



Re-envisioning the Historical Record (Alexandra Rutherford and Stephanie Austin)

“Feminist scholarship has repeatedly demonstrated that how and what we come to know depends on who we are.” (Morawski, 1990, p. 175)

So who are we?

- 1) Instructor constructs several scenarios describing real historical figures in the history of psychology with certain biographical and contextual details ‘re-envisioned.’
- 2) Instructor hands out the scenarios and asks students to reflect on and ponder the questions individually.
- 3) After 5 minutes, students are asked to get together with the others in the class who have the same scenario as they do.
- 4) Have students discuss the scenario for about 15 minutes. Invite a spokesperson from each group to say a few words or make a comment or two about the content and process of the exercise (what they learned, what they found useful, what was funny, etc.). Everyone should hear all the scenarios during the go-around. Everyone should hear a brief description of the answers each mini-group came up with.

General question for individual and group reflection:

Think about the special circumstances in which your character finds herself/himself. Consider the different ways these circumstances might influence 1) his or her involvement/representation in psychology, in history, and in the history of psychology, 2) the content and nature of his/her contributions to psychological knowledge, and 3) how these contributions may be similar or different from the theories you have actually learned about in this and other psychology courses. Consider the impact of personal, social, political, and historical contexts on your character’s ideas or theories and their possible reception.

Sample Scenarios: [these focus primarily on ethnicity/race/gender; others can be constructed that focus on social class]

- 1) Your name is Mary Prince. You are a woman who has been living her entire life as a slave in the United States and therefore you have had no access to formal education. However, you have much to say about the experience of having been enslaved and have spoken with many members of your community about their experiences. You consider this to be an important aspect of a thorough understanding of what it means to be a human being since it has affected so many people in the history of the world.
- 2) Your name is William James. You are a Black man who was taken from your home in West Africa to become a slave in the United States. You have many ideas about free will and resistance, and their importance for human beings. These ideas shape your psychological theorizing and notion of what it means to be human.
- 3) Your name is Margaret Stetter. * You are the daughter of an Illinois farmer, raised during the Great Depression, and you completed a high school education which was unusual for someone of your background. You love to write, and have just given birth to your first daughter. Watching her change and develop in her first year of life inspires you to keep a detailed diary of her behavior.

*mother of Leta Stetter Hollingworth

- 4) Your name is Pradeep Bhattacharyya. It is 19th century India and in your studies you have made scientific observations that lead you to believe that species change and evolve through a process of natural selection. In India there are multiple religions practiced, and in some groups a rigid caste system is in place. You are Hindu and your family is well known and respected in your small community.
- 5) Your name is Francesco Galton. You live Argentina and are interested in eminence and why certain people are able to accomplish great things in their chosen fields. You decide that you would like to know more about how eminence develops and is transmitted. Unfortunately, your family is very poor and does not have the financial resources to allow you to engage in unpaid scholarly activity.
- 6) Your name is Susan Freud. You are interested in hysteria, as it seems to afflict so many women in late 19th-century Austria and has received so much attention from famous physicians like Jean Charcot. You are unmarried and come from a family of very limited means. You have a close friend, however, named Bertha Pappenheim, who is under treatment for hysteria with Josef Breuer.
- 7) Your name is Kenneth Clark. You are a Puerto Rican man who was raised in Harlem. In elementary school you were put in a special education class as a result of psychological testing. Your mother pleaded for re-testing, believing that your abilities were not accurately assessed. Because she could not speak English well, her pleas were ignored. You took a low-paying job at age sixteen and quit school. After many years, you would now like to return to school to study psychology.