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## Positive Psychology Not a New Field, UNH Professor Argues at Chicago APA Conference

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DURHAM, N.H. , Contrary to popular belief, today's "positive psychology" is not new, having roots in the Chicago of 100 years ago, a University of New Hampshire historian of psychology will argue at the American Psychological Association conference in Chicago Saturday, Aug. 24.

At this year's convention, much of the program is devoted to "positive psychology," a field promoted as brand new by APA president Martin Seligman and University of Chicago professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, says Ben Harris, a professor of psychology at UNH. He will challenge that view when he describes the positive psychology taught at the Chicago School of Psychology (1898-1906) and exhibited at the Century of Progress Exposition in 1933.

"Although forgotten today, the Chicago School of Psychology was the leading school of psychotherapy in the early 20th century," Harris says. "It taught therapies based on suggestion, including hypnotherapy and an eclectic mix of interventions aimed at psychosomatic problems."

The school was founded by doctor Herbert Parkyn and based on a new version of medicine that combined the spiritual and psychological. Although quackish by today's standards, Harris says, Parkyn's approach was an innovative alternative to the medicine, psychiatry and neurology of the time. Physicians at the turn of the century were known for their paternalism, drugging their patients, ignoring their subjective experiences and a mechanistic view of the individual. Parkyn, by

contrast, treated individuals as whole organisms whose personal psychology could be studied and adjusted by hypnotism and psychotherapy (called "suggestion").

The second example of early 20th century positive psychology is the Psycograph, a mechanical phrenology machine. It was invented in 1904 by Henry C. Lavery, a man known as the Thomas Edison of Superior, Wisc. According to Lavery, his machine's "true and exact analysis of the faculties of each individual person would contribute greatly to the improved welfare of humanity and that it would make for a higher plane of existence of everybody and eliminate a great deal of ... unhappiness, unrest and unhealthiness." By the 1930s, Lavery had developed an improved Psycograph that took 32 different skull measurements when a lever was pulled, resulting in a rating of 1-5 on 32 corresponding traits. This machine was a hit with the public in 1933 when displayed in a Temple of Phrenology at the Century of Progress Exposition. After the exposition closed, the Boston Store in Chicago used the machine to attract the public during the Christmas shopping season.

Although this might sound like a quack device, it was endorsed by a number of companies and the Evansville (Indiana) Police Department, which used it in its personnel department.

"Both the Psycograph and the Chicago School of Psychology are reminders that much of today's 'latest new psychology' has roots in the fields of entertainment, human improvement and personal enrichment," Harris says.

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