Recognizing the potential importance of their findings on speech style for the position of women in society, O'Barr and Atkins prepared a version of the study of powerful versus powerless speech for a feminist audience (*3*). In both that paper and the report of the results in chapter 5 of the book, the researchers are unable systematically to compare men and women using the same style. The powerless version of the testimony used with the female witness could not be used with the male witness because it was perceived as too much of a caricature to be acceptable as male speech. Thus, the powerless version used with males was a "watered-down" variant of the female version. The results hint that women are probably judged more negatively than men regardless of style.

In a replication and expansion of this study in Israel, a student and I have found that even when a woman witness speaks in precisely the same powerful style of Hebrew as a man, she is judged less credible than the man. Moreover, women judged a woman even more harshly than did men. It seems, then, that women are at a serious disadvantage in the courtroom, especially if the judge or jurors are also women (*4*).

Chapter 6 debates whether the presentational style of the witness can be controlled. It combines a report of an experiment concerning whether the effects of speech style can be neutralized (it seems that they cannot), a general discussion of the meanings of silence versus talk in the courtroom, and a close look at the management of silence and talk in questions and answers. I find it forced to call the presence or absence of talk a matter of style, of linguistic form.

O'Barr's findings have captured the interest of trial lawyers eager for tips on how to win cases. The main tip to come out of this research is: coach witnesses to avoid the powerless style. (And by extension the tip emerging from our Jerusalem study is, sadly: avoid using women as witnesses, if possible.) It is no small irony that the knowledge resulting from this research that identifies sources of injustice in the adversary system may be used to further the amount of injustice in trials. As with other resources that make for differential doling out of justice, access to these findings will not be evenly distributed among members of the legal profession or the lay public.

Despite the limitations of the research, O'Barr and his colleagues have made a first-rate contribution to law and social science, as well as to sociolinguistics. They have managed to say something important about law, though studying language, and to say something important about language, by studying an aspect of law. Their work provides a fresh approach to the criticism of the adversary system of justice.

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Studying the Unique

Life Histories and Psychobiography. Explorations in Theory and Method. WILLIAM MCKINLEY RUNYAN. Oxford University Press, New York, 1982. xiv, 288 pp. $19.95.

In the 1940's Gordon Allport, Robert White, Henry Murray, and many others pointed toward the study of individual lives as a central focus for academic psychology. In the last 30 years, academic psychologists have withdrawn from this field and left it to biographers, the occasional psychoanalyst, and, in the last decade, pop psychologists. The present book, by an author who has spent his academic career examining the value of qualitative, narrative, and introspective methods for the study of lives and draws on wide and catholic reading, does much to make the investigation of individual life history respectable once more for academicians.

Runyan introduces us to the issue by considering the problems that arise from alternative accounts of life history. As an example, he sets forth 13 reasons that have been proposed to explain why Van Gogh cut off his ear. He then examines the structure of biographical narrative, pointing out the narrowness and other weaknesses of considering the life course in purely developmental, stage-dependent terms. The life course is an evolving sequence of interactions of person and situation and behavior. To consider the single variable of the person is too narrow. Runyan closes with a consideration of the pros and cons of various life study methods.

Runyan acknowledges that biography has poor internal validity; a life can always be explained in another way. Biography has poor external validity, for an individual life is always unique and does not permit generalization. In the study of human life histories, there can be no experimental manipulation, little chance to test hypotheses, and no capacity to control for accident and luck. Runyan reminds us that retrospection and introspection are inevitably seductive and misleading. The biographer's prejudices and misplaced precision become magnified by sustained involvement with individual characters.

On the other hand, Runyan points out the power of life study. First, the study of real lives has a face validity that no rat psychologist working in a laboratory can ever hope to achieve. Runyan cites the extraordinary example of two clinicians studying a life who agreed better in predicting the individual's response than they did with each other. Second, redundancy (as with the many reported instances of Lincoln's mercy) lends both power and validity. Third, in the study of an individual life one achieves a richness that cross-sectional study can never achieve. The power of the case example, the opportunity for bringing both poetry and metaphor to bear on psychological truth, is enhanced by the life history method. Fourth, Runyan points out that subjective reality can hardly be deemed unreality. Finally, biography is the only way in which we can study persons with uncommon dimensions, such as presidents and heroes.

Runyan, if he does not show us, at least tells us how lives should be scientifically studied. Clearly, halo effects must be controlled and the conceptual framework of the biographer acknowledged. The purpose for which the data are selected must be admitted. Does the biographer wish to describe illness, leadership, virtue, continuity, or some other quality? Runyan points out the dangers in interpretation that arise from errors in original texts and from cultural biases.

The one important life history method not mentioned by Runyan is Adolf Meyer's life chart. What the physiologist calls the kymograph for the guinea pig ilium and what Skinner has called the cumulative record, both for pigeons pecking and for his own autobiography, allow individual behavior over time to be visually comprehended. The life chart

similarly permits appreciation of a temporal sequence in an instant.

Psychologists cannot hope to study life histories without adopting the scholarly safeguards of the historian. Thus, Runyan points out, a multiplicity of sources is crucial. Lacking the free associations of the subject, the psychobiographer may if fortunate have records of artistic productions and autobiography. The creative product then can take the place of dreams in revealing the unconscious. Indeed, through objective consensual validation achieved by multiple sources and the passage of time the psychobiographer can offer the scientific world what patient and psychoanalyst view only in a limited and distorted way.

Finally, Runyan reminds us that the ultimate task of life history is how to discern what is significant. "Academic scholars helped to get the facts straight, while poets and literary figures helped to reveal the spirit of men" (p. 33). Can modern psychology manage to maintain its intellectual rigor and resurrect Freud's poetic science? This reviewer hopes so.

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Tensions in Psycholinguistics

Language Acquisition. The State of the Art. ERIC WANNER and LILA R. GLEITMAN, Eds. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1982. x, 532 pp., illus. Cloth, $49.50; paper, $17.95.

The 1960's and 1970's produced a generation of unprecedented research activity in an effort to discover what and how children learn about language in the first few years of life. In 1978 Wanner and Gleitman brought together a group of scholars who had made major contributions to this research. Because their work had been seminal, it was reasonable to expect that, taken together, their views would represent the state of the art. This book is the result of that conference.

Different assumptions about what language is and how it might be acquired characterize the different contributions to the volume, and this lack of consensus in itself reflects the state of the art. For example, in one chapter, Martin Braine and Judith Hardy assume that children interpret events in the environment to acquire a case grammar based on categories of semantic relations (*1*); Michael Maratsos, in contrast, proposes that children use the regularities with which forms are distributed in the speech they hear to acquire a constituent structure grammar (*2*); and Kenneth Wexler and Thomas Roeper each present a version of the acquisition of transformational grammar (*3*).

The constraints on acquisition are a major theme, for example, in the chapters by Susan Carey with respect to the acquisition of words and Marilyn Shatz with respect to the acquisition of syntactic structure. Gleitman and Wanner, in their introductory chapter, advance the view that language is autonomous and that the constraints on its acquisition are task-specific. According to Elissa Newport, though the constraints involved in language are task-specific, they are determined by a general learning process that is not itself specific to language. And Thomas Bever, who was one of the original proponents of the idea that general constraints on learning and cognition determine the structure of language (*4*), here suggests that the formal characteristics of language may be "Platonic" in their origin and "uncaused" by the constraints of human learning.

The lack of consensus, here and elsewhere in the study of language acquisition, comes from an interplay between three major theoretical tensions that emerged in the last generation of research. The first concerns the representation of the form and function of language in the brain in relation to general cognition, that is, how specific is the process of language acquisition and whether and how the child's cognitive development influences language development. The second concerns the relative contributions of the child and the social context to the process of acquisition, that is, a contemporary version of the nature-nurture question. And the third derives from the contrast between descriptive approaches to research, concerned with understanding *what* children learn when they acquire language, and approaches that are only explanatory and concerned with theory and *how* languages can be acquired. These theoretical tensions, perhaps more than anything else, represent the state of the art.

In retrospect, these theoretical tensions were inevitable, given the succession of explanatory models that came to dominate at one time or another in the course of the last generation of research. We began in the early 1960's with an interest in children's underlying knowledge of rules of grammar and questions of early syntax. The question of how children learn to combine words to form phrases and simple sentences led to an inquiry into meaning and what their early sentences were about. Questions about meaning led to concern with context. And once we began to look at the context and consider more than just what children actually said, we became concerned with discourse, the pragmatics of speech events, and communication more generally. But we have come full circle. Much of the research activity today, as reflected in many of the chapters in this book, is concerned with questions of grammar and language structure.

The beginning of the generation was marked by the first of these explanatory models: Chomsky's theory of generative transformational grammar (*3*). The theory focused on language structure and on the rationalist explanation of language as a uniquely specified and innately determined human capacity. A speaker-hearer's theory of language is an intricate and highly abstract system of rules, which are themselves never directly accessible. Moreover, these rules apply to representations of sentences that are "quite remote" from what individuals actually say or hear when speech is used. They cannot be learned from the environment, and they bear no relation to the representation of everyday events.

When attention shifted to matters of meaning in child speech, attention also shifted to cognitive development, notably the cognitive theory of Piaget (*5*), to explain language. Sensorimotor development in infancy consists of development of the capacity for the mental representation of reality—objects, events, and relations between them. For Piaget and others influenced by him, the meaning of children's early language derives from the representations of reality developed in infancy, and the subsequent development of language continues to depend on the logical development of thought.

The tension between these two points of view has permeated efforts to conceptualize and explain language development, and culminated in the historic meeting between Chomsky and Piaget at