Several factors may account for Gertrude Stein’s later attempts to disparage her undergraduate studies of subconscious states. On philosophical grounds, she may still have been upholding Weininger’s belief that “genius is identical with the highest and widest consciousness”: any state short of consciousness was for Weininger highly immoral.¹ By the 1930s, Stein certainly considered herself a genius; yet during the decades since her reading of Weininger’s theory in 1907, she did not consistently decry the subconscious. Indeed, two years after reading Weininger’s book she would write: “Automatic action is creation, creation is a mingling of more.”² Here she valorizes the subconscious as a creative source while evoking William James’ concept of the subliminally accessible “more”.³ Furthermore, in a contemporary notebook she remarks that her “initiative” is an involuntary “propulsion” which she neither controls nor creates.⁴ Moreover, Stein would be “delighted” and “proud as punch” when in 1913 Mabel Dodge Luhan published an article attributing her creativity to the subconscious.⁵ Why, then, would she later argue that she “never had subconscious reactions” and then undermine her scientific studies?⁶

¹ Otto Weininger, Sex and Character (1906), New York, 1975, 111.
² Two: Gertrude Stein and Her Brother, and Other Early Portraits 1908-12, in The Yale Edition of the Unpublished Writings of Gertrude Stein, 8 vols, New Haven: CT, 1951, I, 234.
⁴ Notebook B-20. Use of this and other unpublished material from the Gertrude Stein Collection is with the permission of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven: CT.
⁵ See Mabel Dodge Luhan, Movers and Shakers, New York, 1936, 35.
During the 1930s, Stein was anxious to differentiate her genius from the Surrealist movement, while also reacting to a diatribe launched by B.F. Skinner. Unearthing the first of Stein’s scientific articles, in 1934 Skinner argued that *Tender Buttons* (1914) shows “the characteristics of the automatic writing produced by Miss Stein in her early psychological experiments”. In the widely read *Atlantic Monthly*, Skinner criticized *Tender Buttons* as a “probably ill-advised experiment”. Touring the United States in 1934-35, Stein was repeatedly reminded of Skinner’s attack. That she attempted to suppress evidence of her early interest in subconscious states is readily apparent upon comparative analysis of her 1898 article and her 1930s comments. In 1934 she states that her conclusion was as follows: “In these descriptions it will be readily observed that habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual.” The conclusion she published in 1898, however, is somewhat more complex: “In these descriptions it will be readily observed that habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual and again on habits of attention are dependent the different forms and degrees of automatic writing.” By omitting the final variable, automatic writing, from her 1934 summary, Stein radically alters the purpose of her experiments, bracketing their concern with the subconscious. Consequently, critics relying on her *post facto* comments fail to understand a significant aspect of her intellectual development.

The present study aims to clarify the shifting contours of Stein’s

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9 Stein notes that there “has been a lot said about those experiments” and that members of her lecture audiences asked her about them (*Everybody’s Autobiography*, 264 and 266).
12 This is the problem under which Leon Katz labours in *The First Making of The Making of Americans: A Study Based on Gertrude Stein’s Notebooks and Early Versions of Her Novel (1902-1908)*, Diss. Columbia University, 1963. His dissertation has several serious inaccuracies. See also Lisa Ruddick, “‘Melanctha’ and the Psychology of William James”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28 (1982-83), 545-56. In “Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?” Skinner draws upon only the first of Stein’s *Psychological Review* articles. Donald Sutherland, in *Gertrude Stein: A Biography of Work*, New Haven: CT, 1951, assumes that the “secondary and tertiary personalities of hysterical cases” were typically seen as “sadly stupid” (1). Also see Norman Weinstein, *Gertrude Stein and the Literature of Modern Consciousness*, New York, 1970, 12.