

Lightner witmer founder of the school of psychology

[Psychology](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Lighter Witmer Psychology Lightner Witmer Lightner Witmer, an individual who has contributed so much in the field of psychology can be classified as a forgotten hero. He receives very little recognition for his fundamental principles in the field of psychology. He possessed a modest approach towards his ideas, however, maintained an argumentative form of communication. Witmer was born June 28 1867, in Philadelphia, a town which had undergone many events which are now considered historical (Thomas, 2009). He later went on to create the first psychology laboratory which was located in the University of Pennsylvania, where he later coined the terminology " clinical psychology" (Thomas, 2009). This paper will analyze how Witmer created this laboratory and the world's first psychology clinic in addition to his contribution in the field of psychology as both a social worker and psychologist. In 1896, Witmer made his first attempt to utilize psychology to improve people's life. He wrote an article which he presented to the American Psychology Association. This paper was later published in The Psychological Review. This article, which was entitled The Organization of Practical work in Psychology, was one of the highlights of Witmer's career as it enlightened both the public and his colleagues of the work he was intending to do in the field. This article made a statement and opened the minds of other psychologists. He proposed that it would be beneficial for departments to maintain close relationships with children and their surroundings in order to effectively conduct research and tests (Thomas, 2009). He also stated that it was essential for psychology departments to keep specimens in their departments, and the apparatus they used to conduct research on malfunctioning children should be approved by the

psychology department board and instruction for method of experimentation should be given to both teachers and psychologists. The proposal however had a very poor reception and was mostly frowned upon by other medical practitioners. Witmer was unhappy with this response and wrote a letter to Stanley Hall, suggesting the creation of a society specifically for experimental psychologists. However, the proposals in this letter did not materialize. However, the letter was later reconsidered in 1904 and Titchener and Witmer turned their plans into reality. Prior to these developments, Witmer chose to ignore the criticism he received from the American Psychology Association in 1896 and proceeded to open a laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania which was founded on the basis of assisting mentally defected children. The second major highlight of the early stages of his career occurred in 1907, when he published an article entitled Clinical Psychology. The article was based on the events that occurred in the process of him founding his laboratory and he also provided a detailed definition of the term 'clinical psychology'. While the term 'clinical' has been borrowed from medicine, clinical psychology is not a medical psychology. I have borrowed the word 'clinical' from medicine; because it is the best term I can find to indicate the character of the method which I deem necessary for this work. Words seldom retain their original significance, and clinical medicine, is not what the word implies, the work of a practicing physician at the bedside of a patient. The term 'clinical' implies a method, and not a locality. (Witmer, 1907, p. 251) Witmer is infamous for making vicious attacks on his colleagues, however, despite this his clinic excelled and continued to receive favorable views. He had numerous

referrals and encouraged each of his patients, mainly children, to reach their greatest potential. As a teacher he continuously emphasized the importance of observance to his students. He also taught his students to be cautious with their diagnosis and encouraged them to help their patients not label them. Socially Witmer was always keen on helping children and after opening his laboratory he proceeded to broaden his attention onto helping normal gifted children. He published an article which was aimed at creating more awareness for children in the community. He stated that his main goal was to enable all children regardless of their mental status to reach their full potential (McReynolds, 1997). He also made advancement in the research on criminal behavior in infants, establishing that heredity played a role; however, the child's environment was also influential in the development of criminal behavior. While teaching at the rugby academy, Witmer helped a child suffering from dyslexia to graduate and progress to the University of Pennsylvania. This gave him the hope that children with mental problems can be helped (Freedheim, 2003). Analyzing Witmer's life and career one can easily see that both his contributions and achievements in the field of psychology are undervalued. References Freedheim, D. (2003) Handbook of Psychology: History of psychology. John Wiley & Sons. McReynolds, P. (1997a). Lightner Witmer: His life and times. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Thomas, H. (n. d) Discovering Lightner Witmer. Retrieved from http://www.psyencelab.com/images/Discovering_Lightner_Witmer.pdf Witmer, L. (1907). Clinical psychology. *The Psychological Clinic*, 1, 1-9.