

Aella 10

Science



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Aella 10 Self-assessment: I struggle with being concise in my writing. I want to make every point. I worry about missing the most important ones altogether. APA can be confusing, the amount of rules and the similarity of those rules leaves my head aching. Lastly (but not least), but most importantly, I struggle with using of my own words and the fear of plagiarism. There is a fine line to what I already know, what I have read and the difficulty of putting it on paper without it sounding like someone else's thoughts. On a positive note, I feel I have a clear understanding of the material I am reading. I am not a terrible writer and try very hard in using correct grammar, spelling and form. I have a love of words and tend to research meanings including the prefix or suffix and their importance. I think this love of words gives me a unique perspective when reading difficult or confusing material. As for the writing process, I chose to do an outline while reading the article. I just typed as I read to pull out ideas and key points. Knowing I was not passing in the outline gave me permission to write whatever struck me. This in turn allowed me to do a second and third reading without being concerned with anything but reading. It may be a little more work at first but writing the paper went a little quicker since every thought, idea, and key point was already written.

Aella 9 References Coon, D. (1992). Testing the limits of sense and science. *American Experimental Psychologists Combat Spiritualism, 1880-1920. American Psychologist, 47*, 143-151

Aella 1 Spiritualism and psychology; blurred lines. Tracey Aella Psychology 371, section 2 History and systems Dr. Johnson Aella 6

Commentary: This article was quite compelling in the arguments Deborah Coon presented. She did a good job remaining (mostly) neutral. Her uses of certain terms woven throughout the article appeared intentional and a little

<https://assignbuster.com/aella-10/>

comical. Like the use of, " Haunt, " and " Physics envy" but I wondered about her intent with her article title. The term sense made me wonder if she was thinking about how much sense, or non- sense played a role in the battle of words used to discredit the distant relatives of psychology. I thought of common sense and what that implied regarding common beliefs of the time. Spiritualism and psychology have their own belief systems as well as followers. The term nemesis and war as well present a more aggressive attitude. Instead of an intellectual debate it felt like an argument where one needed to choose sides and depending on the side you chose decided what judgment may fall upon you. I wondered if this waged war made sense? Perhaps it did for the time. I had an underlining feeling that she didn't agree with the tactics used by psychologists. Spiritualism was and is a useful practice. There is a cathartic quality to the thought that one may be able to communicate with a loved one. I don't even think it mattered if it was fraudulent. Like Coon quoted in her article from George M. Beard, " spirits only dwell in the cerebral cells...not our house but our brains are haunted. " With tremendous fear during this time of civil unrest and the speed of technological advances that created even more anxiety the public looked for relief in any way form. Aella 7 Regardless of the fraudulent practices that existed in the popular psychologies, psychology is tied to them in a historical way. Phrenology and mesmerism did not begin as fraudulent and are distant relatives of psychology; they were also useful at the time. Spiritualism is very important to some people, even today. Philosophy is the grandfather of psychology and most people respect if not tolerate their grandfather's. I would even go as far as to say fraudulent practice exists in psychology and other disciplines as well. We know some scientists, " Fixed, " their

experiments to represent their theories. Others presented agenda driven propaganda and arguments. I do however understand wanting to separate themselves from what they called pseudoscience and immeasurable mental activities that may or may not exist. I don't think psychologist's needed to silence the philosophical, spiritual and religious Foundation that Psychology was born from in order to protect the image they were trying to form and to define psychology as a purely objective natural science. I understand the fear of the time that psychology might never win its rightful place among its peers in science as well as the fear it must create to a scientist that all this attained knowledge would be useless if levitation and clairvoyance were real. What would Newton or Einstein have done? As a skeptic and agnostic, I want research regarding the unknown and super natural. I would love proof of an after-life and to talk with my dead. What a relief if would be to know this was not it. I particularly like James' open-mindedness regarding all subjects in science and philosophy. He wasn't really saying he was a believer. He was merely pointing out that he felt psychologists had Aella 8 an obligation to study all phenomena reported and to either prove or disprove but not close the door completely on any investigative research regarding normal and paranormal mental processes. Aella 2 Testing the limits of sense and science Thesis The boundaries between spiritualism and psychic research have always been fuzzy at best. Many psychologists, not all, wanted to bring clarity to that boundary and create as much distance between themselves and spiritualism. Deborah Coon presented the battle waged by psychologists to clarify that boundary, the not so legitimate ways they achieved it, and their reluctance and eventual acceptance of the public's funding to aid them in legitimatizing the discipline they were trying to create and fund the

laboratories they were working in. A war waged The goal of psychologists was to be able to measure mental activity using experimental methods in a laboratory-based science (Coon, p. 145). Psychologists felt this would have legitimized their discipline and would have created a clear boundary between spiritualism, psychic research and psychology. Psychologists felt they had to fight for the reputation of their discipline in order to achieve validation as a natural science. They waged a territorial war against spiritualism to create distance and separate them from what they termed, pseudoscience. In this war they set out to define psychology and discredit spiritualism, wield authority over their discipline, as well as authority over the eventual investigative research performed on individuals like mediums or psychically sensitive (Coon 1992, p148) Aella 3 Psychologists had to separate themselves from what they called pseudoscience and debunk and discredit the use of spiritualism and other popular psychologies. Several ways they did this was to publish articles that praised their newly named discipline the, " New Psychology, " They bombarded magazines and scientific journals with as much positive information regarding, " psychology's status. " The establishment of these professional elements (Coon, p. 145) helped psychologists spread the word about New Psychology and its scientific method as well as further distancing themselves from spiritualism. Surrender As the title of Coon's article suggests, the first obstacle might have been the sense required in understanding the belief system in place for spiritualists as well as the faithful followers of psychology as a science. According to Coon, psychology was grouped with psychic phenomena and other popular psychologies of the day, " subject matter of psychology was unquantifiable and its methods mired in a metaphysical morass (Coon, 1992, p 143). " The <https://assignbuster.com/aella-10/>

public's interest in the so-called pseudoscience proved greater than psychologist's ability to silence it.. This led psychologists in the direction of doing investigations in psychic research. They were reluctant to do so and worried about their reputation being further compromised. They accepted, however, public funding for their laboratories. They investigated and conducted experiments in psychic research hoping to discredit even further these practices and further their own reputations as a valid science by gaining attention (Coon, p. 146) for psychology and Aella 4 creating doubt in the field of psychic investigation. Many psychologists, but not all, were opposed to spiritualism and the investigation of psychic phenomena. William James (Coon 1992), for example, had interest in spiritualism and hoped to prove life after death and etcetera. Some psychologists thought Spiritualism would be a valuable area for scientific investigation; others sought to distance themselves from Spiritualism in order to safeguard the reputation of Psychology. To those psychologists opposed, like Hall and Munsterberg, the goal was to combat spiritualism with a new psychology, named, the psychology of deception and belief. They needed to expose the frauds and debunk the belief system. If they were unable to prove fraud they would use their expertise to explain these phenomena with naturalistic explanations. Deborah Coon states that psychologist's were the experts in the mental realm and were capable of exposing the fraudulent practices in psychic and spiritualist matters giving them the self-imposed title, " Guardians of the scientific light(Coon, 1992). " The title of " keepers of the light, " and the defensive maneuvers (Coon, p. 149) employed, according to Coon, presented the debate that one needed to choose sides. Psychologist's would, " preserve the worldview by exposing and correcting wrong thinking,

superstition, and credulity (Coon, p. 149). " They would do this allowing only experimental psychologist to study and investigate psychic phenomena and the people claiming to perform them. She states, " Whether or not they choose to study psychic phenomena, psychologists wanted the authority to dictate who could. " If you chose the psychology side then you were on the " right" side. If you chose to believe in the pseudoscience you had " wrong thinking, " according to Coon in 1992.