

Significant Figures in the History of Psychiatry: Distribution by National Origin and Gender

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Background: History of psychiatry can provide us with a map of the evolution of our practice and identify its major figures and their contributions. Aims: to identify significant figures in the history of psychiatry Methods: a historiometric approach was taken to nine available general histories of psychiatry texts and a historical dictionary of the discipline. Reliability was tested against data from the journal History of Psychiatry. Those cited in at least 60% of the sources are considered significant figures. An index of eminence is calculated for each significant figure. Results: The Cronbach's alpha for the included nine sources was .89. There was significant correlation across the included sources. Seventy-four significant figures were identified. Among these, Sigmund Freud, Philippe Pinel, and Emil Kraepelin have the highest eminence in the field – in this order. Nineteen (25.7%) came from Germany, followed by nine (12.2%) from the US, eight (10.8%) from France, seven (9.5%) from Austria as well as England. Three (4.05%) of the significant figures in the histories of psychiatry are women: Dorothea Dix, Anna Freud, and Melanie Klein. Conclusion: The history of psychiatry has evolved into five distinct periods, with the most eminent figures – Pinel, Kraepelin, and Freud – each representing the first three epochs – the asylum era, the first biological psychiatry, and the psychoanalytical period, respectively. The two most recent historical periods are not well represented yet and the contribution of women are underrepresented in the available histories of psychiatry.