's Concerns with Experimental Ethics (Stark)

- 1953: APA publishes ethics code as defense against federal regulations
- 1953: NIH starts human-subjects review board, the Clinical Research Committee (CRC), which served as model for today's IRBs.
- Mid-1960s: "Deception debates" among APA members
- 1966: U.S. Surgeon General mandates approval from human subjects review committee when using human subjects
- 1968: APA sends ethics questionnaires to members
- 1971: APA publishes *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*
- 1972: APA publishes revised draft of *Principles*, neutralizing deception and no longer describing it as unethical
- 1974: Stanley Milgram publishes book on his experiments
- 1974: Congress passed National Research Act, mandating development of guidelines for human subject research and strengthening the 1966 policy

Relations of Subjects and Experimenters (Morawski)

- Post WWII: Psychologists debate use of volunteer subject pools
- 1945-1965: Studies on "race of experimenter" effect reveal experimental dynamics
- 1947: Air Force study finds that test examiners influence subjects' performance, putting into question the ideal of the ideal objective examiner
- 1954: *Science* reports non-normal characteristics of volunteer subjects and cautions against generalizing data with volunteer subjects as sole data source
- 1959: Orne empirically demonstrates "demand characteristics" of the experimental context and Rosenthal describes "experimenter bias," contributing to debate surrounding experiment dynamics
- Late 1950s: Riecken and Criswell depict political economy of experiment and argue for analysis of experimental relations, power, rewards and rationalizations
- 1961: APA convention features symposium "On the Social Psychology of the Psychology Experiment"
- 1970s-1990s: efforts to reconceive psychological subjects by researchers allied with feminism and race politics
- 1994: APA *Publication Manual* banishes the term "subject" in favor of "participant," claiming that the former may only be used when individuals gave no consent to be studied (Roediger)
- 2004: Roediger challenges use of term "participant" over "subject"

Survey Respondents' Sub-Specialties (n=2157 with some respondents indicating more than one sub-specialty)

- Clinical Psychology: 30.5%
- Counseling Psychology: 7.8%
- Educational Psychology: 9.7%
- Experimental Psychology (all research fields): 37.4%
- Industrial and Personnel Psychology: 7.2%
- Other Specialty: 6.2%

Methods and Preliminary Data Analysis

- Digital images and transcriptions of 2,200 responses produced (2010-13)
- Atlas.ti, a software tool for qualitative analysis, used to develop content categories that are suitable for quantitative analyses.
- Quantitative variables based on qualitative categories include demographics (education, profession, age), type of research (experimental, interview, intervention, etc.), role of the respondent (principal investigator, research assistant, other), and nature of ethical problem (deception, harm to subject, informed consent, invasion of privacy).
- Descriptive statistics of demographics generated using SPSS (compatible with Atlas.ti)
- Inter-coder reliability established using Atlas.ti: surveys coded for interpersonal relations (emotion of subject and experimenter). Future analyses on the full data set will further examine interpersonal relations.
- Coding of the full data set for experimental context (empirical, clinical, ambiguous) and kinds of subjects (gender, ethnicity, age, psychiatric status) is ongoing.
- Upon completion of coding, SPSS will be used to generate descriptive statistics as well as to analyze correlations and relationships between demographic information and coding categories.

Survey Respondents' Employment, Activities and Age (n=2157):

- Most commonly reported employer among respondents was a University (50%), followed by Federal Government (7%), Medical College (6%), Private Industry or Business (5%) and Non-Profit Hospitals and Clinics (5%)
- Most commonly ranked activity was teaching (29%), basic research (16%), clinical practice (12%), management or administration of other than research and development (9%) and management or administration of research and development (8%)
- 38.3% of respondents in their thirties, 29% in their forties, 17.5% in their twenties, 10.9% in their fifties, 2.2% in their sixties and 0.23% in their seventies
- These analysis indicate that respondents were primarily young clinical and experimental psychologists, which is in line with historical trends

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