

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION  
OF AMERICAN HISTORY

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**Abstract**

Although the application of psychological theories to the study of American history began as early as the 1920's, it did not become a fashion among historians until the 1950's. Today, psychohistory is widely recognized as an established sub-branch of the history discipline in the United States. In this paper, besides tracing the rise of psychohistory in American historiography, the author also evaluated the merits and demerits of psychohistory through a discussion of the psychological interpretations of two events—the Jacksonian Democracy and the Abolition Movement—and two persons—Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson—in the American past. He comes to the conclusion that though psychological theories provides historians with new insights in their effort to understand past events, their application to the study of history nevertheless raises some fundamental methodological difficulties which greatly reduce the usefulness and credibility of the psychological approach to history.