

# Family Life and Intellectual Growth: An Analysis of Helen Taylor’s Contribution to John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill’s Intellectual Development

**SURG** | Arts, Humanities, and Performance (AHP) | Tags: Archival, Literary/Composition Analysis

*This cover page is meant to focus your reading of the sample proposal, summarizing important aspects of proposal writing that the author did well or could have improved. **Review the following sections before reading the sample.** The proposal is also annotated throughout to highlight key elements of the proposal’s structure and content.*



Proposal Strengths	Areas for Improvement
The gap in knowledge and justification for the research aims are clearly stated, and the scope of the proposal stays narrowed to what the researcher is planning to do during their 8 weeks.	It is important to be clear and confirm that you have access to the archives and materials that you name in your proposal.
Archival methodology is explained with illustrative examples for what the student intends to find at the archives they will visit. There is a clear and extensive archival appendix. Trips to both archives are separately justified.	
The proposal includes specific research questions. These questions come at the end of the background section. As such, they are fittingly more concrete, answerable, and well justified by the preceding literature review.	
Includes an explicit research question. It comes at the end of the background section. As such, it is fittingly more concrete, answerable, and well justified by the preceding literature review.	



Other Key Features to Take Note Of
Projects that require international travel are eligible to receive additional funding of up to ½ the price of the round-trip plane ticket (as long as that travel is not to a researcher’s country of permanent residence).

For my independent summer research project, I propose to study the relationship between 19<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher John Stuart Mill, his wife Harriet Taylor Mill, and their stepdaughter, Helen Taylor. In doing so, I hope to develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which the household and family life play roles in the development of intellectual thought. To achieve this, I will review letter collections between the trio and begin to synthesize my findings, focusing on Helen's opinions on the work of her parents. This research would allow me to begin closely analyzing archival information for my upcoming Honors Thesis in History that I plan to pursue in the 2020-2021 academic year.

The historical roles of the household and family life in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe have been explored in significant depth by contemporary historians such as John Randolph and Deborah Coen. In Randolph's *The House in the Garden*, the author uses the household life of the famed Russian Bakunin family to demonstrate the merit of a closer inspection of the history of the private lives of historical figures. Randolph argues that, as intellectual inquiry shifts away from strictly public institutions such as popular literary publications or forums for speech, the domestic space has taken a character of "distinction, agency, and memory." In his analysis of the correspondence, meetings, and publications of three successive generations of the Bakunin family, Randolph illustrates that, in order to fully appreciate the intellectual figures as subjects, an inspection of their private lives and households is necessary. Without the implementation of this analytic framework, an evaluation of these figures would be incomplete.

This conclusion is supported by the work of Deborah Coen, whose analysis of the Austrian Exner family, one of the most notable academic families in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty* is a demonstration of the connections that become possible once a family's private life is brought into focus. Coen defines the public-private space as "a figurative space between individuals, made possible by the security of a stable environment, in which play and creativity become possible." Through her study of the Exner family, Coen is able to trace the intellectual development and published work of individual members through the lens of their familial interactions around their household. Coen and Randolph's work presents a justified reason for engagement with the private lives of intellectuals because the authors are able to demonstrate the significance of one's private life to their intellectual growth and maturation, creating a new framework of analysis and historical interpretation. Because the lives of John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor, and Helen Taylor are situated in the midst of 19<sup>th</sup> century European history and their interactions largely play out in their private lives, this framework is apt for the project at hand.

Additionally, though there has been much biographical work done on John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill's published intellectual achievements and public lives, little information exists concerning the intellectual relationship between Helen Taylor and the former pair. Having already read and annotated four biographical works related to the Mill family – John's autobiography, two 20<sup>th</sup> century biographies of John, and a 21<sup>st</sup> century biography of Harriet – I have concluded that, though the biographies recognize Helen's contribution to the intellectual work of John and Harriet, they rarely specify the extent of that contribution. Given Helen's constant presence in Harriet's life until her death, and subsequent shared household with John for the last 15 years of his life, there is significant potential for an exploration of the trio's personal lives as it relates to John and Harriet's intellectual development. Ultimately, this study will shed a new light on the life of John Stuart Mill's intellectual contribution and familial relationships. As some of the preeminent

The focus of the project is clear within the first paragraph.

Background draws on relevant work with clear logic flow that clearly sets up the gap in knowledge.

Justifies why this project is important.

Identifies gap in knowledge.

philosophers of their age, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill's lives and personal relationships are certainly worth further inspection. In performing this exploration, I hope to answer the following questions: What was the extent of Helen Taylor's intellectual contribution to the work of John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill? How does her contribution frame conceptions of the household and family as important dimensions of political and intellectual life in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe? Through the course of my research and subsequent Thesis project, my goal is to tease out the true extent of the trio's private relationship and potentially shed a new light on the suitability of the household and family life as an appropriate lens for the historical analysis of Victorian intellectual figures.

My plan for the summer consists primarily of archival data collection and synthetization. I will inspect the letters of John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, and Helen Taylor, looking specifically for mentions of John and Harriet's work in Helen's writing. Currently, letters between the trio are housed at the John Stuart Mill Collection at Yale University and the Mill-Taylor Collection at the London School of Economics (see Appendices C-D). Having consulted with my faculty advisor, I plan to spend one week at Yale University and two weeks at the London School of Economics, photographing and inspecting the letters. Additionally, several books of correspondence - *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor : their correspondence and subsequent marriage* and *The Letters of John Stuart Mill* - have been published and are available through the Northwestern University Library portal. I will spend the remainder of my summer working my way through the digitized versions of the archive and aforementioned selected texts, reading and annotating relevant letters from Mill and Harriet Taylor that mention Helen, as well as Helen's letters to the former pair.

In order to successfully examine Helen's contributions, I will employ a biographical analysis similar to the work performed by Randolph and Coen. To ensure that this analysis fully captures the dynamics of Helen, Harriet, and John's relationship, it is important that I have as broad of an archive as possible. Therefore, the majority of my summer will be spent gathering and annotating evidence from the aforementioned archives and source bases. I will use this evidence throughout my Thesis project, during which I will perform the bulk of my analytical work and biographical formation.

As a result of my extensive coursework in European history and research experience, I believe that I have the skills necessary to perform and categorize archival research. Having taken an upper-level History elective on Victorian Britain for my major, I have had significant exposure to the various historical themes of the time period and have specifically analyzed the work of John Stuart Mill in a classroom setting. Additionally, I have worked as a Leopold Fellow for my faculty advisor within the History Department, performing a year of archival research including a week-long independent research project at the archives of Southern Methodist University. With this experience under my belt, and having already read an extensive amount of literature on the subject, I believe that I am in the perfect position to perform this strand of archival research.

Working to explore new facets in which the household and private life played a role in the intellectual formation of prominent historical figures will help me further develop the necessary analytical skills to pursue future academic research. This work will not only aid the completion of my upcoming Thesis project, but will prepare me for my planned graduate study of Political Philosophy and Intellectual History. Ultimately, I plan to use this experience to further explore my academic interests and support the culmination of my academic career at Northwestern with the completion of a Thesis project.

Background leads to specific, answerable, and explicit research questions.

Identifies what materials are digitized and what will be looked at in-person.

Clear output given.

Mentions larger goal of the research: a senior thesis.

When using archival methods, make sure that you provide verification that you will have access to what you need.

Gives overview of archival methods with illustrative examples at will be found in the archives student will visit.

Researcher lists clear preparation to undertake this project.

Bibliography

Borchard, Ruth. *John Stuart Mill: the Man*. Watts, 1957.

Coen, Deborah R. *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty: Science, Liberalism, and Private Life*.

*University of Chicago Press*, 2011. pp. 19.

Jacobs, Jo Ellen. *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*. Indiana University Press, 2002.

Mill, John Stuart, *Autobiography*. Penguin Classics, 1989.

Packe, Michael St. John. *The Life of John Stuart Mill*. Secker and Warburg, 1954.

Randolph, John. *The House in the Garden: the Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian*

*Idealism*. Cornell University Press, 2007. pp. 5.

Appendix A: Research Materials

Hayek, Friedrich A. von. *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, Their Correspondence and Subsequent Marriage*. Routledge & K. Paul, 1951.

John Stuart Mill Collection, Yale University

Mill, John Stuart, et al. *The Letters of John Stuart Mill*. Longmans, Green and Co., 1910.

Mill-Taylor Collection, London School of Economics

Appendix B: Plan

John Stuart Mill Collection, Yale University ~ 1 Week (Archival)

Mill-Taylor Collection, London School of Economics ~ 2 Weeks (Archival)

*John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, Their Correspondence and Subsequent Marriage* ~ 1 Week  
(Reading/Annotating)

*The Letters of John Stuart Mill* ~ 1 Week (Reading/Annotating)

Synthesis and Notetaking ~ 3 Weeks

## Appendix C: Open Archive Confirmation

Collection: John Stuart Mill papers

archives.yale.edu/repositories/12/resources/2951

Collection Overview | Finding Aid View | Container List

### Scope and Contents

The John Stuart Mill Collection extends from 1812 - 1888, with around 425 items, mainly correspondence to or from John Stuart Mill. There are 237 letters by Mill, 131 of which are to his wife, Harriet (Hardy) Taylor Mill. Twenty-four letters are from Helen Taylor (1831 - 1907), Mrs. Mill's daughter.

The collection contains letters from Jeremy Bentham (1748 - 1832) to James Mill and John Stuart Mill. Bentham's philosophy was very influential. [See more >](#)

### Dates

1812-1888

### Creator

- Mill, John Stuart, 1806-1873

### Language

English

### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

### Conditions Governing Use

Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator(s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially... [See more >](#)

Document Document@lse.ac.uk xja lsecloud.onmicrosoft.com  
to Document, me, LSE

Fri, Feb 14, 6:57 AM (10 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear [REDACTED]

Many thanks for getting in touch.

The Mill-Taylor collection is indeed open to all. You can see the catalogue record for it here: <https://archives.lse.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=MILL-TAYLOR&pg=1> On that page you will also see a "How do I search?" guide which will give information on how to search for particular files of interest within the Mill-Taylor collection. Once you've identified files you'd like to see, you'll need to register as a visitor to the Library and request the material in advance so that it can be fetched for you to consult in the reading room. Information about how to do that can be found here: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/access-archives-and-special-collections>

You are welcome to take pictures in the reading room for your own research. We just ask you not to use the flash.

None of the collection has been digitised I'm afraid, so you would need to come in to view it. If that is not possible, the National Archives maintains a list of independent researchers who (for a fee) can come in to take pictures/research on your behalf: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/finding-for-research/independent-researchers/>

Best wishes,

Daniel.

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## Appendix D: Preliminary List of Files at Archives

### Yale Archive:

#### John Stuart Mill papers

Collection

Call Number: MS 350

Collection Overview

Finding Aid View

Container List

#### Scope and Contents

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### LSE Archive:

#### Hierarchy Browser

MILL-TAYLOR - Mill James (1773-1836); Mill John Stuart (1806-1873), philosopher

- 1 - [Correspondence of John Stuart Mill]
- 2 - [Correspondence with John Stuart Mill]
- 3 - [Copies of letters to Henry Fawcett]
- 4 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re publication of J.S.Mill's works]
- 5 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re publication of J.S.Mill's works]
- 6 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re the translation of J.S.Mill's works]
- 7 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re J.S.Mill's letters and proposals for their]
- 8 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re J.S.Mill]
- 9 - [Correspondence of JS Mill]
- 10 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re the Moral Reform Union]
- 11 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re the Moral Reform Union]
- 12 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re women's suffrage]
- 13 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re women's suffrage]
- 14 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re the social position and education of wo]
- 15 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re the London School Board and educatio]
- 16 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re the London School Board and educatio]
- 17 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor re (a) her literary work and (b) the land e]
- 18 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor relating to (a) political questions (b) Irish]
- 19 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 20 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 21 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 22 - [Correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 23 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 24 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 25 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 26 - [Private correspondence of Helen Taylor]
- 27 - [Correspondence of Harriett Hardy (later Taylor and Mill), of other member]
- 28 - [Correspondence of Harriet Taylor Mill]
- 41 - Miscellaneous papers of J S Mill and Helen Taylor
- 42 - 'Limits of Local Government'
- 43 - ['The Municipal Vote and the Moral Condition of Women']
- 44 - Diaries of Helen Taylor, January 1842 to January 1847.
- 45 - [Letters, speeches and articles by or relating to JS Mill extracted from news]
- 46 - [Catalogue of Mill-Taylor papers]
- 47 - [Family letters, 27 October 1817-6 January 1871]
- - - - -
- 50 - Personal correspondence of J.S.Mill and Harriet Taylor before and after thei
- 51 - [Correspondence relating to Helen Taylor's stage career]
- 52 - [Correspondence relating to Helen Taylor's stage career]
- 53 - [Correspondence relating to Harriet Mill's death]
- 54 - [Letters from Fanny Stirling to Helen Taylor]
- 55 - [Correspondence with John Elliott Cairnes]
- 56 - [Correspondence with John Elliott Cairnes]
- 57 - [Correspondence with Henry Fawcett and others]
- 58 - [Papers relating to Algernon Taylor, Mary Taylor and Helen Taylor, with mis]
- 59 - Manuscript notes by James Mill

- Box 1 - [Miscellaneous papers]
- Box 2 - [Miscellaneous papers]
- Box 3 - [Miscellaneous papers]
- Box 4 - [Photographs]
- Box 5 - [Press cuttings re J.S.Mill]]
- Box 6 - [Press cuttings re Helen Taylor and the London School Board]
- Box 7 - [Press cuttings re Helen Taylor and parliamentary election of 1885, won]
- Box 8 - [Posters]
- Box 9 - [Miscellaneous]
- Box 10 - [Family portraits]