

## MILLER AND PSYCHOLOGY

Morris Miller was appointed as Lecturer in Mental and Moral Science at the University of Tasmania in 1913 and took over the Philosophy and Psychology courses that Dunbabin had taught.

By that time all the 6 Australian Universities had lecturers in mental philosophy or similar titles, but the other Universities taught “Psychology” as a component of Philosophy, if at all. Whoever designed the Philosophy/Psychology courses at the University of Tasmania in the 1890’s, which Dunbabin later adapted and taught, they had included a lot more psychology than the other Australian universities. However like the other components in Australian Universities these may have been largely theoretical, neglecting the empirical basis essential to later Psychology.

Miller drafted the Mental Deficiency Act (passed in 1920) for the Tasmanian government. Mental deficiency, also called subnormal or feeble-minded at the time, describes the condition currently called Mental Retardation in the US, and people with an Intellectual Disability in Australia, amongst other names. Miller based the Act on the British act of 1913. It was the first in Australia and gave substantial powers to the Mental Deficiency Board. It was strikingly humanitarian for its time. Amongst its provisions was a recommendation for a State Psychological Clinic to work with the psychology department at the University. Its chief task was to test children’s intelligence and advise on special education.

The Advanced Psychology course in 1920 included as the third point under Additional for Distinction: **“Account of the work of experimental and applied psychology, with special reference to mental deficiency and methods of measuring grades of intelligence”**.

After 1905 when Binet demonstrated that intelligence could be measured, the first test of intelligence to be fully professionally developed was the Terman or Stanford-Binet of 1916. **{British edition available}**

In 1922 Miller negotiated a salary increase of 200 pounds from the government for directing the State Psychological Clinic and sitting on the Mental Deficiency Board. The government asked that a chair of Psychology be created and linked with the clinic, but University politics, prevented this. Miller blamed Dunbabin and his supporters. The tests used in the Clinic included Stanford-Binet, Porteous (sometimes combined to give a Binet-Porteous IQ), and Healy Puzzle and Pictorial Completion test with norms for American children. Of the 736 individual recently examined by the clinic, 68% had Stanford-Binet IQs below 70, of whom 52% were diagnosed as defective. If this exclusion of many of those with IQs below 70 reflects an assessment of adaptive behaviour it would be consistent with contemporary professional standards for the diagnosis of mental retardation (which are not always followed).

Miller asked the premier for funding for a 3 month tour of the US in 1921. The funding was not given and Miller travelled at his own expense (Reynolds & Giordano, 1985, p70). He was given paid leave, unusual as study leave was not then University practice. He visited psychology departments and institutions in the US and Canada. Amongst those he met were S.D. Portous, developer of the Porteous maze tests, who had taught in a special school run by the Victorian Education Department before the war. *{later reprints of Porteous tests available}*

In 1923 (Calendar. 1923) Advanced Psychology included a

**Note.-- The course for both pass and pass with distinction will include a limited amount of experimental work in the sensory processes of vision, hearing, and touch, as well as in the processes of attention, association, and memory. (p146)**

**The first prac classes in Psychology.** Miller had bought a box of equipment, perhaps in the US. **It included a set of tuning forks for hearing (still held in the school)**, cards with visual stimuli and similar simple apparatus. Prac classes had been offered at Sydney from 1912 in the first year philosophy course, in 1922 they required 2 hours per week for those proceeding to Psychology II

In the 1923 calendar then followed an outline of the distinction course on a range of topics, followed by:

Note.—The following alternative course on Individual Psychology as additional for distinction will be offered provided that a sufficient number of entries is received :--  
(p147)

followed by a course on mental subnormality and the use of mental tests. Some of the texts, including the Vineland translations of Binet and Simon's original articles from 1905 to 1911 and British texts on subnormal/feebleminded children published in 1920, are still in the University library. This was probably the **first university course in applied psychology** in Australia, in Sydney a course on mental testing was introduced in 1924.

The 1924 handbook adds a further note to the Individual Psychology course

Note.—By arrangement with the director of the State Psychological Clinic, the Clinic is available for a limited amount of practical work and demonstrations in connection with the alternative course. (p160)

### **Perhaps the first applied placements of students in Psychology.**

He became chairman of the Mental Deficiency board from 1924 and Associate-professor by 1925.

In 1928 he won a seat on Council and was appointed Professor of Philosophy and Psychology. In one sense Miller was the first professor of Psychology in Australia, but HT Lovell of Sydney is claimed as the first professor of Psychology as an independent discipline, he was promoted to professor with a separate department of Psychology in 1929.

### **The next 20 years of Psychology at the University.**

Once Professor of Philosophy and Psychology Miller's interests changed. Nothing notable happened in Psychology: more students enrolled, Miller got older.

In February 1950 James Alexander (Jim) Cardno arrived in Hobart to take up the position as Senior lecturer in Psychology.

By 1951, Cardno had approval to bring Psychology and Philosophy into separate 3 year sequences, and to separate the departments of Psychology and Philosophy. Cardno was promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology in July 1951. When he saw Cardno's course outline, Miller said "Who would have thought it. All I wanted to do was to teach clinical psychology and have a University clinic, and you are doing this. You must do it, and I am the old man now" (Cardno).

Cardno recalls the original equipment, the set of tuning forks plus a Stanford-Binet and a Wechsler test, though Miller had some more apparatus on order.

James Alexander