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Authors:

Horley, James, Augustana U Coll, Dept of Psychology, Camrose, AB, Canada

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James Mark Baldwin was one of the earliest American practitioners of the "new psychology" and an influential figure in the emergence and establishment of psychology in the US. He left the US because of a scandal in Baltimore resulting from his arrest at a "colored" bordello. Baldwin returned only occasionally to North America following his forced resignation from Johns Hopkins University in 1909. Contrary to the few references to his life after leaving Baltimore, Baldwin appears to have initially settled in England. He made numerous extended trips to Mexico and continental Europe, especially France, which eventually became his adopted home. Baldwin's later life and work in Europe are examined in this article. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2009 APA, all rights reserved) (from the journal abstract)

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AFTER “THE BALTIMORE AFFAIR” : James Mark Baldwin’s Life and Work, 1908–1934

By: James Horley

Department of Psychology, Augustana University College, Camrose, Alberta, Canada

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: James Horley, Department of Psychology, Augustana University College, Camrose, Alberta T4V 2R3 Canada Electronic Mail may be sent to: horleyj@augustana.ab.ca.

James Mark Baldwin (1861–1934) has been typically described as among the “leaders ... of the ‘new’ psychologists in America” ([Boring, 1929/1950](#), p. 528). After he received his PhD in philosophy from Princeton University in 1887, his rise to the top of his chosen field was rapid. Baldwin was definitely “a young man in a hurry” ([Sokal, 1997](#), p. 60). Although perhaps not a clear writer ([Richards, 1987](#)), he was a prolific one. Baldwin published a two-volume handbook of psychology ([Baldwin, 1889, 1891](#))

and became a well-known developmental psychologist and evolutionist because of various publications (e.g., [Baldwin, 1894/1906a, 1902](#)). He even appears to have been an early contributor to social psychology ([House, 1936](#); [Mueller, 1976](#)). Baldwin was also a prolific “founder.” He established the first psychological laboratories at the University of Toronto (1889) and Princeton University (1893), while reopening G. S. Hall’s laboratory at Johns Hopkins University (1904). He was one of the founders of the American Psychological Association, becoming its sixth president in 1897. Baldwin cofounded (1894) and co-owned, with J. M. Cattell, the Psychological Review Company, which included the journal *Psychological Review* (for details of this venture, see [Sokal, 1997](#)). In short, his influence on early U.S. psychology was pervasive and profound ([Cattell, 1903, 1929](#); [Urban, 1935](#); [Wozniak, 1982](#)).

Baldwin’s fall from the top of his profession was just as abrupt and spectacular as his rise. Despite a reluctance by many historians of psychology to discuss the reasons that led to his departure from Johns Hopkins and the United States (see [Boring, 1929/1950](#)), or a tendency to describe it simply as an unnamed “event” ([Hilgard, 1987](#)), it is clear that a major scandal led to his Baltimore resignation in 1909. Baldwin was forced to depart from Johns Hopkins by the university’s president because of his arrest during a police raid on a Baltimore brothel (see [Evans & Scott, 1978](#); [Pauly, 1986](#)).

Baldwin’s life and works prior to 1908 have been examined by various writers (e.g., [Cairns, 1992](#); [Hoff, 1992](#); [Mueller, 1976](#); [Sewny, 1945/1967](#)). The details of the event that led to Baldwin’s self-imposed exile and his life in Europe after forsaking the United States, however, have been discussed very little. If only because he fell from grace as one of the most influential American psychologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to a figure who receives little if any mention in contemporary histories (e.g., [Brennan, 1998](#)), further inquiry into Baldwin’s life is warranted. The present examination focuses on his activities and writings after “the Baltimore affair” ([Baldwin, 1910d](#)).

[The Baltimore Affair](#)

[Mueller \(1976\)](#) described the Baltimore prostitution incident in Baldwin’s life as an “unfortunate scandal that marred his career” (p. 253). Such a characterization must be construed as a gross understatement, because the scandal precipitated Baldwin’s departure from Johns Hopkins and the United States, in effect ending his career in psychology ([Pauly, 1986](#)).

Baldwin himself offered no detailed explanation of his actions prior to, including, and following the 1908 police raid on the bordello that led to his downfall. Indeed, there is no reference to the incident in either his autobiography ([Baldwin, 1926a, 1926b](#)) or his autobiographical book chapter ([Baldwin, 1930/1961](#)). According to [Baldwin \(1926a\)](#), because his work in Mexico after 1908 “involved serious and continued responsibilities to the National University ... I accordingly resigned my position in the Johns Hopkins University in 1908” (p. 148). This was not his view in 1910, however, when he released a brief “communique” to select U.S. colleagues to clarify his after-dinner “visit to a house of a colored ‘social’ sort” ([Baldwin, 1910b](#)). The “house” was a Baltimore bordello where Black prostitutes plied

their trade. The police raid on the establishment was, [Baldwin \(1910b\)](#) argued, orchestrated by a corrupt police captain who was later put “on trial for protecting crime.” It is difficult to see how the officer in charge of the raid was protecting a criminal enterprise unless the raid was part of an extortion attempt. Whatever the real reasons for the police raid, enough of the story reached President Ira Remsen of Johns Hopkins. Baldwin’s resignation was demanded later even though he was not charged with any criminal offense. Baldwin was able to stall for a short while, but he eventually tendered his resignation, effective September 1909. As he wrote to E. B. Titchener ([Baldwin, 1910c](#)), he chose not to “fight the thing out” because of his family. Besides, he was already far from Baltimore in Mexico City at the time, providing consultation at the Mexican National University where, contrary to some rumors and reports (e.g., [“University of Mexico,” 1909](#)), his role was professor of philosophy and not future president (see [Sewny, 1945/1967](#)).

Some details of what occurred during Baldwin’s fateful evening in the summer of 1908 were presented by [Pauly \(1986\)](#). Newspaper reporters apparently recognized Baldwin at the police station and relayed the news to university officials. No charges were forthcoming, however, in part because Baldwin provided a false name to police. Nothing became of the incident until a subsequent discussion of possible candidates, including Baldwin, for a position on a Baltimore education board. Baldwin’s presence at the bordello was then discussed more openly, although still beyond reach of the general public, and his resignation was demanded to preserve the reputation of Johns Hopkins. This he delivered early in 1909, although his formal explanation to some colleagues was that he was granted a leave for “medical reasons,” specifically, to “rest [his] throat for a long period” ([Baldwin, 1910c](#)).

This time must have been very demanding emotionally for Baldwin. His handwriting in some personal letters at the time is unsteady, conveying some of the anguish that he must have been feeling when he wrote about his own “embarrassments on the Baltimore charges” ([Baldwin, 1910a](#)). He suggested in a letter to Titchener ([Baldwin, 1910e](#)) that his election in 1910 as correspondent, after William James, to the Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in France should be interpreted as “a vindication, as well as an honor,” but the general tone and context of his comments in his scribbled note cause the words to ring hollow.

Despite personal shock and embarrassment, Baldwin managed to limit damage by mustering some support from Titchener and James, among other former U.S. colleagues. One ally, Howard Warren of Princeton, who was his research assistant and demonstrator after his return from Toronto, wrote that through “conviction as well as moral obligation I supported Baldwin’s side and interests” ([Warren, 1930/1961](#), p. 461). Supporters, however, were outnumbered by detractors. Not only was Baldwin an ambitious individual who alienated many on his way to the top, but also he appears to have been arrogant and dismissive of colleagues at times. He sparred publicly with a number of psychologists in the published literature and in personal correspondence. Such disputes included one with Titchener in the 1890s over a question of reaction time (see [Mueller, 1976](#)). At this point in his career, Baldwin had very much antagonized his formerly close associate Cattell ([Sokal, 1997](#)). His actions surrounding the presidency of the proposed International Congress of Psychology, planned but never held in the United

States for 1913, were perhaps indicative of the extent to which he would maneuver and frustrate colleagues in order to achieve his personal ends (see [Bjork, 1983](#); [Evans & Scott, 1978](#)). Overall, he appears to have been a difficult person to work with in any capacity ([Richards, 1987](#)).

Was Baldwin blacklisted in the United States because of immorality? The Baltimore brothel raid did not receive serious public scrutiny, and he seems to have been keen on keeping it that way. Threats of increased publicity by the Johns Hopkins administration may have forced his hand and barred his return to North America, although this is unlikely given their apparent interest in keeping the scandal from the public ([Pauly, 1986](#)). There is no evidence that Baldwin applied to other U.S. or Canadian universities before leaving for Mexico City with no full-time position and seemingly no long-term commitment. His plan could have been to return to Europe as quickly as possible and concentrate on writing. He had a number of projects underway, and others planned ([Baldwin, 1909](#), [1910c](#), [1910d](#)), so he may have believed that he could “lay low” in Europe while collecting awards (e.g., honorary degrees, election to various professional academies) until the storm in North America blew over. Unfortunately, the embarrassing stories and innuendo never did disappear completely.

[Baldwin Leaves the United States](#)

Baldwin made four separate trips to Mexico City between 1907 and 1912, consulting with officials from the National University and delivering a lecture series that formed the basis of his two-volume history of psychology ([Baldwin, 1913b](#)). He did not, however, spend the next 5 years living there, as reported by [Boring \(1929/1950\)](#). His consultancy and lecturing kept him in Mexico City from a few weeks to 4 months. His principal residence during this period was England ([Baldwin, 1921](#)), although once again he made no clear reference to this in autobiographical accounts ([Baldwin, 1926a](#), [1926b](#), [1930/1961](#)). It is likely that he just did not want to be found there by many former colleagues.

England might have been his choice as a new home because of familiar language and culture as well as Baldwin’s family roots. Through some references to England, Baldwin gave the impression that it was not much to his liking. He wrote in his autobiography ([Baldwin, 1926a](#)), for example:

As for myself, however, I was a docile and humble Christian, feeling no impatience or revolt against the regime of Sunday restraint and religious observance. It was only much later that I began to feel the weight of the monotony and stagnation of a Sunday in Toronto or London. (p. 12)

Baldwin did make frequent and extended trips to France and continental Europe. He had been making regular journeys to Europe since spending a year in Germany, including a term in Wilhelm Wundt’s Leipzig laboratory, in 1884. He traveled there throughout the 1890s, from both Toronto and Princeton, purchasing laboratory equipment and visiting friends and business contacts. He also received awards and honors throughout Europe. In 1898 he received an honorary LLD from Glasgow—often dropping the “honorary” when presenting himself in writing (e.g., [Baldwin, 1910c](#))—and he spent the winter of 1900

at Oxford University, England, where he received an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

During a trip in the summer of 1907, prior to his self-imposed exile, Baldwin purchased a house in West Essex, on Osborne Road in the town of Leyton, which is now part of the east end of London. Why he would choose Leyton is not clear. It was close to London, and at that time it was a rather bucolic setting. His familiarity with the area may have been the result of his equipment purchases of past years. Leyton was known at the turn of the century for the manufacture of condoms, cricket bats, and scientific instrumentation, not necessarily in that order. Baldwin, while visiting the makers of scientific equipment, might have been attracted to this area in the Waltham Forest. Whatever the case, he purchased a row house that served both as his European base of operations and a family residence. It also provided a mailing address for an extension to his business operations. As reflected in his letterhead of the time, as well as reference to his own catalogue ([Baldwin, 1921](#)), he ran a bookselling operation.

Baldwin was well acquainted with the world of business, having spent 2 years in his teens working in a dry goods store in his hometown of Columbia, South Carolina ([Baldwin, 1926a](#)). From the early 1890s, Baldwin was involved in different facets of the publishing trade. He did occasional editing for Scribner's and Appleton in New York, among other publishers, and he owned professional journals with his partner Cattell. After they parted ways in 1904, Baldwin bought out Cattell's share of the enterprise, possibly for the sum of \$3,505 ([Baldwin, 1926a](#); [Boring, 1929/1950](#)), but see [Sokal \(1997\)](#) for other details about this transaction. Baldwin later sold the journals to Warren in 1910 for a price that does not seem to have pleased [Warren \(1910\)](#) but in hindsight might have been a reasonable one given the nature of the journals purchased ([Warren, 1930/1961](#)). Baldwin's business savvy probably extended into bookselling, but he did not describe this sideline in autobiographical writings. He does not appear to have listed his business locally in Essex (see [Kelly's directory of Essex, 1917, 1922](#)), and his catalogue seems to have been sent only to potential buyers beyond London ([Baldwin, 1921](#)).

During this period, Baldwin not only was consulting, editing, and selling books, but he also continued writing. He clearly, however, did not equal his output of the 1890s and early 1900s, and the focus of his writing changed at this time. He finished his volumes on genetic logic ([Baldwin, 1906b, 1908, 1911](#)). He wrote his history of psychology ([Baldwin, 1913b](#)), and its publication followed by a few months the first volume of [Brett's \(1912\)](#) detailed history. After this work, Baldwin wrote little on psychology. His books became more popular and more concerned with France and Franco–American relations, particularly after the beginning of World War I. Whether this was intentional and necessary to cover his expenses by appealing to a wider audience or due simply to a waning interest in psychology is difficult to determine. Perhaps a number of factors led to the decline of his writing in his primary discipline. According to [Baldwin \(1926a\)](#), he changed from a man of thought to a man of action because “questions of philosophy seemed distant and futile” (p. 301) when compared to the immediate problems faced by Europe during the second decade of the 20th century. Like his colleague and friend William James before him, Baldwin might have found the new psychology too narrow for his broadening interests ([Bjork, 1983](#)).

[The War Years and Beyond](#)

Baldwin does not appear to have kept a principal residence in continental Europe, at least until the end of the first world war. Those who have described him as residing primarily in Paris (e.g., [Boring, 1929/1950](#); [Mueller, 1976](#); [Sewny, 1945/1967](#)) have relied exclusively on Baldwin's public accounts (e.g., [Baldwin, 1926a](#)) of his whereabouts. Except for a few close correspondents and family, he appears to have kept his primary address to himself, using various banks as mailing addresses (e.g., [Baldwin, 1914](#)). He stayed for long periods of time in hotels and temporary apartments, especially in Paris throughout the early part of 1916, but he always traveled back to England. Excursions to the continent seemed to be for business, such as the Sixth International Congress of Psychology in Geneva in 1909, including presentations and writing. He became increasingly interested in writing on Franco–American relations and the need for closer ties (e.g., [Baldwin, 1913a](#)), possibly because of a commitment to France ([Sewny, 1945/1967](#)) but perhaps because it appeared to be a “winning” position. Throughout the war and following the armistice, Baldwin received honors, including the Legion of Honor in December of 1917, from the French government. These awards were for his writing and speaking efforts to convince the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies rather than his efforts as a “lecturer to soldiers” ([Baldwin, 1933](#)). No doubt his French awards contributed to his already very favorable view of French society ([Baldwin, 1913a](#)).

Baldwin's travels during the war took him to Oxford in 1916, where he delivered a prestigious Herbert Spencer Lecture. His topic on this occasion concerned the European powers and ethics rather than any subject of direct relevance to psychology. He took his family with him often when he traveled, and this nearly ended in tragedy following the Oxford lecture. When the packet steamer *Sussex* was torpedoed or struck a mine, Baldwin's youngest daughter, Elizabeth, suffered injuries serious enough that she had to “struggle for life” ([Baldwin, 1926a](#), p. 216). Although she recovered, Baldwin used the incident to his political advantage by writing to the U.S. administration expressing his outrage over the sinking and urging American involvement in the war on the side of the Allies.

[Baldwin \(1926a\)](#) claimed to have seen the war firsthand while in France, both as a British and French war correspondent, although his writing seems to have been more political propaganda than direct news reports. He made frequent trips to the front lines while researching or writing letters or articles on the war. Not only was travel hazardous, but also home life in war-torn Europe was dangerous for Baldwin. Zeppelin bomb damage, although minimal compared to the destruction of World War II, included High Street in Leyton, not far from the Baldwin home. It may well have been this damage that convinced Baldwin to sell the house on Osborne Road, which he did some time after 1915 but before 1919. British registry records (e.g., [Government of England, 1907, 1915](#)) show that he was the owner of the house at 14 Osborne Road in Leyton prior to and during the first part of the war, but the owner by 1919 was a “Hannah Cohen” ([Government of England, 1919](#)). No voter/owner records were kept from 1916 until the end of the conflict.

From Leyton, Baldwin's movements become harder to follow. A new residential listing ([Kelly's](#)

[directory of Woodford, Buckhurst Hill, Loughton and Chingford, 1925](#)) for a “James Baldwin” appeared in Chingford, a more upscale Essex town a few miles north of Leyton. It is possible that Baldwin moved to this quieter area in Greater London, closer to the Epping Forest and away from increasing industrial development in the south, either in 1919 or 1920. The records, however, are incomplete. Baldwin certainly seemed to be spending more and more time in France, especially Paris and Nice, after the war.

By at least 1918, Baldwin had accepted an appointment at the *École des Hautes Études Sociales* in Paris. His exact duties there seem to have included lectures on the history and development of American thought. The time of his tenure at this Paris institution is unknown, although one obituary notice listed it as 1916–1918 (“[Obituary,](#)” 1934). [Sewny \(1945/1967\)](#) described it as lasting “only a few years” (p. 11), although [Baldwin \(1926a, 1930/1961\)](#) said nothing on this subject. The position may well have been another of the honors or French government rewards for his wartime service, and the appointment might have been more honorary than substantial, lasting as an official sessional appointment for only 1 year. Whether he moved his family—which by this time was just him and his wife, because his youngest daughter was on her own, soon to be married to an American doctor from New York in 1920—to France for 1919 then back to England is difficult to determine.

Life in England immediately after the war could not have been easy. As [Baldwin \(1921\)](#) wrote to Titchener, “money is anything but plentiful in England.” Baldwin’s published writing declined further during this time, and it was mostly self-focused. His two-volume autobiography ([Baldwin, 1926a, 1926b](#)) described some incidents of his early life, reproducing in the second volume some of his later papers, presentations, and selected letters. He referred little, however, to his major contributions to psychology, and he wrote carefully about some aspects of his personal and professional life in his autobiography. He devoted a mere 10 pages, for example, to his years in Baltimore at Johns Hopkins, and few details concerning his professional work were revealed. Baldwin may well have been trying to convince readers of his autobiographical work that he moved to a “higher calling” by dealing with more important matters than those concerning psychology. Unfortunately for Baldwin, there seem to have been few readers of his later writing, and at least one critic of the autobiographical *Between Two Wars* suggested that it should have been entitled *Between Two Whores* ([Broughton & Freeman-Moir, 1982](#)).

It is interesting to note that Baldwin used the American Civil War as a significant personal event by calling his two-volume autobiography *Between Two Wars*. This may have had more significance than just being born in South Carolina during the conflict. Although Baldwin emphasized his English and Connecticut background ([Baldwin, 1926a](#)), he betrayed a Southern perspective at times. He identified Baltimore as a Southern city ([Baldwin, 1926a](#)), for example, and seemed to evaluate U.S. cities in terms of their geographical position with respect to the Mason–Dixon Line. Self-identity as a Southerner may help to explain Baldwin’s ability to maintain a relationship with his wife while using the services of Black prostitutes (see [Cash, 1941](#)).

[The Final Act](#)

Near the end of his life in France, Baldwin appears to have been physically unhealthy ([Sewny, 1945/1967](#)). The question of his state of mind is an open one. As he wrote to R. B. Perry of Harvard 2 years before his death, “I hope the years are treating you gently. I am among the ‘as is,’ as the auctioneers say” ([Baldwin, 1932](#)). Baldwin died in the American Hospital in Paris on November 8, 1934, after a 2-day bout with pneumonia. His wife returned with his body to Princeton for burial in a small ceremony. None of his American contemporaries in psychology were in attendance, but one famous French colleague, Pierre Janet, did serve as a pallbearer.

Baldwin’s legacy as a psychologist was much discussed by his obituary writers, and all were not glowing in their estimates of his place in the development of psychology. [Jastrow \(1934\)](#) suggested that for Baldwin there “is thus both in his life and work an element of detachment and estrangement” (p. 498). As a philosopher and a theorist, Baldwin was out of touch and certainly out of vogue in empiricist, behaviorist American psychology by the 1920s. [Kantor \(1935\)](#), in a separate obituary, argued that Baldwin’s place in psychology was prominent and well established. Such an assertion missed the mark at the time. When he died, Baldwin and his ideas were ignored, if not forgotten. Even if he had a legacy of many graduate students at the North American universities where he had held positions, which he did not, it is unlikely that they would have persisted in the face of the later behaviorist tide. He was a developmental–evolutionary theorist, with interests in philosophy and sociology, who stood alone, particularly after James died in 1910.

Baldwin, like James had a decade before, lost his zeal for psychology, but this did not occur abruptly after 1908. He got more involved in philosophy after the turn of the century, investing much time and effort in editing and publishing the massive *Dictionary of Psychology and Philosophy* from 1901 to 1904. His attention after publication of the volumes of *Genetic Logic* from 1906 to 1911 turned to political writing, and undoubtedly the doors to American psychology were closed to him forever. As [Richards \(1987\)](#) noted, those doors rather ironically were closed in part by the rise of a radical form of behaviorism developed by his successor as head of psychology at Johns Hopkins. John Watson, a fellow South Carolinian who also lost his position at Hopkins because of a scandal, had been hired by Baldwin before his career came crashing down.

Baldwin’s exact place in the history of psychology can and should be debated at length. At this point in time I think we can grant him at a minimum a prominent role as an important pioneer in the academic and professional establishment of the new psychology in the United States. He was, in addition, a fascinating if enigmatic character.

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