

**PSYCHOLOGY SINCE 1945:
INSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAGMENTATION, COGNITIVE
DIFFERENTIATION, REFLEXIVITY**

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Introduction

Psychology occupies a peculiar place among the sciences, suspended between methodological orientations derived from the physical and biological sciences and a subject matter extending into the social and human sciences. The struggle to create a science of both subjectivity and behavior, and the interrelated effort to develop professional practices utilizing that science's results, provide interesting examples for the reach and also the limits of such scientific ideals as objectivity, measurability, repeatability, and cumulative knowledge acquisition. In addition, psychologists' struggles to live by such ideals while competing with others to fulfill multiple public demands for their services illuminates both the formative impact of science on modern life, and the effects of technocratic hopes on science.

There has been a broad shift in the historiography of psychology over the past twenty years from the achievements of important figures and the history of psychological systems and theories to the social and cultural relations of psychological thought and practice.¹ In the process, interrelationships of psychological research and societal practices with one another, and with prevailing cultural values and institutions in different times and places, have become clearer. Elsewhere I have tried to bring out certain common threads in this varied narrative.² One of those common threads is that the history of psychology has been a continuous struggle by multiple participants to occupy and define a sharply contested, but never clearly bounded, discursive and practical field. The emergence and institutionalization of both the discipline and the profession called "psychology" are often portrayed as acts of liberation from philosophy or medicine, but these efforts to establish scientific or professional autonomy never completely succeeded. A second common thread is that the history of psychology as a science, the history of the psychological profession, and the history of reflexive psychological practices in general are inseparable, at least in the twentieth century.

In consideration of all this, it is clear that this paper is not and cannot be about the philosophers' constructs called "psychology" or "philosophy of mind," for several reasons. The first reason is banal, but perhaps worthy of mention nonetheless: I am a historian of

¹ For comprehensive overviews, see Roger Smith, *The Fontana History of the Human Sciences* (London: Fontana, 1997), published in the United States as *The Norton History of the Human Sciences* (New York: Norton, 1998); Kurt Danziger, *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); idem., *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found its Language* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

² Mitchell G. Ash, Psychology: Historical and Cultural Perspectives. In: N. J. Smelser & P. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Oxford: Pergamon, 2001, 12399-12405; idem., Psychology, in: Dorothy Ross & Theodore Porter (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 7: *The Modern Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 251-274. I have drawn upon these articles and other previous publications in this paper.

science, not a philosopher; my institutional socialization has given me knowledge interests and trained me to raise questions rather different from those of philosophers. The second reason follows from the first, but is perhaps less banal: as a historian, I believe that it is both methodologically inappropriate and empirically incorrect to speak as though there were such a thing as “psychological objects” or “mind” as such, without pausing to ask just how such concepts have been defined and used, and in this sense constructed, in different contexts over time. A simple distinction between “scientific” and “folk” psychologies does not relieve us from the necessity of such considerations. So-called “scientific” psychology has never been able to agree on common definitions of its own terms, and has in any case become hopelessly fragmented institutionally as well since 1945, as I will argue in part one below. On the other side of the supposed divide, as Martin Kusch and others have suggested, “folk” (or, as I prefer to call it, everyday) psychology is also a social construction that is just as subject to change over time as are the concepts of scientific or professional psychology.³ As I will try to show here, more careful consideration of such contexts and historical changes over time indicates that various segments of psychological science have defined, used or constructed aspects of the psychical in rather different ways during the postwar period, in part due to complex interactions with other disciplines, as well as particular segments of society.

Neither time nor space is available to discuss all of these results here.⁴ All I can present is a sketch, necessarily lacking in detail, of three subtopics within a vast domain. In the first part of the paper, I will try to survey institutional developments, focusing on two key trends: inner-disciplinary fragmentation, resulting in the emergence of sub-disciplines with different semantic/conceptual and methodological resources; and internationalization as Americanization, with certain countervailing crosscurrents. In part two, I will briefly sample some results of this fragmentation, focusing on the subfields of cognitive (neuro)science and social psychology. Finally, I will address the final term in my subtitle, “reflexivity,” as both a cognitive and social process that has become increasingly characteristic of psychology – and perhaps also of other human sciences – in the past few decades.

Part one: Institutional fragmentation, 'Americanization' and the alternatives

In the United States, the postwar years saw explosive expansion and differentiation in both the scientific and professional realms of psychology. The establishment of a divisional structure within the American Psychological Association in 1947 - already negotiated during the war - reflected this process. Despite the optimism of the time, it proved difficult to subsume all aspects of psychology's protean identity within single university departments or graduate programs.⁵

By the 1970s, both the sheer numbers of psychologists (over 70,000, over 100,000 by the end of the century) and the international representation of psychology had reached levels that could not have been imagined fifty years earlier. The growth was world-wide, but more than two-thirds of the total were and remain Americans. From the point of view of social history, the most important aspect of this story is the openness of both discipline and profession to women. Already noticeable in the pre-World War II period, this openness continued, indeed increased from the 1950s onward. According to a National Science Foundation survey for the years 1956-1958, for example, 18.49 per cent (2,047) of all American psychologists were

³ Martin Kusch, *Psychological Knowledge. A Social History and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁴ Detailed studies of such interactions will be presented in Mitchell G. Ash/Thomas Sturm (eds.), *Psychology's Territories: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Different Disciplines* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, in press).

⁵ James Capshew, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. chaps. 3-7. Here: pp. 205 ff.

women - the highest percentage for any single discipline. Today more than half the doctorates in the field issued in the US go to women.⁶ However, the gender concentration that began in the 1920s continued, with women being most numerous in developmental and educational psychology (that is, the “softer” subdisciplines) and men in experimental, industrial and personnel psychology (the “harder” subfields).

Such numbers as those given above and the extent of the institutional anchorage of psychology in the United States were more than sufficient to assure that the research and professional practices institutionalized there would spread throughout the world. “Americanization” understood in this sense was, however, by no means automatic. The reception of American-style psychology occurred at different rates in different countries. In Western Europe outside Germany and France, the predominance of American and British work in academic psychology was secure by 1970. For example, citation rates for English-language publications in the leading Dutch psychology journal rose from 20 per cent in 1950 to over 70 per cent in 1970; by then the citation rate of American publications in social psychology dissertations was well over 90 per cent.⁷

American predominance was contested during the Cold War era, not only in the Soviet Union,⁸ but also, though with at best partial success, by dissident local-language movements in the West, most notably in France and Germany. The most important exceptions to the overall trend in terms of scientific impact were the near-worship of Piaget by developmental psychologists, and the positive reception of applications of factor analysis to personality testing and diagnostics by British psychologists Hans Eysenck and Raymond Catell. In cognition research, too, British work such as that of F. C. Bartlett and Donald Broadbent, as well as the work of Soviet theorists such as Alexander Luria were mobilized to lend respectability and theoretical sophistication to the resurgent field in the United States.

During this period psychology in the two German states became itself a laboratory for Cold War science. In West Germany there was striking continuity from the Nazi period at first; nearly all those who had held professorships in 1943 also did so in 1953. After an intense controversy with both nationalistic and generational dimensions, this older generation was supplanted by younger advocates of American-style, meaning data-driven research and statistical presentation and assessment of results, by the 1960s.⁹

In East Germany, continuity with the past was most clearly evident in the appointment of Kurt Gottschaldt, a former student of the Gestalt psychologists who had carried out extensive twin studies at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology in the Nazi era, to a full professorship at the Humboldt University in East Berlin. The context here was the decision of East German party and state officials to utilize “bourgeois” scientists for pragmatic reasons until a “new intelligentsia” could be trained.¹⁰ By the late 1950s, however, Gottschaldt came under pressure from proponents of a “Marxist-Leninist” psychology based, ironically, in

⁶ Margaret Rossiter, “Which Science? Which Women?” in *Women, Gender and Science*, eds. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt and Helen E. Longino (*Osiris*, vol. 12 – YEAR!), pp. Here, Table One, p. 170 and Table 3, p. 175. Contemporary data on pp. 172 f.

⁷ Pieter J. van Strien, “The American ‘Colonization’ of Northwest European Social Psychology after World War II,” *JHBS*, 33 (1997), 349-363. For a more differentiated perspective emphasizing initiatives by local psychologists reaching out to selected American partners, see Frederick Thue (2006).

⁸ See Jorawsky et al and chapter on Russia in 2003 and the literature cited there.

⁹ Alexandre Métraux, “Der Methodenstreit und die ‘Amerikanisierung’ der Psychologie in der Bundesrepublik 1950-1970,” in *Geschichte der deutschen Psychologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Ash and Geuter, 225-251.

¹⁰ Mitchell G. Ash, “Kurt Gottschaldt and Psychological Research in Nazi and Socialist Germany,” in *Science under Socialism: East Germany in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Kristie Macrakis and Dieter Hoffmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 286-301, 360-365.

Wilhelm Wundt's Leipzig.¹¹ He departed for the West in 1962, but his successor in Berlin, Friedhart Klix, skilfully presented his own mixture of Soviet-style cognition research and American information-processing approaches as a new "Marxist" psychology in tune with the "scientific-technical revolution."¹²

A brief remark may be permitted here on psychology in the so-called "developing world." Small laboratories and departments for psychology had been established in Asian, African and Latin American countries long before 1945, and European and American investigators had begun studying the behavior and mental processes of "non-Western" peoples early in the twentieth century. The discipline expanded in these areas during the post-war period, though not nearly at the same speed as in the United States and Western Europe. Particularly interesting in this regard is the emergence of a specialty called "cross cultural" psychology, which, after modest beginnings, expanded rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s. This sub-field soon became a site in which ambivalences of post-colonialism acquired visibility before the term itself became fashionable. Whereas the founders of the specialty initially thought it sufficient to "validate" existing (Western) research and diagnostic procedures in non-Western locales, critics of such approaches soon challenged the universalistic claims on which they were based as a species of cultural imperialism, advocated paying attention to the psychological aspects of non-Western cultural traditions and supported "indigenization" movements.¹³

The professional history of psychology after 1945 also continued to be affected by contingent local circumstances. The rise of clinical psychology in the United States, for example, was originally driven by the need to deal with large numbers of mentally ill veterans after World War II. The initially established division of labor between test-based clinical diagnostics and psychiatric treatment soon became complicated, as clinicians engaged in a wide variety of psychotherapies, often though not always inspired by psychoanalysis. The new field ultimately brought forth its own basic research in both clinical and academic settings, which led to the emergence of scientific communities based on methodological norms quite different from those of experimental or developmental psychologists. This was the background of the controversy over "clinical versus statistical prediction" during the early 1950s.¹⁴ In addition, an eclectic, so-called "humanistic" psychology movement arose in opposition to both behaviorism and psychoanalysis, and became widely popular in psychotherapy, social work, and the emerging field of counseling psychology.

In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, the rise of clinical psychology came approximately ten years later than in the United States. Here, however, in contrast to the United States, the supremacy of personality diagnostics and its quantitative tools had already been established in basic research before the professionalization of the clinical field. Another important difference indicative of a persistent European tradition was that clinical training in academic settings was based far more on cognitive and behavioral techniques than on psychoanalysis. Barriers to the academic institutionalization of psychoanalytic research and training in the universities proved surmountable only in exceptional cases, such as that of the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt am Main under Alexander Mitscherlich.

¹¹ Stefan Busse, "Gab es eine DDR-Psychologie?" *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 5 (1993), 40-62.

¹² Friedhart Klix, *Information und Verhalten* (Berlin/GDR: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1966).

¹³ Alison Turtle et al. On psychology in Asia, plus other studies, e.g. of psychology in China, and critiques of "cross cultural" psychology.

¹⁴ Paul E. Meehl, *Clinical versus Statistical Prediction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954).

Part two: Scientific impacts of institutional fragmentation

Given the spectacular growth in the sheer size of the discipline, specialization was inevitable. The process had already begun decades before 1945, and by the mid-1950s discerning observers had become aware that specialization and sub-specialization was having an impact on the contents and practices of the field. Put in social historical terms, sub-communities were creating their own terms of trade. Complaints that the discipline had lost any semblance of intellectual unity had become endemic by the 1970s. At least two related issues characterized the discussion of that period: (1) an intellectually sterile, but historically revealing debate on whether psychology was “pre-paradigmatic” as Thomas Kuhn appeared to claim in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, and (2) a related discussion of the unity of psychology’s subject matter, resolved by compromise in basic textbooks by adding the term “experience” to “behavior.” Fragmentation was most obvious in the different research practices institutionalized in experimental, social and personality psychology (see below).

Common across subfields were methodological conventions: an emphasis on standardizing experimentation by 'operationalizing' variables, distinguishing 'independent' from 'dependent' variables, and using statistical significance testing to evaluate results.¹⁵ An increasingly fragmented field held itself together, if it did so at all, by enforcing such methodological conventions on ever widening groups of researchers via the increasingly extensive guidelines in the Publication Manual of the APA.¹⁶ Among the results were a relative lack of interest in field research and phenomenological exploration, and, by implication, the pre-structuring even of basic research to suit the needs of an expert society.

Beneath this loosely-forming net of methodological convention, substantive differences persisted. In educational psychology, for example, the preferred research tools were not ‘classical’ experimentation but the correlational methods pioneered by Francis Galton. This contrasted markedly with the laboratory tools preferred by Neo-behaviorist learning theorists, who claimed at least implicitly to be providing the basic science that educators required. In 1957, Lee Cronbach even spoke of the rival research communities (educational and experimental psychology) as “two disciplines.”¹⁷ A comparable methodological split occurred in experimental social psychology and personality theory. In a broad survey of the field, Dorwin Cartwright spoke openly of “hard” and “soft” or “messy” methods to distinguish learning theory from social and personality psychology.¹⁸ Meanwhile, developmental psychology went its own way, taking the work of Jean Piaget as a touchstone for numerous studies closely related, as the earlier work of Arnold Gesell and others had been, to the practical needs of schools for age-related developmental norms.

Case 1: Cognitive (neuro)science

In experimental psychology, Neo-Behaviorist learning theory was challenged in the late 1940s and 1950s by a revival of cognition research by advocates of the so-called “New Look” and information processing approaches. Cognitive science was not limited to psychology, of

¹⁵ On the postwar triumph of statistics, see Danziger, Constructing the Subject, and Capshaw, Psychologists on the March, chap. 10.

¹⁶ Charles Bazerman, Codifying the Social Scientific Style: The A.P.A. 'Publication Manual' as a Behaviorist Rhetoric, in The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs, eds. John S. Nelson, Donald McCloskey and Allen Megill (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 125-143.

¹⁷ Lee Cronbach, The two disciplines of scientific psychology, American Psychologist, 12 (1957), 671-684.

¹⁸ Dorwin Cartwright, Lewinian Theory as a Contemporary Systematic Framework, in Psychology: A study of a science. Vol. 4. General systematic formulations, ed. Sigmund Koch (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 7-91.

course, but was a multi-disciplinary project from the start.¹⁹ Among its components were: computer science, with its associated artificial intelligence and cybernetics groups; philosophers of mind following Wittgenstein's remarks on psychology among others; and experimental psychologists trying to swim against the Neo-Behaviorist tide and bring cognitive processes back into the mainstream of their discipline, while retaining the semblance of natural scientific rigor. Each of these research communities remained largely self-contained at first, since each was affiliated institutionally with different disciplines; this resulted in considerable tensions at interdisciplinary gatherings. But the tensions were not only institutional in origin: the machine dreams of the early AI community were not easily married with the struggle to re-establish the autonomy of the psychological events and processes against the very different reductionism of behaviorist learning theory. I focus here briefly on two issues: the impact of machine metaphors since the 1950s, and the (seemingly) more recent challenge of brain research.

Very soon after the emergence of computer science and cybernetics during World War II and of information theory soon afterward, talk of "information processing" as a way of describing sensory, then lower level cognitive processes began to proliferate. By the late 1950s it was common to speak of an information-processing model of sensory and cognitive processes, or even of mind per se. In hindsight, it appears obvious that the term was actually a metaphor, but it was nonetheless powerful for that. Metaphors have often served as a kind of glue, binding together different disciplines, or even linking the sciences and the wider culture.²⁰ A certain conceptual imprecision generally accompanies such linkages; no one seems to mind, so long as it appears fruitful to continue using imported language. Whether synapses actually work the same way that vacuum tubes do (as cybernetics seemed to imply), whether Claude Shannon's information theory could ever have had much to do with entropy in physical systems, or whether talk of genetic "codes" transmitting information had much to do with Shannon's information theory, seemed not to matter, at least at first. The machines were there, they "processed" information, and their technical prowess was getting rapidly more impressive. One irony seems obvious in retrospect: just as cognitivists were beginning to succeed in their struggle against behaviorists for supremacy in experimental psychology, they came in thrall to cybernetics, a reductionist programme in its own right.

As stated above, psychologists made strenuous efforts to maintain the unity of the discipline despite obvious fragmentation by enforcing methodological conventions. One of these was the use of statistical significance testing to establish reliability of research results. One of the problematic implications of this convention became clear in the 1980s and 1990s, in the debate over computational models of mind. In this case, psychologists seeking instruments of control via standardized inference provided tools such as Bayesian statistics, which then generated metaphors and concepts, the justification of which was easier because the tools were already in frequent use. The scientists then found the instruments informing their theorizing, or they found themselves claiming, quite implausibly, that "normal" subjects not socialized into the use of these techniques nonetheless solve problems the way they do, by applying "incomplete" or "naive" versions of statistical inference.²¹

I turn now to the challenge of brain research. The interaction of psychology and neuroscience in the postwar era is a superb example of the degree to which interest in psychological subject

¹⁹ Howard Gardner, *The Mind's New Science* (New York: Basic Books, 1996). First published 1985.

²⁰ For examples from the nineteenth century, see Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

²¹ Gerd Gigerenzer, From Tools to Theories: Discovery in Cognitive Psychology, *Science in Context*, 5 (1992), 329-350.

matter is influenced by the availability, constraints, and development of instrumentation. This is in part a question of theory-method alignments, but it is also a question of disciplinary power and preferences. Instrumentation from brain research, such as the EEG, has played a significant role in cognitive science for decades, in combination with other methods taken from experimental psychology.²² At the same time, brain researchers have long claimed to have privileged access to the psyche.²³ Current brain research, and particularly neuroimaging and other visualization techniques, are now having such a major impact on cognitive science that a leading segment of the field has been renamed cognitive neuroscience. At least some brain researchers clearly want to argue that their instruments can or will soon make psychological processes visible; if there is anything to such controversial claims, they would have fundamental implications for any model of or metaphor for the mind.

Modern neuroscience maintains that all affective-emotional processes are coupled to neural processes in specific brain regions. Though they acknowledge that attempts to delineate the neurobiological foundations of affective-emotional states and of psychiatric disorders with the aid of structural and functional imaging methods are still at very initial steps, they nonetheless maintain that states of the “psyche” can be visualized by modern neuroimaging methods. In this case one might well ask two questions: first, what in fact is being “imaged,” psychical or neuronal processes; and second, are the techniques in question only instrumental or also rhetorical? Are psychological processes now being made visible by neuroscientific apparatus, as some neuroscientists clearly want to argue, or are pieces of equipment and spectacular images being used as tools in a rhetorical strategy to make people believe that this has happened?

In a recent paper, Michael Hagner provocatively describes what he calls the “fictional” elements in current (over)confident proclamations by neuroscientists and by their allies in the media. In Hagner’s view, poetic dreams about brain mirrors and mind reading have been kept alive mainly by the sense of uncanny possibility that they evoke. The simple fact that a category mistake is involved – that the metabolic processes in the brain being recorded by neuroimaging techniques obviously do not “think” in any coherent sense of the word – suggests, in his view, that the current controversy may say more about the need to make exaggerated claims in order to gain media attention, and thus to use cultural resources to attract research support, than they do about the science involved.²⁴

Case 2: Social psychology

In social psychology, the main trends in the early postwar years were two: continuation of the effort to subject social behavior to experimentalization, leading, as some have claimed, to the progressive removal of the “social” as such from the field; and the continuation of efforts begun during the 1930s to make social psychology more relevant to social and political problems. Both of these trends were complicated by the impact of émigrés from Nazi Germany.

Experimental studies of social influence on perception by Solomon Asch and of prejudice by Gordon Allport and others captured the imagination of many in the field in the 1950s.

²² Frank Rösler, From single-channel recordings to brain-mapping devices: The impact of electroencephalography on experimental psychology. *History of Psychology*, 8 (2005), 95-117.

²³ Michael Hagner, Der Geist bei der Arbeit: Überlegungen zur visuellen Repräsentation cerebraler Prozesse, in Cornelius Borck (Ed.), *Anatomien medizinischen Wissens* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer), 259-286; Cornelius Borck, *Hirnströme* (2004), 2005.

²⁴ Michael Hagner, Thought reading, brain mirror, neuroimaging: Insight into the Brain or the Mind? in: Ash & Sturm, *Psychology’s Territories*.

Common to these studies was specific construction of the “social” as group impact on individual behavior or attitudes. This was partly due to the acceptance of methodological conventions resulting with competition with learning theorists, in particular the injunction to ‘operationalize’ variables as well as results, and to distinguish ‘dependent’ and ‘independent’ variables.²⁵ That this need not have happened the way it did is shown by the case of Kurt Lewin.

Lewin was a Berlin-based German Jewish psychologist who resigned his position in 1933 before he could be dismissed by the Nazis and accepted research stipend at Cornell supported by Rockefeller Foundation. After moving to the Child Welfare Research Station at the University of Iowa in 1934, he carried out, with American collaborators, research on “authoritarian,” “democratic,” and “laissez faire” behavioural styles in children’s play groups that made him famous.²⁶ In each group the role of the group leader, and thus a kind of individual-group influence, was central; the notion that leadership and democracy were not only not incompatible, but that a particular kind of (facilitating rather than dominating) leadership was essential to democratic behaviour, was attractive as a contrast to Continental Europe’s authoritarian regimes. Most impressive to contemporaries, however, was the visual evidence provided by Lewin’s films of his subjects that he had succeeded in studying the behaviour of groups *as groups*, and not only the impact of groups on individuals or vice-versa. This success encouraged Lewin to inaugurate a program he called “action research,” the purpose of which was to collaborate with members of socially disadvantaged groups in order to study their behaviour, while at the same time giving them the means of changing that behavior. His open support for American democracy and his optimism about the potential of education to achieve social change impressed the progressive segment of his discipline sufficiently that he was elected President of the “Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues” in 1939, only three years after he had helped to found it.

After his sudden death from a heart attack in 1947, at the age of 57, Lewin's prestige reached its high point. In the obituaries that followed he was celebrated as the founder of experimental social psychology; Edward Tolman went so far as to call him the most important thinker in the history of psychology after Freud.²⁷ Indeed, many of Lewin's terms, including “life space” and “marginal affiliation,” entered the vocabulary of American psychology.²⁸ Nonetheless, precisely in the field of experimental social psychology, the field in which he made his greatest impact in America, his experiments with ‘authoritarian’ and ‘democratic’ groups were greatly admired, but not accepted or imitated as exemplars for research design. Instead of the behavior of groups as groups, the preferred subject matter of social psychology remained the influence of groups on the behavior of individuals. Moreover, rather than establishing laboratory settings in which group behavior could be observed directly, social psychologists preferred to work according to standardized methodological rules that prescribed clear differentiation between ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’ variables. With that the holistic presuppositions on which Lewin had based his approach ceased to apply.²⁹ A number of

²⁵ Kurt Danziger, The project of an experimental social psychology: Historical perspectives, *Science in Context*, 5 (1992), 309-328.

²⁶ Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippitt, and Robert K. White, “Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created ‘Social Climates,’” *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10 (1939), 271-299.

²⁷ Edward C. Tolman, Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), *Psychological Review*, 55 (1948), 1-4.

²⁸ Günther Bierbrauer, Ein Sozialpsychologe in der Emigration. Kurt Lewins Leben, Werk und Wirkungsgeschichte, in Edith Böhne & Wolfgang Motzkau-Valeton, *Die Künste und die Wissenschaften im Exil 1933-1945* (Heidelberg, 1992), p. 329.

²⁹ See, e.g., Leon Festinger et al., *Theory and Experiment in Social Communication* (Ann Arbor, 1950); cf. Kurt Danziger, The Project of an Experimental Social Psychology: Historical Perspectives, *Science in Context*, 5

Lewin's former collaborators tried to work in the style he had taught them, and some of them were among the founders of the approach called 'ecological psychology' in the 1960s.³⁰

In the case of the The Authoritarian Personality, the picture is even more complex, but equally ironic. As I have tried to show elsewhere, the Authoritarian Personality study, begun during the war and published in 1950, was the result of a complex synthesis of three cultures of scientific practice, each of which was itself a synthesis of multiple components: the combination of late Marxist 'Critical Theory' and empirical social research practiced by the Frankfurt School since the late 1920s; personality theory based on in-depth clinical interviews, as practiced by Viennese psychologist Else Frenkel-Brunswik; and the statistical correlation methods practiced by the Americans R. Nevitt Sanford and Daniel Levinson.³¹ When it appeared, the study played to widespread worries among American liberals that fascist and anti-Semitic attitudes were not limited to Nazi Germany. The popularity of such studies was symptomatic of a widespread tendency of the period to psychologize, and thus individualize, social problems.³²

Many accepted the central claim of the study, that racist prejudices are rooted in depth psychology and are therefore not likely to be eliminated completely even in liberal democracies. Nonetheless, a certain ambivalence expressed itself in the methodological criticisms of the study that began to appear very soon after it was published – some of which came, interestingly enough, from other emigres.³³ Some of these criticisms, for example the point that all of the test items were formulated as negatives, were not unjustified, but the emphasis on such problems to the exclusion of content issues can surely be interpreted as resistance against accepting the study's disquieting results. A sign of the McCarthy era were the accusations that the study paid too little attention to authoritarian tendencies among liberals and leftists.³⁴ Nonetheless, the fundamental results of the book have stood the test of time to a remarkable extent. In particular Frenkel-Brunswik's concept 'intolerance of ambiguity' has been shown to be valuable in recent studies of xenophobia.³⁵

Part three: Reflexivity

James Capshew has described an increasing emphasis on what he calls "reflexivity" in psychology since World War II.³⁶ By "reflexivity" Capshew means first of all the awareness that psychologists are themselves part of the subject matter of their own discipline, and second of all, that working on people's selves, meaning their identities and personal problems, has become an increasingly important purpose of psychological practice. As Capshew, Jill Morawski and others have shown, reflexivity in the first sense – the awareness that

(1992), 309-328; Danziger, *Making Social Psychology Experimental: A Conceptual History, 1920-1970*, Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 36 (2000), 329-347.

³⁰ Vgl. Roger Barker & Herbert Wright, Midwest and its Children (New York, 1955); Roger Barker, Ecological Psychology: Concepts and Methods for Studying the Environment of Human Behavior (Stanford, 1968).

³¹ Mitchell G. Ash, *Learning from Persecution: Émigré Jewish Social Scientists' Studies of Authoritarianism and Anti-Semitism after 1933*. In: Beate Meyer and Marion Kaplan (eds.), Jüdische Welten. Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart (Festschrift für Monika Richarz) (Göttingen, 2005), pp. 271-294.

³² Franz Samelson, "Authoritarianism from Berlin to Berkeley: On Social Psychology and History," Journal of Social Issues, 42 (1986), 191-208.

³³ Marie Jahoda & Richard Christie (Eds.), Studies in the Scope and Method of 'The Authoritarian Personality': Continuities in Social Research (Glencoe, IL, 1954).

³⁴ See, e.g., Edward Shils, *Authoritarianism: 'Right' and 'Left'*, in Jahoda & Christie (Eds.), Studies.

³⁵ David Oesterreich, Autoritäre Persönlichkeit und Gesellschaftsordnung. Der Stellenwert psychologischer Faktoren für politische Einstellungen (Weinheim, 1993); William F. Stone, Gerda Lederer & Richard Christie (Eds.), Strength and Weakness: The Authoritarian Personality Today (New York, 1993).

³⁶ James Capshew, in Ash & Sturm (eds.), Psychology's Territories.

psychologists are part of their own research – was initially suppressed during the formative period of academic psychology, but has become an increasingly acknowledged feature of psychological thinking within the discipline since the 1940s.

(examples – Skinner, Carl Rogers, George Kelley).

One reason for the increase in such reflections is the increasing demand for reflexive knowledge and expertise to help clients working on themselves, meaning their identities and personal problems. Both are indicators of what Roger Smith has called “psychological society,” meaning “a significant sense in which everyone in the twentieth century ... became her or his own psychologist, able and willing to describe life in psychological terms.”³⁷ Smith suggests that this cultural phenomenon both draws upon and helps to sustain the authority of at least certain parts of psychology, just as psychologists respond in varied ways to the corresponding need for expert assistance in self-improvement, or for expert repair of damaged selves.

“Mind games” of various kinds have been around for a very long time. A random list of examples would include Zen practices, the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius de Loyola, the agonized “soul-searching” of English and American Puritans, as well as the passionate introspections of Karl Philip Moritz and his colleagues in the Magazin für Erfahrungsseelenkunde in the late 18th century. In the 1920s approaches emerged that could be called reflexive or self-applications of psychology, which were offered to wider publics and not only to the adepts of sects. One example is the autosuggestive relaxation technique developed by the German psychotherapist Johannes Heinrich Schultz, which he called “autogenic training,” and which is still in use.³⁸

From such modest beginnings an entire field of reflexive practices has emerged, with particular intensity since the 1960s, in which everyday psychological knowledge(s) have been given the appearance of technical tools and put on offer by a wide variety of practitioners to improve productivity through self-knowledge or group awareness in management training workshops, to raise the quality of child-rearing, or to increase individual well-being in numerous kinds of psychotherapy.³⁹ Nikolas Rose and others have suggested that these techniques, and the “work on one’s self” they all claim to involve, have become a fundamental feature of late modern societies and cultures (see below).

Sabine Maasen has compared the self-help literature of the 1920s and that of today, focusing particularly on constructions of the concept of will in the two periods.⁴⁰ As Maasen argues, in modern life the government of others is closely linked with practices in which free individuals are enjoined to govern themselves as both free and responsible subjects. To this end, self-help manuals do not themselves prescribe any particular action or values, but ‘train’ us to decide for ourselves. This self-help literature often refers to psychological knowledge and the practices of counselling and psychotherapy, but it also draws from other sources, such as

³⁷ Roger Smith, The Norton History of the Human Sciences, p. 577.

³⁸ Johannes Heinrich Schultz, Das Autogene Training: Konzentrierte Selbstentspannung. Versuch einer klinisch-praktischen Darstellung (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1991. First published 1932).

³⁹ Ellen Herman, The Romance of American Psychology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Ellen Herman, Psychologism and the Child, in: Dorothy Ross & Theodore Porter (eds.), The Cambridge History of Science, vol. 7: The Modern Social and Behavioral Sciences (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); E. Moscovitz, In therapy we trust: America’s obsession with self-fulfillment. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); for historical background see S. Shamdasani, “Psychotherapy”: The invention of a word. History of the Human Sciences, 18 (2005), 1-22.

⁴⁰ Sabine Maasen, Governing by Will - The Shaping of the Will in Self-Help Manuals, in Ash & Sturm (eds.), Psychology’s Territories.

manuals designed to refine manners and educate virtues. While in the 1920s self-help manuals aimed to help male employees establish strong, fixed identities, today's self-help books and techniques advocate (male and female) "enterprising selves," capable of managing various tasks efficiently.

Conclusion

By the 1980s, if not earlier, psychology, which had been a multifaceted but predominantly European discursive and practical field at the turn of the century, had spread around the world, but at the same time had become deeply dependent economically, institutionally and culturally on American research styles and professional practices.⁴¹ When and to what extent the kinds of obsessions with psychological topics typical of American popular culture came to pervade European or even non-Western cultures cannot be considered in detail here. But it was clear even to casual visitors by the 1980s that psycho-babble and the associated group workshop culture had become as firmly anchored at least in Western European, especially German, middle and upper middle class culture as in its American counterpart.

How much of this is caused by, and how much is an effect of developments in the discipline called psychology remains an open question. Kenneth Gergen argues that a cyclical interaction of everyday and academic psychology has worked particularly prominently in the case of so called "mental deficits." As psychological concepts like "depression" have been used more frequently in ordinary life, he claims, people come to be seen - and to see themselves - more often and more easily as mentally ill. As they seek professional help more frequently, psychology reacts to this increasing demand, and the cycle continues. Gergen explains such cycles by arguing that psychological phenomena are socially constructed in any case, and that such constructions depend in turn on intellectual and financial interests. However, though he calls the process "colonization," he acknowledges that it need not result from deliberate strategies by psychologists in order to be effective.⁴²

Historians love ironies; one such irony is perhaps the most significant result of these complex developments. I refer to the contrast between American predominance in both academic and professional psychology world-wide and the insecure standing of trained psychologists in America itself. Vagueness and confusion in the use of the term "psychologist" in public discussion have been remarkably consistent over time; the term itself lacks legal protection in any case. All this, not to mention the omnipresence of self-help books which are placed on the psychology shelves of many bookstores whether their authors are psychologists or not, indicates that even in the United States, where most of the world's psychologists live and work, trained academics and professionals can hardly claim hegemony over psychological discourse in the public sphere to the degree that physical scientists can in their fields.

Given this incomplete victory in the century-long struggle for scientific and professional autonomy and authority in psychology, it might well be asked why such a shakily legitimated field has acquired such an important role in twentieth-century culture and society. Roger Smith's notion of "psychological society," cited above, may be of some help here, but it cannot answer the causal question, except by suggesting that developments within psychology are responses to demand which in turn shape subsequent demand by organizing supply. Nikolas Rose, in contrast, argues that psychological practices make possible particular kinds of social authority, assembled at first *ad hoc*, then grafted onto all activities connected with

⁴¹ On the "psychologization" of American postwar culture, see Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*.

⁴² Kenneth Gergen, *Colonizing the Self in Psychology and Society*, in Ash & Sturm (eds.), *Psychology's Territories*.

the stewardship of human conduct in liberal-democratic polities, from law and penal administration to education and parenting. No single profession has monopolized the codification and certification of these activities, aimed at simplifying the administration of modern life by producing calculable individuals and manageable social relations. Precisely because it is so diffuse and widespread, psychological knowledge shapes the practices of welfare states and justifies them with a rationale, according to which individuals are required to be free, and feel obligated to correct or repair defects if they fail to cope on their own.⁴³ Such a view could explain why reflexive practices, nicely epitomized in the phrase "working on one's self" or "working on a relationship," have become the norm in late modern societies.

A further implication of such views is that psychology's alleged objects themselves – mind, behavior, and personality – are not simply invariant fixtures of the species, but may have cultural as well as natural histories. These histories also require study, in order to understand the historical development of scientific discourse about them. Such questions have only recently received the attention they deserve, despite the focus on "mentalities" in cultural history.⁴⁴

⁴³ Nikolas Rose, Governing the Soul (London: Routledge, 1990); idem., Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴⁴ For important first steps in this direction, see Irmingard Staebler, 'Psychological Man' and Human Subjectivity in Historical Perspective, History of the Human Sciences, 4 (1991), 417-432; Roy Porter (ed.), Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present (London: Routledge, 1997).