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Contextual Discipline: The Unmaking and Remaking of Sociality

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Conventional social psychology has studied conduct through a conceptual lens that regards neither temporal dimensions (history) nor the nuances of language. Through such context stripping, social life has been decomposed into elementary components of behavior where person perception, self-perception, dyadic encounters, close relations, and the like have come to be taken as discrete and disparate events. Primarily through the ruse of metaphors the "social" has been expurgated from the subject of inquiry, the social being. The nature of the social, sociality, has come to be conceptualized through mechanistic models of accounting, economic exchange, and physical machinery. However, the discipline of social psychology includes two social worlds: the subject's and the observer's. The model of the primed machine, the passive respondent in the laboratory, contrasts with a model of the active reasoner generally known as the experimenter. This second model tacitly presumes that sociality includes special powers and

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controls over subjectivity *and* a community that shares language, rules, and goals.

These two categories of social action are not derived from experimentation, for conventional research validates only the former type. Rather, these categories are *constituted* by that research: They result from a particular structuring of social actions. However, in illuminating the first social type, the second social world is bracketed from critical scrutiny. In the process of excluding analysis of time, place, and interpretation (discursive acts), conventional research methods omit the significance of the researcher's unique social position. Earlier attempts to understand the social bases of scientific activities, for various reasons, have been neglected. Contextualism revivifies interest in the internal dynamics of research as a putative part of making sense of social life. Contextual analysis thus encompasses both categories of social conduct by exploring how knowledge of the one type (the subject) has been produced over time through a formal structuring of social encounters and experiences as well as through an informal, tacit understanding of the other type (the observer).

Criticisms of context stripping are hardly new to the discipline; they are a recurrent event. Moderate critics acknowledge that contextual elements ought to be considered but regard context simply as those exogenous variables that limit the generalizability of research findings (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1984b). Others, informed by a postempiricist philosophy of science, take context to be the very features that constitute social phenomena. The moderate, empiricist position recognizes contextual elements as contingent upon or causally related to an event, whereas the postempiricist position sees them as constituting that event. The distinction between these forms of contextual thinking cannot be overemphasized (see Georgoudi & Rosnow, 1985a; Sarbin, 1977). Only the stronger sense of contextualism would warrant the focus of the present chapter: analysis of our basic designation of "subject" and "observer." Taking context seriously entails unpacking and renegotiating the very ideas of subject and experimenter, of the social relationships between them, and even of the relationships between social psychologists. In the end it necessitates attention to the ways we structure and warrant our knowledge claims and invalidate other contestants.

There are at least two routes to exploring social psychology through the deeper sense of contextualism. Sociolinguistic analysis permits discovery of the rhetoric of the observer-subject relations and of the observers' (research-

ers') community of discourse. Studies in the sociology of science have demonstrated the ways in which scientific workers collectively decide about the most adequate versions of reality and assign both responsibility and credit for scientific findings. The second route, historical analysis, enables a comparable perspective on discursive practices but with the advantage of locating the cultural genesis of these relationships. The temporal structure and texture of social arrangements is integral to contextual analysis.

I shall begin by exploring historical grounds in some detail in order to explicate just how—and for what reasons—various social relationships were constructed through research. Historical analysis leads us to see two ways in which these relationships are social, although neither of them corresponds directly to conventional understandings about what goes on in research. First, the relationship between researcher and subjects relies on tacit social arrangements among researchers themselves. The visible and formal level of these arrangements is our research methodology, but there is a less visible, although equally social, level of such relationships. Second, the formal relationship between researcher and subject is actually multifaceted. In the course of normal theory construction, the "sociality" of the subjects is invented: Researchers define and refine the borders of the individual's social world. Through methodological practices, they simultaneously and systematically restrict the subjects' participation in the enterprise. Yet, researchers of the conventional empiricist spirit do acknowledge another dimension of the relations between subject and observer. As noted in Chapter 1, studies of experimental artifacts revealed that the relationship between subject and researcher included a barely explored underlay of social interactions. However, although the revelation of artifacts indicates that researchers utilize sophisticated tacit knowledge to make sense of their interactions with the objects of inquiry, there has been a tendency to eliminate or confine these interactions rather than to achieve deeper understanding of them.

Each of the ways in which the research relationship entails unacknowledged or unspoken social processes can be addressed in light of historical reconnaissance. Understanding the sociality of the research enterprise will permit us to rethink metaphors of research and ultimately to reconceptualize the sociality of everyday life. By reconstructing the tacit stipulations whereby individuals are *taken to be subjects and spectators*, we can then entertain the ways in which individuals also *might be taken as agents of change or as producers* of social reality. Such recon-

struction requires reworking concepts from the level of social structure to those of agency, identity, and experience. That task lies beyond the objectives of this chapter for it depends entirely on a restructuring of researchers' practices and interests. In the final section I shall outline some of those requisite though nontrivial alterations in social psychologists' self-conceptions and research practices.

The Social Enters Psychology

In the period just following World War I psychologists staged their last substantive disputes about the nature of their discipline, and often did so in arguments about whether behavior or consciousness was the proper subject matter of psychology. These disputes spawned a frequently cited witticism that first psychology gave up soul, then mind, and now it would surrender its consciousness (but at least it would still have some behaviors). What was less apparent at the time, and remains faint in our current historical portraits, is that psychology was also abandoning sociality. Or at least it was to cast off certain facets of social life. At one level the arguments for eliminating the study of consciousness, and of any social phenomena that were not locatable in the behavior of some individual, was a logical step in making psychology truly scientific. In order to count as a natural science, psychology had to be purged of metaphysics. It was necessary to remove any hypotheticals, myths, or presuppositions that could not ultimately be observed under the stage lights of objective procedures. Expunged were the crowd mind, group psychology, and most of consciousness.

Indeed the inquisition of what were considered metaphysical entities began long before the 1920s, even before the century began. Yet, John B. Watson's behaviorist manifesto is considered to be the classic mandate for adopting objective experimental methods and excluding hypothetical constructs. Floyd Allport's *Social Psychology* (1924) is thought to be a parallel document in the reform of social psychology. By 1919 Allport had announced the essential experimental basis of social psychology on the grounds that the locus of sociality, like that of the rest of psychology, "is the neuromotor system of the individual" (p. 298); he continued to argue that social behavior consists of biological adjustments to the external world. The preeminent word in Allport's 1924 text is "control," for adjustment entails control of self or others and in many cases it requires subordination of individual desires. Such control was to be

a public responsibility of psychologists just as it is a private responsibility of the parent (Harris, 1984; Morawski, 1984b).

Allport's social psychology intimates another transition that eradicated certain forms of sociality along with consciousness and that simultaneously promoted scientism in psychology. Two facets of this underlying transition dovetail during the years between the two world wars, the period when the concepts and methods of social psychology, as it is currently known, took concrete form. Each had momentous effects on the very rationale as well as the later maturation of social psychology. The first, and most familiar, are the interests in developing a *practical* psychology to serve the control of social life. Psychologists had returned from participating in World War I with a sense of usefulness and a confidence that they would better serve society (Camfield, 1969; Samelson, 1979; Sokal, 1984). The ideals of improving human welfare had been with psychology since its inception (Leary, 1980b; Morawski, 1984b), but the reform period and war experiences heightened these ideals. The prewar calls for social psychology reminded readers of the myriad social ills—divorce, crime, delinquency, individual maladjustment, urban unrest—that had beset industrial America. The war involvement provided the human sciences, especially psychology, with a conspicuous impetus to expand their efforts (Baritz, 1965; Danziger, 1979; O'Donnell, 1979; Samelson, 1985).

The other facet of the impetus to develop a "social" psychology relates to the broader changes in the idea of human nature that took form in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The evolutionary thesis of Darwin, the maturation of psychiatry, the study of the unconscious, and radical changes in conceptions of the physical universe signaled a gradual reassessment of human rationality. Notions of autonomous action of the individual, moral sentiments, rational decision making, and unilinear causation of human events yielded to a far more complex conception of human nature. Human behavior came to be seen as neither inherently moral, rational, nor autonomous but as composed of socially interdependent, multicausal, nonrational, and amoral actions (Haskell, 1977; Lasch, 1965). These new conceptions formed the very rationale for expedient construction of social science because, given the limits of morality, religion, and philosophy, scientific rationality appeared to be the only guarantee of social order. For these reasons William McDougall (1908), who otherwise revered William James, rejected James' concept of the will because it assumed a hypothetical internal-control mecha-

nism—a dubious assumption of individual responsibility.

The making of social psychology was in the air, and even before 1924 dozens of histories tracing its scientific flowering were published (Morawski, 1979). Figures like John Dewey, E. A. Ross, and William McDougall prepared prototexts of this new science of *complex yet knowable* social phenomena, though they were uncertain about its exact form and disciplinary nexus. These trends proved to give more than general impetus; they contained the very genetic codes for a scientific social psychology. They set the axioms upon which experimentation would proceed, and Allport's *Social Psychology* collated the axioms into a positive program for examining the "social" in human action.

As intimated earlier but definitively reasserted by Allport, social psychology would deal with individual action. This stipulation is important not for the forms of sociality that it invalidated (group mind, crowd consciousness) but for its inherent *mechanism* and *reductionism*. Social actions ultimately were explainable in terms of underlying natural processes (whether biological units, habits, or responses). Second, the science was tied to *social practice*: In Knight Dunlap's (1928) words, social psychology was "but a propaedeutic to the real subject" of ameliorating social problems through social control. The call for a practical social psychology corresponded with the scientific aims of *prediction* and *control*; the search for mechanical and causal explanations that enable systematic control of social actions. These precepts had enabled McDougall (1912) to argue that the science "offers some guarantee of stability and some prospect of the continued progress of the human mind and human culture" (p. 252). For Dewey (1900) such a science "is the recognition that the existing order is determined neither by fate nor by chance, but is based on law and order, on a system of existing stimuli and modes of reaction, through knowledge of which we can modify the practical outcome" (p. 313). The positivist mechanics of individual psychology fitted well with the then-current models of social reform and control.

Underlying these two explicit stipulations for social psychology, a positive science and social control, was a third: a resolute belief in the irrational, amoral bases of social action. A social psychology would produce the "moralisation of the individual," of the "creature in which the non-moral and purely egoistic tendencies are so much stronger than any altruistic tendencies" (McDougall, 1908, p. 18). Haphazard impulses, primitive drives, irrational motives, blind desires, instinctual compulsions, and immoral urges were the stuff of social action. They were the

material for a social psychology. They also endangered modern society, for the maintenance of an "orderly social life necessitates a certain degree of subordination of individuals" (Allport, 1924, p. 391).

In America, social psychology found a steady platform on scientific rationality and the optimism of a nation in the midst of social reform. The emergent images of human nature could have resulted in different interpretations, and to some extent this was the case among European intellectuals. Many Europeans self-consciously reflected upon the deeper implications of irrationality and the complexities of the unconscious. Their science of social life consequently was oriented toward historical and phenomenological understanding, toward hermeneutics and psychoanalysis (Bauman, 1978; Steele, 1982). By taking the path of optimism and naive positivism, American intellectuals faced the apparent paradox of accepting the rationality of progressive democratic society while simultaneously claiming the irrationality of human action (see Soffer, 1980). In their everyday lives as scientists there emerged an even more directly threatening paradox: that of positing the rationality of scientific activities in the face of the irrationality of human conduct.

The Conduct of Homo Scientus

The professional identity of psychologists was well established by the beginning of the century. The training process was formalized in the universities, laboratories were being constructed at a tremendous rate, and the American Psychological Association monitored strict requirements for professional membership (Camfield, 1973; Fernberger, 1932). This formal identity was augmented by psychologists' own public commentaries on their place in modern society. In conjunction with the concerns about social problems needing amelioration, psychologists presented themselves as experts. Psychologists, especially those studying the social, were commanded to join "the small remnant of creative and progressive thinkers who can see even this bewildering world soundly and see it whole. Such is part of the psychologist's responsibility" (Jastrow, 1928, p. 436). James McKeen Cattell (1926) lauded the Psychological Corporation as an example of how "scientific men should take the place that is theirs as masters of the modern world" (p. 34). These homilies situated psychology as a science equal to, if not more important than, the other sciences. Psychologists described their roles as "a sort of high priest of souls" (Hall, 1923, p. 436), the "helmsman"

of human lives (Jastrow, 1930), the "saviors of our collapsing civilization" (McDougall, 1936, p. viii), and the new "analysts" of modern life (Watson, 1924, p. 297). Immodest as they appear, these proclamations were indicative of the progressive spirit of scientific guidance (Haber, 1964; Tobey, 1971; Wiebe, 1967). Even the skeptical Walter Lippmann (1922) demanded scientific leadership to assist "the private citizen and the vast environment in which he is entangled" (p. 368).

The self-created image of the scientific savior has been discussed elsewhere (Burnham, 1968; Kaplan, 1956; Morawski, 1982, 1984b). Another, quite different self-conception of psychologists has remained largely unexamined. During the interval between World Wars I and II, psychologists displayed a crisis in confidence (Sokal, 1984)—an uneasiness about their accomplishments, promises, and potential. Historians of psychology have sensed some of the internal doubts but have interpreted them as simple controversies over schools and systems. However, to many psychologists working in that period, such controversies were symptomatic of a larger problem: the social and psychological infirmities of psychologists themselves. Controversies were but one consequence of the uncontrolled expression of affect in scientific work. They suspected that emotions and irrational actions invited conflictual disunity among researchers, errors in research, preoccupation with metaphysics, and the general lack of progress in psychology (Angell, 1920; Boring, 1929; Cattell, 1922; Dodge, 1926; Dunlap, 1929; Saidla & Gibbs, 1930). Psychologists, like the laity, were thought to be filled with social urges, and at one point Allport (1924) even suggested that early marriages might resolve the young professional's restlessness and sexual preoccupations. To complicate matters, the cultural beliefs about genius, beliefs to which many scientists and even the American Psychological Association subscribed, held that creative individuals suffered maladjustments and psychopathologies (Fernberger, 1932, p. 50; Langfeld, 1925).

These troublesome observations implied that the psychologist was possibly as entangled in the complex web of social life as the lay person. However, the perceived solutions to the problems of these two groups differed substantially. The problems surrounding the social dynamics of psychologists were rectified by faith in a model of reality containing two certainties: the *incorrigible veracity of the experimental method* and the *fundamental orderliness of the natural world*. The deductive method of empirical inquiry would yield logical and rational thinking and, given that the natural universe functioned in an orderly and

lawful manner, uncontaminated objective knowledge. There were the certainties to which researchers had to sacrifice all other values and inclinations, even moral customs and some democratic beliefs. It was not uncommon to hear psychologists argue that, in research, democratic and individual rights had to give way to collective beliefs in the scientific method. For example, Clark Hull became concerned about the social complications among psychological researchers. He compared their irrational, uncooperative, and selfish behaviors to those of *infrahumans* and young children and deduced that it was a "fact of human nature" that individuals were essentially illogical and subjective (Hull, 1935).^{*} Hull resolved the problem by proposing how researchers could be organized like an automatic mechanism; each researcher represented a cog in a research machine that divided tasks according to logical, mathematical, and empirical imperatives (see Morawski, in press-a). With this mechanical system based on trust in the experimental method and the lawfulness of nature, the "chaos" in the house of psychology would be put in "order" (Hull, 1935).

Psychologists *needed* the experimental method and a trust in the regularity of human nature (Boring, 1929). Even researchers who recognized relativism and methodological pluralism endorsed these corrective measures; for instance, Murphy and Murphy (1931) claimed that they prepared the first volume of *experimental social psychology* to remedy psychologists' cognitive needs. They conceded that only the gods can think accurately about reality, for "the human mind has proved again and again to be too meager and too fragile an instrument" to excavate the structure of reality (p. 689). Social psychologists needed experimental procedures. Some researchers believed even the experimental method could not prevent a scientific Machiavelli—which Jastrow (1928) accused J. B. Watson of being. However, with adequate methods, even the behavior of the behaviorist could be examined (Lashley, 1923).

As one behaviorally oriented economist proclaimed, in the 1920s the ideal of *research* came to replace the outmoded eighteenth-century ideal of *reason* (Young, 1929). The early years of social psychology coincided with a fetish for methodology (Toulmin & Leary, 1985). The pages of journals and texts are strewn with the hopes for "objectivity,"

^{*}Hull's attempts to find solutions to the social and emotional problems of researchers are contained in his laboratory notebooks. Clark Hull Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University.

"lawfulness," "logic," and "rationality." In the methodological statements, psychologists projected their idealized self-attributes against a backdrop of their tacit knowledge of human fallibility and, in doing so, sharpened a contrast between the researcher and the subject of that research.

The Other-One: The Subject

In 1929 J. S. Dashiell published a brief note on the term "observer." He suggested that referring to the person on whom the experiment is performed as the observer is wholly inappropriate and belonged to an antiquated research tradition. That person actually is not the observer at all because "in many contemporary lines of investigation the so-called 'observer' does no observing!" Dashiell proposed using the "equally-respectable synonym, 'subject'" (pp. 550-551). However, he did not acknowledge that the term "subject" is hardly comparable, especially given its connections to the attribute "subjective." Subjects were the irrational, impulsive, egoistic beings who required guidance. They were the "half-educated" ones who needed expert assistance (Thorndike, 1920) and whose common sense was but a "crude psychology" requiring a scientific replacement (Watson, 1919). The psychologist and the person on the street were different. Thus, Max Meyer's introductory psychology textbook of the "Other-One" (1922) draws the analogy between Robinson Crusoe's relationship with his man Friday and the psychologist's with his "Other-One."

Just as the conceptions of scientific expertise and reform integrated the modern images of the social incapacities of ordinary beings, so the maturation of experimental methods refined these images. The development of standards of scientific thinking (the "method as mind" argument) amounted to a privileging of scientific over ordinary thought, though it was recognized that no one could be such a psychologist all of the time (Woodworth, 1923). Research findings, particularly intelligence tests, corroborated the psychological weaknesses of the average person. The perceived psychological differences between the psychologist and the subject thus grew and were substantiated in theoretical models, just as they were reified in methods.

The distance between the cognitions of researcher and subject came to be represented in the very content of theories. Subjects' social knowledge of themselves or others came to be seen as erroneous—either misrepresen-

tations, prejudices, or misattributions of social reality. The research on masculinity and femininity illustrates these changes in both method and theory. The development of M-F tests was premised on the beliefs that individuals could not know their true sexual orientation and were deceptive in representing it. Only controlled quantitative assessments, the minimizing of subjective reports, and the use of deceptive techniques could definitively locate true masculinity and femininity (Morawski, in press-b). Likewise, the shift away from explaining racial differences in terms of biology and toward identifying racial prejudice (Samelson, 1978) intimates how problems of race eventually became problems of individuals' misperceptions (also see Henriques, 1984).

Thus, social psychological theories were accommodated to three stipulations about social life. First, the ordinary person's awareness of social acts is different from a scientific awareness: It is either inaccurate or partial. Second, social acts occur in regular and universal patterns (for instance, femininity and masculinity). Finally, because social conduct was assumed to conform to universal laws, it was interpretable in terms of metaphors of causal mechanics. With the refinement of methodology, the social world of the researcher and subject diverged: The former's became increasingly orderly, objective, and logical; whereas the latter's seemed less so (or at best was presented as a poor imitation of the scientist's). Methods became more of a prescription for psychologists as they offered a program for improving cognitive skills and social relations. The cure for ordinary beings and their muddled social relations awaited the fruits of research.

Problems in the Social Dualism

Between the world wars social psychology dovetailed with general psychology: The discipline became more empirical, quantitative, nomothetic, and mechanistic (Allport, 1940; see also Rosnow, 1981). On the one hand, this orientation yielded a model of individual conduct that stressed the *negativity* of social actions—the faulty mental acts and irrational motives. The mechanistic vision of reality and the actual isolation of action through experimental procedures yielded specialized and localized (in time and space) conceptions of social conduct. Once analyzed in discrete, context-free, and atemporal parts, social actions were fractured. The resultant theories were divested of diachronic, idiographic, and other contextual features. It consequently was divested of reasonableness. On the other

hand, the working model of the observer had become one of rationality and cognitive mastery. Observers were afforded insularity from social contaminants; they ostensibly functioned much like the metaphorical invisible hand, if not like Hull's computing machine. The two models offer a strong contrast and fit a range of common polarities: objective versus subjective, autonomous versus determined, self-directed versus other-directed, authority versus subject.

The double standard of social conduct was never without its critics, but the difficulties inherent in the dualism were only confronted seriously when they had been confirmed experimentally. That is, despite a long tradition of questioning the social dynamics of experimentation (see Rosnow, 1981; Silverman, 1977), it was with the laboratory demonstration of experimental "artifacts" that the (other) social dimensions of the experiment surfaced as a tangible concern. Robert Rosenthal, Martin Orne, and their co-workers conducted a series of experiments demonstrating the pervasive but "unintended" effects of the interaction between experimenter and subject. By the late 1960s the various manifestations of this interaction were duly registered in research annals.

Once identified through quantitative and controlled measuring, suggestions were made for reducing or eliminating artifacts, generally through more rigorous experimental controls or use of nonexperimental techniques. Those solutions simply represent additional means of bracketing, exempting, or confining the conduct of the experimenter from whatever is taken to be the social object of the inquiry. Another response to the issue of artifacts is less revisionist, for it demanded a comprehensive reinterpretation of social psychological experiments. Instead of viewing artifacts as the *residuals* of imperfect methods or researchers, they are seen as *main effects*, as the very substance of social interaction. For example, Scheibe (1979) has shown how experimenters' successful predictions depend upon their authority and special knowledge. Artifacts are not noise to be systematically controlled: They are, like the rest of the experimental events, the product of experiences and strategic interactions on the part of all participants. The differences in social conduct between subjects and experimenters is that the latter have certain advantages of authority, control, and occasionally sagacity.

A Narrative on the Social

The idea of the artifact as a real and revealing social phenomenon and the identification of the investigator's

social power contributed to a malaise that beset social psychology in the last two decades (see Altman's Chapter 3 in this volume, also Armistead, 1974; Israel & Tajfel, 1972; Rosnow, 1981; Strickland, Aboud, & Gergen, 1976). These and other symptoms indicated the insolvency of the positivist-empiricist perspective and signaled metatheoretical reflection. Among the fruits have been coherent and fairly consonant proposals for new theory (Gergen, 1982; Harré & Secord, 1972; Sampson, 1978; for a review see Gergen & Morawski, 1980). However, exploring metatheory has appeared easier than instituting changes in the practice of social psychology, in being a social psychologist. This discontinuity between metatheory and practice is not unique to new work in social psychology, but has been confronted in philosophy (Rorty, 1979), social theory (Giddens, 1984), economics (Piore, 1983), and feminist studies (Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Lykes & Stewart, 1983), among other areas.

So far I have traced the building of a partial—yet dual—sociality through its invention and reproductions in social psychology. The positivist-empiricist world view was realizable only through the particular social practices that comprised the research. In order to define what constituted the "social" for experimental observation, researchers found it necessary to *deny* the existence of other social phenomena—to discount not simply the ostensibly ephemeral group mind but also the hierarchical relationships between researcher and subject, the special social life of the researchers, and the problematic relationships among researchers. The very interests that engendered social psychology (regularity, control, and prediction of conduct) became the conditions for warranting disinterested, supra-social inquiry. Experimental methods became the *idealized* form of social conduct. The conduct of ordinary social actors was something other than this ideal.

The historical narrative of the researcher-subject relationships also intimates the temporal, nonlinear, reflexive, and sometimes self-contradictory constituents of those relationships. By reclaiming these neglected constituents, the narrative moves toward thick description (Geertz, 1973), toward contextualism in the stronger sense. The account indicates that it is the structuring of social relations that constitutes a social psychology. The subscription to methodological individualism and reductionism, tenets urged by Floyd Allport and the experimentalists who succeeded him, not only eliminated metaphysical constructs, such as the group mind, but also pre-empted an understanding of the experience and structure of interactions. Yet social interactions are produced through structuring, in

time and space, and through experiences of that structuring. Even working within that constrained world view, researchers nevertheless incorporated experiential knowledge, or what Giddens (1984) calls mutual knowledgeability, to monitor and regulate their own conduct and to make sense of their subjects.

The refinement of experimental methods, therefore, depended on reflexive self-regulation even though researchers usually were not self-conscious (nor self-critical) of their reliance on tacit social knowledge. This historical narrative both extends and amends Koch's (1959) claim that psychology began by placing institutionalization and methods before content and problems. It further suggests that institutional and methodological systemization not only preceded but actually generated much of the intellectual substance. The present account also qualifies Koch's claim by indicating how certain prior conditions—societal demands, customs, and philosophical commitments—loosely guided the institutionalization and organization of social psychologists' work. Although highlighted here, the prior conditions that so influenced institutional practices deserve closer attention (see Danziger, 1985, for the genesis of the social roles of "experimenter" and "subject").

Contextual Discipline

Postempiricism proposes transformations in the conception of the knower that are as dramatic as those introduced with the seventeenth-century scientific revolution. But the transformations are not exactly analogous. The seventeenth-century arguments for natural philosophy (science) postulated that all humans, through sensory experience, had equal potential for acquiring knowledge of the world. In actuality, this new world view privileged certain observers over others and warranted only certain types of observations (Burt, 1932; Kearney, 1971; Merchant, 1980). Postempiricism prompts reevaluation of the very boundaries that are assumed in the positivist-empiricist world view, particularly the notion of an independent, individual observer and the consequent distinction between the observer and what is observed. Such reappraisal enables an undoing and refolding of conceptual dichotomies, not just those of the objective and subjective, but also those of individual and social, natural and moral, actor and spectator, and discovery and invention. These transformations provide no determinate methodology. If anything they eschew universal or fixed procedures and, consequently, make more

demands of the investigators than of methods. They do, however, suggest several requisite features of any research program.

The construction of social knowledge. The historical section of this chapter underscores psychologists' active construction of what is then taken as the "discovered" social nature of human beings. Knowledge seeking entails not the discovery of truths but the construal of them. The cognitive construal of social reality is inextricably dependent upon the social interactions of those actors involved in the project. This thesis neither implies solipsism nor contradicts versions of philosophical realism; it simply posits the intrinsic social and agenic qualities of inquiry. Framed in terms of the sociology of knowledge, "the organization of scientific work is inextricable from its content" (Kuklick, 1983, p. 301; see also Shapin, 1982).

Although more trenchant in its implications, the constructionist position shares many of the views about the processes of knowledge production that are contained in cognitive social psychology (Gergen, 1985). The position differs from the cognitive movement in two notable respects. First, emphasis is placed on *social interaction* and not simply internal *mental processes* as the source of construing social reality. Second, the "subjects" of inquiry include the *actions, interactions, and social interests* of the inquirers. This extension of the domain of inquiry is essential, given that knowledge is the product of interactions in a particular context. Sociologists of science have begun mapping the broader social bases of scientific knowledge (Barnes & Shapin, 1979; Brannigan, 1981; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Latour & Woolgar, 1979). In psychology, studies of mind (Coulter, 1979; Hoffman & Nead, 1983; Sampson, 1981), maternal affection (Badinter, 1981), emotion (Averill, 1982) and childhood (Cole, 1983; Kessen, 1983) have been reappraised in terms of the social production of concepts. Examinations of social psychology have primarily entailed historical studies of the personal, social, and political origins of theory and research programs (Apfelbaum & Lubek, 1976; Finison, 1976; Gorman, 1981; Minton, 1984; Morawski, 1979, in press-b; Samelson, 1974, 1978; Steinger, 1979). Some contemporary social psychology has been subjected to similar contextual interpretations (Armistead, 1974; Hogan & Emler, 1978; Sampson, 1977).

These studies illuminate the ways in which explanatory interpretations of social events are partial and context-dependent, whether they are produced through interactions in laboratories, boardrooms, or playgrounds (Fish, 1981). Their meaningfulness depends on contextual features:

the history, objectives, rituals, and rules of those interactions. While conventional research strategies restrict or exclude these features of social experience, contextualism takes the revelation as well as delineation of contextual boundaries as an active, ongoing facet of the research enterprise.

Reflexivity. Comprehension of how knowledge is constructed, maintained, blocked, or retained requires understanding the reflexive conditions of conduct. Reflexivity, the act of turning back on oneself, occurs whenever humans are both the observers and the object of observations. This simple and inevitable condition, however, has considerable implications. In the social sciences, the best known among these are the limits of prediction: Given that reflexivity enables agents to employ knowledge about themselves to monitor and alter actions, the use of that knowledge to predict future outcomes is jeopardized (MacIntyre, 1981; Taylor, 1979). A variation of this phenomenon occurs in conventional research when the subjects' awareness of and responses to being observed culminates in their reactivity. These phenomena are hardly understood since investigators typically attempt to remove rather than reveal or examine them (Howard, 1985).

Other effects of reflexive thinking appear among the investigators themselves. There is now considerable evidence of the ways in which psychologists, though unaware of doing so, have reflexively projected their experiences and ideologies onto their subject of research (Eagly, 1978; Flanagan, 1982; Unger, 1983). The history narrated in this chapter demonstrates how psychologists' self-critical reflection influenced their construction of strict, rule-bound methods. Their procedures to restrict later behaviors fits Schelling's (1984) account of "anticipatory self-command." Reflexivity also can have the implications of a self-fulfilling prophecy when social research explicates possible courses of acting and when these models are taken as prescriptions (Howard, 1985; Schwartz, Lacy, & Schneddenfrei, 1978). Despite the passage of almost a century, many of the consequences of reflexivity illustrate what William James (1890) called the "psychologist's fallacy"—the confusion of the observer's standpoint with that of the subject.

Such consequences of reflexivity demonstrate that research is inextricably part of the fabric of social life. Whether within or outside the laboratory, social acts are not discrete but continuous, not linear but complexly fused in time and space. Recognition of such processes enables exploration of the ways in which actors monitor and regulate their actions (Giddens, 1984; Harré, 1983). It

similarly offers means for understanding the reproduction of social practices as well as the introduction of novel practices; for instance, Lloyd's (1983) study of ancient Greek science illustrates the multiple consequences of reflexivity whereby science both reproduced and challenged cultural traditions. Accounts of social conduct can hardly be intelligible without understanding, and employing, reflexive thinking. As social psychologists we constantly rely on the dynamics of reflexivity, yet we have hardly begun to comprehend that fundamental social process.

Warranting. The constructive and reflexive features of social knowledge indicate the impossibility of anything resembling "objective truth" and, to some, they suggest an impasse of absolute relativism. The positivist empiricist notion that truth statements are those that correspond to some external reality becomes unfeasible, particularly since it depends on the untenable belief in some objective access to a stable reality. The history of subject-researcher relationships illustrates how statements about social life have been warranted according to the social power or authority of those who issued the statements. The idealization of objectivity is two-sided, for it simultaneously embraces an "aspiration to value neutrality and the claim to manipulative power" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 83). Attempts to surmount this apparent impasse by idealist or political positions have been unsuccessful.

Resolution of the problematics of warranting truth claims may well be that there is no obvious solution, at least not in the senses implied by conventional philosophy of science. As indicated by pragmatic and interpretive studies, the adequacy of interpretations is dependent upon the context of the speaker, and ultimately upon the shared understandings of the community of inquirers (Toulmin, 1982). What stands as "rationality" or "scientific" depends upon the context in which rational or scientific knowledge is judged or used. More specifically, Rorty (1982) proposes that a criterion of truth is "a criterion because some particular social practice needs to block the road of inquiry, halt the regress of interpretation, in order to get something done" (p. xli). The coherence, intelligibility, and adequacy of truth statements are decided in the community of discourse, in a cultural context of particular interests, practices, and aims (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1981; Rorty, 1982).

The dissolution of objectivist, universal criteria for warranting knowledge claims has notable virtues. It becomes necessary to reject the untenable dichotomies of fact/value and objective knower/subjective spectator and to

recognize the intricate texture and inherent sociality of the way persons come to know their world. The deconstruction of objectivity opens the way for a more adequate consideration of values and morals (Howard, 1985; Kukla, 1982). These virtues, however, introduce responsibilities that must be confronted repeatedly in social inquiry. The interpretive community (which in psychology is an especially intimate, structured, and privileged one) provides means for empowering certain accounts of social actions and blocking others (see Addelson, 1983; Morawski, 1983, in press-b; White, 1977). The misuse of interpretive authority is possible within both the positivist and contextualist programs. Given the tradition of identifying positivist science with democratic practices and interpretive methods with political conservatism, it appears that contextualism is susceptible to being seen as undemocratic (Kuklick, 1983). Indeed, critics of positivists' claims of objectivity and value neutrality have not been forthcoming with procedures for handling values, subjective accounts, or moral judgments (Morawski, 1984b). However, science and democracy are not always compatible in theory or practice (Feyerabend, 1976; Hollinger, 1983), and what is democratic (just as what is rational or scientific) is itself context dependent. The problem of warranting knowledge claims poses challenges for contextualism no less than for positivism.

Our language of explanation, our conferring social acts with meaning, itself contains moral claims. Our narratives and intellectual rhetoric sanction some social actions and discredit others (Coulter, 1979; Vann, 1976; White, 1980). Thus, the criteria of adjudicating and warranting interpretive statements must themselves be available for critical scrutiny. Here lies a substantial advantage of contextual interpretation: The standards of investigation, rather than being held as unproblematic givens, are continually subject to reappraisal.

Generativity and transformation. The positivist aspirations of discovering the facts and modeling reality are replaceable by other objectives of inquiry. The hope to objectively map social reality is being supplanted by an effort to construct more coherent and intelligible accounts of social experience. Coherence and intelligibility are crucial yet minimal criteria; explanatory interpretations also should extend beyond immediate understandings, our everyday proto-interpretations or mutual knowledgeability, offer greater clarity and options for future actions (Taylor, 1979). The goal of the human sciences becomes the generation of new modes of thought and action (Gergen, 1982; Henriques et al., 1984). In its transformative goals, human

science becomes co-extensive with moral science (Haan et al., 1983; Howard, 1985; Rorty, 1982). In its challenges to the normal ways of seeing the world—challenges to authoritative versions of the world—the human sciences become political (Jaggar, 1983; Scheman, 1983; Taylor, 1979). However, for the reasons just outlined, transformative theorizing differs radically from the politics of expertise that evolved within positivist science.

Conclusion: Toward New Practices

These four architectonic features of inquiry—constructionism, reflexivity, warranting, and generativity—merely intimate what is entailed in being a social psychologist within the contextualist tradition. Other features, such as audacity, insight, self-criticism, and refusal, make the process to some degree "unformalizable" and certainly "scandalous" according to current scientific conventions (Taylor, 1979, p. 66). The dissolution of settled boundaries, of such ready conceptions as the "individual" and "causal effects," and of the hierarchical roles of the observer and the subject of those finely regulated observations, is hardly a modest change. Although the idea of the social construction of realities may be palatable, perhaps owing to its resemblance to cognitive science, the idea of reflexive practices challenges the putative functions of conventional social psychology (those of objectivity, control, prediction, and explanation). The canonical functions of being a social psychologist are challenged no less by the goals of generative theorizing and the consequential presence of morals, politics, and negotiated criteria of inquiry.

Social psychologists who contemplate new directions have no explicit models for structuring their conduct, as did their predecessors who emulated the natural scientist. However, in these beginnings we might learn from observing a variety of modes, both old and new, of conducting conversations about the social world. Eagleton (1984) asks literary critics to look back and recapture the early tradition whereby criticism struggled against absolutist politics: Criticism then approximated culture criticism and not culture legitimization. Other informative examples may be found in former practices of moral philosophy and the precursors to what are now called the health sciences. Some historically unprecedented alternatives are exemplified by feminist scholarship, whose emergence is influencing conversations across the human sciences. Feminist scholars are using their training in the disciplinary canons as a means to

locate the privatized, objectified, and often marginalized social experiences of women (and men) in modern culture (Cott & Pleck, 1979; Gould, 1984; Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Lott, 1985; Steele, 1985). Similar insights into alternative modes of investigation may be found in contemporary disciplines such as history (Gergen & Gergen, 1984; Morawski, 1982; Scheibe, 1979), anthropology (Barnes & Shapin, 1979; Kuklick, 1983; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979), and hermeneutics (Steele, 1982; Toulmin, 1982).

Familiarity with research built upon experiential, historical, and holistic foundations will augment a move toward contextualism. However, as the history of researcher-subject relations illustrates, conceptions of social life ultimately *will depend entirely* on how social psychologists choose to structure their social interactions—how they organize their work and conduct conversations. The development of more coherent interpretations of social life requires that researchers first decide upon their own social conduct, interests, and ambitions.