

**Bottom-Up Management:
Participative Philosophy and Humanistic Psychology in
American Organizational Culture, 1930-1970**

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the rise and fall of participative and humanistic management in American organizational culture. In the years surrounding World War II, an influential network of psychologists and human-relations experts successfully promoted the idea that managers' involvement of subordinates in decision-making, along with their cultivation of underlings' authentic self-expression, would boost the effectiveness of organizations, individuals, and the nation as a whole. Four men proved particularly influential in this endeavor: German social psychologist Kurt Lewin (co-founder of the National Training Laboratories), survey pioneer Rensis Likert (founder of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan), humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow (developer of the "hierarchy of needs"), and industrial psychologist Douglas McGregor (author of *The Human Side of Enterprise*). Each of these men was deeply concerned about the fate of democracy in modern society, which they feared was endangered by both authoritarianism abroad and bureaucratic dehumanization at home. Each insisted that the nurturing of participation and "self-actualization" within organizations could help build an increasingly peaceful order in industry and the world at large. Ultimately, they found their most enthusiastic converts within the corner offices and personnel departments of corporations.

The dissertation argues that for roughly two and a half decades after World War II, this network of anti-fascist, pro-democratic theorists and practitioners injected their idealism into corporate culture and ultimately recast popular expectations for the relationship between

organizational work and selfhood. These theorists' ability to make humanistic and participative management palatable to industrial leaders— largely through promises of intertwined psychological and economic growth —offered them significant inroads into mainstream organizational culture and helped shape a humanistic rhetoric of personal growth that still thrives in some corporations today.

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Introduction

In 1955, General Mills, Inc. hosted a Management Development Conference dedicated to the cutting-edge management practices of its day. The conference featured lectures and training on conventional topics like “Methods of Leadership” and “Principles of Manpowerbuilding,” but its central focus was the concept that had become General Mills’ official management slogan by the mid-1950s: “Bottom-Up Management.” The opening lecture on this topic assured managers that “as the arbitrary power of rank and authority is decreasing, the importance of participative and cooperative leadership is increasing.”¹ New times called for new styles of leadership. Whereas the manager of the past had been prized for his “experience and technical ability,” the manager of the future needed to demonstrate his ability “to motivate, to create good morale and teamwork.” This manager would not simply tell subordinates what to do but would also enlist their feedback, for he recognized that “Persons do more and better work if they feel they have helped to plan it and are fully informed about it.”²

The General Mills management manual expanded on these principles with detailed descriptions of bottom-up practices (alternately referred to as “consultative” or “participative” management).³ The bottom-up manager empathically recognized that each of his employees was a “unique individual” with “separate and personal aims, viewpoints, needs, and desires” and treated each employee as such. He offered opportunities for each subordinate “to expand and stretch his abilities and to become the larger person he is capable of being.” At the same time, he

¹ “The Importance of Leadership and Good Human Relations in Bottom-Up Management,” General Mills Management Development Conference Training Materials, 1955-56, folder and box unknown, General Mills Corporate Archive, 2.

² “The Importance of Leadership and Good Human Relations in Bottom-Up Management,” 1.

³ “The Importance of Leadership and Good Human Relations in Bottom-Up Management,” 3.

enlisted “group thinking, group feeling, and group action” rather than treating employees as isolated individuals—because he recognized that most people thrive through teamwork in small groups. The bottom-up manager functioned less as a boss than as a “guide” or “coach” who “develops while he directs.”⁴ In contrast to the “bureaucratic” or “autocratic leader” of days gone by, he sought recognition for his subordinates and delegated responsibilities and authority to them, soliciting continual feedback. This two-way flow of communication defined the “Democratic leader” in the modern age.⁵

General Mills’ Management Development Conference model stressed that participative and empathic techniques of management had developed from the failures of scientific management in the first half of the century. Frederick Winslow Taylor, the definitive turn-of-the-century management theorist, had conducted innumerable time-motion studies aimed at reducing assembly line work to its most efficient and therefore profitable tasks.⁶ But in equating human laborers with cogs in a machine, Taylor’s later critics argued, he had demoralized them. What savings might have been made in task efficiency were lost to workers’ resistance, absenteeism, and turnover. Bottom-up management offered a revision of Taylor’s approach and promised that by restoring the humanity to workers, managers could increase profit-making and efficiency. The management developers at General Mills made no bones about the central motives underlying the bottom-up approach. Their first stated purpose was “greater productivity

⁴ “The Importance of Leadership and Good Human Relations in Bottom-Up Management,” 3.

⁵ Charles W. Nelson, “Methods of Leadership,” Training materials from the General Mills Management Development Conference, 1955-56, folder and box unknown, General Mills Corporate Archive, 54.

⁶ Frederick Winslow Taylor, *Concrete Costs; Tables and Recommendations for Estimating the Time and Cost of Labor Operations in Concrete Construction and for Introducing Economical Methods of Management*, 1st ed. (New York: J. Wiley & sons; [etc., etc.], 1912); Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York; London: Harper, 1911). For more on the history of Taylorism, see Daniel A Wren, *The Evolution of Management Thought* (New York: Ronald Press Co, 1972).

and higher profits through better satisfied employees.” Their second was the desire to “[build] competent managers to carry on and expand the business in the future.”⁷

In 1958, the *Harvard Business Review*'s Robert McMurry celebrated General Mills' "sincere effort to integrate the humanistic philosophy of management." The "climate is favorable," McMurry remarked, and "an active campaign is being waged from the top down" thanks to the support of the company's president, Charles Bell.⁸ Throughout the second half of the 1950s, General Mills conducted Management Development Conferences with assistance from some of the giants of postwar human relations. The idea of bottom-up management originally stemmed from work with psychologist Douglas McGregor, one of the most prominent management theorists of the postwar era. Collaborating with Dewey Balch, the company's vice president of personnel, and fellow psychologist Richard Beckhard, McGregor conducted what has been called one of the defining organizational experiments of the era.⁹ Central to McGregor's project at General Mills was the implementation of supervisors' performance self-appraisals, in which supervisors set goals for themselves and then evaluated their own completion of those goals.

⁷ "The Importance of Leadership and Good Human Relations in Bottom-Up Management," 1.

⁸ Robert N. McMurry, "The Case for Benevolent Autocracy," *Harvard Business Review* 36, no. 1 (February 1958): 82–90, 85. McMurry, openly skeptical of most participative management techniques, believed that General Mills' efforts were among the few corporate experiments in democratic leadership that showed promise. See Chapter 10 of this dissertation for further discussion of McMurry's article.

⁹ This assessment comes from an interview with Warner Burke, a professor at Columbia University's Teachers College and former staff member of NTL who worked on the Management Development Conferences of the 1960s. I interviewed Professor Burke on July 23, 2008 at Columbia University. The other major Organizational Development (OD) experience he cited was the collaboration between Herb Shephard (of Case Western University), Robert Blake, and Jane Mouton (both of the University of Texas and founders of the Managerial Grid) at Esso Refineries in Houston, Texas. Burke explained of Beckhard and McGregor's work at General Mills that they did "empowerment stuff" without calling their work T-groups, and coined the term "organizational development" because they thought this term was more likely to catch on than "bottom-up management." For more on the history and definition of Organizational Development, see Warren G Bennis, *Organization Development: Its Nature, Origins, and Prospects* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1969); W. Warner Burke, *Organization Development: A Process of Learning and Changing, 2nd Edition*, 2nd ed. (Prentice Hall, 1993); Joan V. Gallos, ed., *Organization Development: A Jossey-Bass Reader*, 1st ed. (Jossey-Bass, 2006).

In 1957, an organization called the National Training Laboratories visited General Mills for ten days to offer sessions on organizational theory, analysis of day-to-day management planning at General Mills, and workshop sessions on the communication problems facing managers. In these experiential workshop sessions, called “T-groups” (short for “training groups”), managers spent days offering each other frank feedback about each other’s communication styles and temperaments. According to business historian Andrea Gabor, General Mills’ “innovative bottoms-up approach to cultural change” marked “possibly the first attempt to consciously change a company’s organizational culture.”¹⁰

This dissertation examines the rise and eventual fall of what I call participative and humanistic management in American organizational culture. Proponents of participative techniques argued that the best managers delegated responsibility to underlings, from whom they solicited continual feedback about workplace procedures and their own management styles. As demonstrated at General Mills, “bottom-up” consultants advocated for what they called “democratic” communication styles in place of the autocratic methods of days gone by. They promised that their reforms would foster not just increased profits but also more democratic organizational environments and, by extension, a healthier social structure. Supporters of humanistic management, who often advocated for participation as part of a larger process of organizational evolution (the two approaches were by no means mutually exclusive), tended to focus on the personal growth of the individual as much as on the culture of the workplace as a whole. They argued that the healthiest and most effective organizational cultures offered workers opportunities for self-actualization; that the most successful workplaces were ones in which workers derived deep satisfaction from their tasks and experienced meaningful, expressive

¹⁰ Andrea Gabor, *The Capitalist Philosophers: The Geniuses of Modern Business--Their Lives, Times, and Ideas*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Business, 2000), 164.

interactions with superiors and coworkers. While participative advocates tended to emphasize the value of democracy, their humanistic counterparts also prized the more personal virtue of authenticity. By the time of General Mills' experiments in "bottom-up management" in the mid-1950s, participative and humanistic rhetoric and practice thrived in dozens of corporations and mainstream management journals. These practices continued to spread until their fall from grace in the early 1970s, though they have experienced waves of revival in the decades since.

In this project, I identify a powerful movement in postwar human relations that alters our understanding of the management and labor histories of the era. This network of theorists, practitioners, and organizations emerged from the influences of New Deal liberalism, wartime anti-authoritarianism, and Cold War boosterism to promote a new model of management in American corporations. Their ideas deviated from both Taylorism and traditional models of human relations with their inherent idealism and social conscience. I focus on the intellectual biographies and institutional lineages of four men in particular: Kurt Lewin, Rensis Likert, Abraham Maslow, and Douglas McGregor. These men, all trained in psychology in the early decades of the 20th century, worked in a variety of subfields including survey science, humanistic psychology, and group dynamics. Each was deeply concerned about the relationships between individuals, groups, and organizations in democratic society, which they believed were seriously endangered by authoritarianism abroad and bureaucratic dehumanization at home. Significantly, none of them came from a specifically industrial background. Instead, they worked in a range of institutional contexts, including government service and social justice, before introducing their ideas in the corporate arena. Through decades of writing, teaching, and training, they expressed their collective determination to build more democratic and empathic relationships in a range of

institutions. Ultimately, they found their most enthusiastic converts within the corner offices and personnel departments of corporations.

The psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) immigrated to the United States from Germany in the 1930s with a determination to eliminate prejudice and totalitarian leadership through training in small groups. He labeled his distinct brand of inquiry “action research,” because it addressed problems that needed solving in the real world. He also initiated an influential psychological subfield called “group dynamics,” which focused on the pivotal role of groups in the formation of larger social dynamics. Lewin conducted research for the University of Iowa and the American government during World War II before establishing two research centers: the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Commission on Community Interrelations, a branch of the American Jewish Congress. Lewin promoted the idea that social science could enhance democratic leadership and harmonious relationships between different groups, whether they be Jews and Catholics or workers and management.

Before Lewin’s death in 1947, he helped establish one of the postwar era’s most important sites of humanistic management training: the National Training Laboratories for Group Development. NTLGD opened its doors in Bethel, Maine in 1947 as a non-profit wing of the National Education Association, its founders committed to the study of group dynamics as a pathway to social reform. They hoped to teach individuals how to be more effective leaders and teachers, developing the T-group as an exercise in experiential, group-focused education. T-groups were often held in remote locations far from the organizational fray and lasted for as long as three weeks. Participants, gently guided by “non-directive” group leaders, were encouraged to confess their deepest emotions and solicit honest feedback from other group members.

Proponents of T-groups believed that people who were aware of themselves as individuals would function better in groups and in organizations. In the late 1940s, NTL began conducting T-groups for community leaders, clergy, government officials and other individuals who wanted to become more effective “change agents” in a democratic society. But the T-group soon took off with one group more than any other: corporate managers.

Renis Likert (1903-1981) was an American psychologist trained in survey administration at Columbia University. He launched his career as a researcher of consumer preference and the psychology of salesmen, and went on to establish himself as a pivotal player in governmental survey research during the late New Deal and World War II. While working for the Department of Agriculture and the military, he became committed to the study of morale and the method of open-ended survey administration. He carried both of these foci to the University of Michigan, where he launched the Survey Research Center (SRC) in 1946 and became committed to the study of organizations after receiving a large grant from the Office of Naval Research. Likert emerged from decades of organizational studies with a strong belief in participative management and published one of the most influential management treatises of his day in the early 1960s. He insisted that principles that democratic management would propel the nation as a whole to socially harmonious and economically prosperous heights.

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), unlike the other psychologists in this cohort, never worked for a governmental agency or independent research organization. Born and raised in Brooklyn, he received early exposure to Jewish Socialist activists and European émigré social scientists, and developed a conviction that psychology could be used to change the world. He spent much of his life as a professor at Brandeis University, where he cultivated his famous theory of the “hierarchy of needs.” Having satisfied basic physiological requirements like food

and shelter, Maslow argued, humans pursue satisfaction of an ever-more-sophisticated and complex range of needs: to feel safe, to be loved, and, ultimately, to be “self-actualized.” Self-actualization described the moment at which a person reached such pinnacles of creativity and self-expression that he became authentically purposeful, in harmony with the people and environments around him. This theory became the centerpiece of what he called “Third Force” psychology and left a profound impression on corporate culture and management training. Maslow provided a humanistic vocabulary for the organizational theorists of his day who incorporated self-actualization as a goal of corporate reform.

Finally, Douglas McGregor (1906-1964) served as the linchpin who combined group dynamics, humanistic psychology, and participative philosophy into a bestselling management treatise published in 1960. McGregor, trained in social psychology, worked for much of his life as a psychologist in the Industrial Relations Department of MIT, and served as president of the progressive Antioch College for six years (1948-54). Deeply committed to social justice and democratic administration, his seminal book *The Human Side of Enterprise* explicitly incorporated Maslow’s ideal of self-actualization with Kurt Lewin’s model of democratic leadership. In this work, McGregor cited the hierarchy of needs as a model for the organizations of the future. He asserted that “we have not learned enough about...the creation of an organizational climate conducive to human growth” and proposed a new set of management principles that he called “Theory Y.”¹¹ Theory Y assumed that workers were self-directed, self-controlled, motivated, and eager for challenges. It was meant to debunk what McGregor labeled “Theory X”: the traditional management credo that most people dislike their work, abhor

¹¹ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960), vi.

responsibility, and have little ambition.¹² According to McGregor, Theory X neglected the fundamental “egoistic needs” that most human beings have “for continued self-development, for creativity in the broadest sense of the term.”¹³ McGregor placed the responsibility for successful organizations on managers. It was up to them to boost their underlings’ self-esteem, to give them chances to take on new responsibilities and spark their imaginations.¹⁴ In the 1950s and 1960s, he became both a corporate consultant and a practitioner of T-group training with the National Laboratories for Group Development. In these roles, he trained managers and executives in the methods of Theory Y management.

These four men – Lewin, Likert, Maslow, and McGregor– built a powerful circuitry of people, organizations, and ideas in the middle decades in the 20th century. Kurt Lewin and Rensis Likert met while working for the US government in wartime, and Likert’s Survey Research Center attracted Lewin’s Research Center for Group Dynamics to the University of Michigan after Lewin’s death in 1947. The SRC and RCGD went on to collaborate on decades of organizational studies that incorporated both survey methods and group-dynamics training practices. Douglas McGregor lobbied for MIT’s president to hire Lewin in the mid-1940s, and Lewin earned his own chapter within McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise*. Maslow and McGregor began corresponding in the 1940s and exerted strong influence on each other’s writings. Finally, Likert, McGregor, and Maslow all participated in or worked with the National Training Laboratories, Lewin’s brainchild, conducting T-groups and helping to direct the organization’s development. Together, they built a new school of organizational theory and practice rooted in both democratic leadership and self-actualization.

¹² McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 34.

¹³ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 38-39.

¹⁴ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 48.

These men personify developments taking place in the new field of behavioral science in the middle years of the 20th century. Behavioral science was one of the “new social sciences” that gained momentum in American education, government, and industry after World War II, broadly defined as the “the systematic study of people and their relationships to each other”¹⁵—an integration of methods from sociology, psychology, and anthropology. In the field of management studies, postwar behavioral scientists investigated the motivations and behavioral patterns that fueled productive organizations, focusing particularly on interpersonal communication within groups. Kurt Lewin, Rensis Likert, Abraham Maslow, and Douglas McGregor advocated candor and transparency for personal and organizational success; they also stressed small group work and manager-subordinate feedback. According to a lengthy report published by the National Industrial Conference Board in 1969, behavioral science’s most prominent theorists employed an approach to modern management that was, above all, “humanistic and optimistic.” They agreed about “the innate potential of man to be independent, creative, productive, and capable of contributing positively to the objectives of the organization” and shared “an assumption that man not only has these potentialities but, under the proper conditions, will actualize them.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Harold M. F. Rush, *Behavioral Science; Concepts and Management Application*, Studies in Personnel Policy no. 216 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1969), page labeled “highlights.” For more works on behavioral science in industry, see: Chris Argyris, *Intervention Theory and Method; a Behavioral Science View*, Addison-Wesley Series in Social Science and Administration (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1970); William Eddy, Warner Burke, Valedimir Dupre, and Oron South, Editors, *Behavioral Science and the Manager’s Role* (New York: NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Sciences, 1969); Industrial Relations Counselors, inc, *Behavioral Science Research in Industrial Relations; Papers Presented at a Symposium Colors*, 1962); Renato Tagiuri, *Behavioral Science Concepts in Case Analysis: The Relationship of Ideas to Management Action* (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1968); Robert Tannenbaum, *Leadership and Organization: A Behavioral Science Approach* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961); Robert Tannenbaum, *Leadership and Organization: A Behavioral Science Approach*, McGraw-Hill Series in Management; (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1961); *Behavioral Science Concepts in Case Analysis: The Relationship of Ideas to Management Action* (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1968).

¹⁶ Rush 6.

The institutional affiliations and written works of these protagonists reveal a lofty set of motives in their formulation of humanistic and participative management principles. Lewin and Likert's work for New Deal and wartime agencies persuaded them that psychology could aid democracy by making leaders aware of the needs and realities of their constituencies. In the case of Lewin, this commitment to democracy also fueled his work in the nascent Intergroup movement, which insisted that a democratic society could and should accommodate communication between different faiths, ethnicities, and races. Lewin and Maslow's vehement anti-fascism, gleaned from Lewin's exposure to Nazi Germany and Maslow's schooling by European exiles, inspired them to reshape the nature of authority and leadership in American society. Both men believed that social science could guide a new generation of leaders who sought the common good rather than arbitrary power or authority. McGregor's presidency of Antioch College taught him the possibilities of democratic administration, while his close work with labor leader Joseph Scanlon at MIT reinforced his commitment to labor-management cooperation and the power of unions. For these four men, the American organization emerged as the ideal microcosm in which to test their idealistic principles of participative communication and self-actualization for all.

In this dissertation I argue that for roughly two and a half decades after World War II, this cadre of humanistic and activist psychologists successfully injected their idealism into many segments of American corporate culture. Though they were personally inspired by anti-fascist and pro-democratic sentiments, their ability to make management theory palatable to industrial leaders and personnel directors offered them significant inroads into mainstream organizational culture. They developed a program that promised both human development and increased profits, and they convinced a large swath of corporate America that they were right. But their

ascent was short-lived. By the mid-1970s, their ideas had faded from mainstream management theory, displaced by more autocratic and traditionally efficiency-oriented techniques. In the decades that followed, humanistic idealism returned in flush economic times – corporate rhetoric of personal growth is in some ways still with us today – but it continued to battle the bottom-line incentives of recessions and the depersonalizing nature of globalization.¹⁷

Mid-century behavioral scientists functioned as prototypes for the utopian “postindustrial” visionaries theory that Howard Brick has addressed in his work.¹⁸ According to Brick, the period of 1958-1967 witnessed a flurry of theorists who imagined a new “post-scarcity” affluent age as an opportunity for the crafting of the ultimate welfare state and stronger networks of social cohesion. With the economic problems of capitalism “solved,” government could move on to solving the *social* dilemmas of modern life. And with the gradual displacement of manual labor by intellectual labor and technology, the mind would be the next frontier of capitalist fulfillment. Humanistic and participative management training marked an extension of these ideas within the field of behavioral science. As epitomized by McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise*, behavioral scientists were consumed by the project of making

¹⁷ It is worth noting that humanistic ideas reared their heads again in the flush 1990s, when companies had increased economic flexibility to experiment with idealistic ideas and practices. The business magazine *Fast Company* was a perfect embodiment of revived humanistic celebrations of participation, flexibility, and creativity in the workplace. In this decade Abraham Maslow’s management treatise *Eupsychian Management*, originally published in 1965 and then out of print for decades, was reissued as *Maslow on Management*, 1st ed. (Wiley, 1998) in 1998 and became a staple of business school curricula across the country. The principles of the humanistic revival were outlined in Mort Meyerson, “Everything I Thought I Knew about Leadership is Wrong,” *Fast Company* (April/May 1996). Here, Meyerson details an evolution he underwent at Perot Systems, from a take-no-prisoners autocrat to a kind and caring coach who delegated responsibilities and supports his subordinates’ emotional needs. He wrote: “There’s a much larger calling in business today than was allowed by the old definitions of winning and losing. One hundred years from now, we’ll know we were on the right track if there are more organizations where people are doing great work for their customers and creating value for their shareholders. And raising their children, nurturing their families, and taking an interest in their communities. And feeling proud of the contributions they make. These are things you can’t measure when winning and losing are only financial metrics.”

¹⁸ See Howard Brick, “Optimism of the Mind: Imagining Postindustrial Society in the 1960s and 1970s,” *American Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Sept 1992): 348-380; Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

capitalism more “human” and ultimately more fulfilling for every level of worker within it.¹⁹ In shifting their focus to metaphysical needs, behavioral scientists suggested that the psychological frontier would be the most important site of satisfaction for managers and workers alike.

We can also situate humanistic management theories within the intellectual context of the postwar period, when intellectuals like Theodor Adorno and Erich Fromm emphasized “mass man’s” vulnerability to authoritarianism and warned that the conformity engendered by large organizations spelled psychological and political disaster.²⁰ An international critique of the “new middle classes” similarly argued that postwar corporate developments had spawned a new brand of white collar worker particularly prone to dangerous levels of conformity.²¹ More popular, domestic versions of this critique circulated in the 1950s as the “Organization Man” literature, which targeted the so-called men in grey flannel suits as impotent, lifeless cogs.²² Participative

¹⁹See Warren G Bennis, *Beyond Bureaucracy: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization*, 1st McGraw-Hill paperback ed., McGraw-Hill Series in Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005); Rensis Likert, *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Alfred Jay Marrow, *Making Management Human* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957); Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*.

²⁰ In *Escape from Freedom* (1941), Erich Fromm located the roots of Nazism in a psychological condition embodied by the middle-class masses, arguing that totalitarianism seized upon its feelings of alienation and powerlessness in the modern world. Several years later, two of his colleagues in the Germany’s Frankfurt School of Research—Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer—launched a critique against the “culture industry” of mass society, alleging that forms of popular culture and mass communication “manipulated consumers into a classless social conformity and submission.” See Adorno and Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1993), originally published as *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in 1944; Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1941).

²¹ For examples of international critiques of the new middle classes, see Luc Boltanski, *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957); Ezra Vogel, *Japan’s New Middle Classes: The Salary Man and His Family in a Tokyo Suburb* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

²² See C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1950); William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956). It is worth noting that scholars have since emphasized that Riesman’s work is often unfairly classified with works more harshly critical of mass society. While Riesman was concerned about the rise “team playing” and group thought in American society, he was basically optimistic about social prospects and never introduced the kinds of larger political fears espoused by Mills and his “Left-humanist” colleagues. See Eugene Lunn, “Beyond ‘Mass Culture’: The Lonely Crowd, the Uses of Literacy, and the Postwar

and humanistic management techniques belonged to a larger intellectual project of theorizing and crafting the “Cold War individual”—one simultaneously capable of retaining his autonomy and working within the large organizations that increasingly dotted the American landscape. The “small group” apparatus created a new space for authenticity within bureaucracy. The managerial experiments of my protagonists and their institutions reveal legions of so-called Organization Men eager to embrace a fundamentally anti-organizational ethic.

My narrative of mid-century behavioral scientists deviates from those of business and labor historians of the same era. Historians have convincingly portrayed the field of human relations as an attempt to undermine labor movements and leftist political currents in the mid-20th century.²³ Elton Mayo, a professor at Harvard Business School, pioneered the field of human relations with his techniques for increasing workers’ morale. The central findings of his famous Hawthorne Studies, conducted at the Hawthorne plant of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) from 1924-1933, are still contested, but their motives were clear.²⁴ Mayo was hired by AT&T to devise strategies for making workers more productive. His studies soon thereafter attracted the funding of the John Rockefeller, who, scarred by the previous decade’s

Era,” *Theory and Society* 19, no. 1 (February 1990): 63-86; Dennis Wrong, “The Lonely Crowd Revisited,” *Sociological Forum* 7, no. 2 (1992): 381-9.

²³ Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power; a History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry*, 1st ed. (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1960); Luc Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005); Elizabeth A Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-century America (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002); Donald B. Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1965).

²⁴ For a nuanced analysis of the Hawthorne Experiments, see Richard Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments*, Studies in Economic History and Policy (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

bloody industrial strife, was interested in increasing industrial peace while also boosting industrial profits.²⁵

In Mayo's first Hawthorne study, he and his researchers observed the effects of a variety of lighting conditions on worker efficiency. But they soon concluded that lighting mattered little as a variable, since all female workers brought to the researchers' observation room produced at higher rates than they had on the large shop floor. Mayo concluded that the workers had responded positively to the increased attention granted to them by supervisors and researchers, and that they responded positively to their isolation in a study room as a work group with its own cohesive social dynamics. Consequently, Mayo advised supervisors to treat their employees more like "patients," speaking to them attentively about their problems and grievances. He urged industrial leaders to appreciate the "anthropology of work"; the ways in which the shop floor constituted a kind of culture with its own relationships and norms.²⁶ According to one historian of the Hawthorne Studies, the research also revealed the extent to which interviewing workers—12,000 employees, in the case of Hawthorne—could boost worker attitudes and help them adjust psychologically to work conditions by making them feel listened to and valued. The Hawthorne Studies introduced the principle that an elusive quality called *morale* could affect workers' productivity more strongly than material working conditions.

Historians are right to situate Mayo and his colleagues in a larger narrative of labor-management relations, in which Mayo's interests were aligned with the corporation and foundation that funded his studies. He revised Taylor's scientific management principles because he and his funders found those principles to be inefficient and counterproductive.

²⁵ Rockefeller struggled in the 1920s and beyond to recover his reputation as an industrial leader particularly thanks to the 1914 "Ludlow Massacre" in Ludlow, Colorado, in which dozens of striking coal miners and their families in a tent colony were killed at the hands of militiamen.

²⁶ Gillespie 152.

Mayo's human-relations principles inspired decades of experiments in corporate recreational opportunities and publications aimed at making employees feel that they were part of something larger than themselves.²⁷ To be clear, many of the corporate executives and personnel directors who subsequently employed participative or humanistic management techniques were inspired by a similar set of concerns about poor worker productivity, high rates of turnover, or increased rates of union membership. But the motives of the theorists themselves were different.

This project serves as a cultural and intellectual history of organizational theories and practices in the middle decades of the 20th century. Somewhat surprisingly, there is no thorough account of the mid-century transformation of management training techniques—of the transition from an emphasis on workers' morale to organizational democracy and the personal growth of workers and managers alike. Alfred Chandler reigns supreme as the leading historian of management, and his history of managers' visible hand in the rise of American business lays important historiographic foundations for my work.²⁸ But how did the changing nature of postwar corporate capitalism create a new set of possibilities and challenges for middle managers? The most comprehensive book that attempts to pick up where Chandler left off, Daniel Wren's *The History of Management Thought*, provides a textbook account of evolutions in management theory, but offers little historical analysis.²⁹ Art Kleiner also offers a history of

²⁷ Fones-Wolf offers a particularly astute analysis of corporation's recreational and otherwise extracurricular experiments in *Selling Free Enterprise*.

²⁸ Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1977). Also see Chandler, ed., *Precursors of Modern Management*, *History of Management Thought* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

²⁹ Daniel Wren, *The Evolution of Management Thought* (New York: Wiley, 1987).

post-1945 management history, but his insider perspective makes the book as much a primary source as a secondary one.³⁰

In exploring the connections between personality and corporate capitalism, I have called upon the work of historians who have examined the cultural implications of salesmanship, advertising, and other brands of corporate image-making. Roland Marchand, William Leach, and Jackson Lears have addressed attempts to humanize and romanticize corporations in the first half of the 20th century through methods of public relations, commodity display, and advertising.³¹ But few historians have examined the internal workings of corporate culture in 20th century. Walter Friedman stands out as a critical exception.³² In Friedman's work, the well-trained salesman emerges as one of the most important agents of consumer capitalism in the first half of the 20th century, when salesmanship took on veneers of both scientific expertise and emotional connection. In this project, managers pick up where Friedman's salesmen left off as agents of capitalist economic and cultural order. Given that the international economic climate changed dramatically after the middle of the 20th century, expectations for capitalism's custodians necessarily shifted as well.

³⁰ Art Kleiner, *Age of Heretics* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996). Chris McKenna's rich and informative history of management consulting has also proved informative for my work, though he operates from a different perspective. He analyzes management consulting as a product of political and economic changes before World War II, and argues that consultants emerged to take advantage of a new niche created by New Deal financial regulation. McKenna's focus on the rise of consulting as a legitimate profession leaves unanswered larger questions about the ideological and cultural impact of management theory itself. Christopher McKenna, *The World's Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the 20th Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³¹ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-40* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). See also Pamela Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

³² Walter Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). Also see Olivier Zunz *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Zunz's book, framed as a social and cultural history of corporate culture at the turn of the century, ends chronologically before my story begins.

A number of historians have touched on industrial psychologists' quest for more "humanized" management techniques in the twentieth century, as noted above. Scholars like Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, Donald Meyer, Loren Baritz, and Richard Gillespie have chronicled the role of social science and industrial psychology in the transformation of postwar labor relations.³³ David Montgomery, Nelson Lichtenstein, and Kim Phillips-Fein have examined the changing relationship between labor and the state in the middle of the twentieth century.³⁴ But in their works, human relations and related industrial endeavors emerge as emblems of corporate conservatism. A rare exception to the conservative narrative is Jennifer Delton's recent work on racial integration in American corporations, which argues that progressive corporations initiated the movement toward affirmative action in the postwar United States.³⁵

I incorporate the work of labor and business historians with the perspectives of historians who have examined 20th century social science as a force in and of itself, a powerful marker of changing ideas about self and society. Jeffrey Sklansky, Rebecca Lemov, Sarah Igo and Pamela

³³ Baritz, *The Servants of Power; a History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry*; Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*; Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge*; Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale*.

³⁴ See Nelson Lichtenstein, *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise*, Woodrow Wilson Center Series (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge University Press, 1993); Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II: With a New Introduction by the Author*, Labor in Crisis (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003); David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Paris: Cambridge University Press; Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1987); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009); Christopher L Tomlins, *The State and the Unions: Labor Relations, Law, and the Organized Labor Movement in America, 1880-1960*, Studies in Economic History and Policy (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For a broader history of the New Deal's relationship with business and labor, see Eds. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). See also Adolph Berle, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1933) for a primary source on this topic. For chronicles of larger transformations in 20th century capitalism, see Robert Brenner, *Economics of Global Turbulence* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006); John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958); Galbraith, *The New Industrial State* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1971); Andrew Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁵ Jennifer A Delton, *Racial Integration in Corporate America, 1940-1990* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Laird stand out in this arena, but their work does not specifically address the integration of social science and management theory.³⁶ Stuart Svonkin has offered a particularly useful examination of the Jewish Intergroup movement, including the work of Kurt Lewin, but has not considered the extensions of this movement's key theories into the business realm.³⁷ Ellen Herman has argued persuasively that the field of psychology exerted a profound influence on political culture in the 20th century, illuminating the ways in which psychological discourse and expertise shaped the American government's management of policy and public opinion from 1940 through 1975.³⁸ Her argument about psychologists' conceptions of the "subjective and emotional realities of power" within the political realm offers a helpful lens for my project. Corporate culture served as an equally pivotal site for the creation of ideas about power and selfhood.

There is a growing literature on the rise of the idea of corporate culture, as reflected by the works of Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello, Howard Brick, Thomas Frank, and Eugene McCarragher.³⁹ Frank has examined, in particular, the intersections between the counterculture and the advertising industry of the 1960s. My work draws on his challenges of the counterculture/corporate culture dichotomy but offers an alternative conception of both

³⁶ Sarah Elizabeth Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007); Pamela Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success Since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Rebecca M Lemov, *World as Laboratory: Experiments with Mice, Mazes, and Men*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005); Jeffrey P. Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

³⁷ Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties*, Columbia Studies in Contemporary American History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). For the Christian counterpoint see Eugene McCarragher, *Christian Critics: Religion and the Impasse in Modern American Social Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

³⁸ Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

³⁹ Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*; Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Eugene McCarragher, "Me, Myself, and Inc.: 'Social Selfhood,' Corporate Humanism, and Religious Longing in American Management Theory 1908-1956," in Wilfred McClay, Ed., *Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2007).

chronology and causality. Boltanski and Chiapello have argued that a “new spirit of capitalism” emerged from the managerial literature of postwar France, which co-opted the participatory and humanistic rhetoric of the left in order to undermine union strength and diffuse criticism of corporate practices. While their subject matter and themes are deeply consistent with my own, we have reached different conclusions about the motivations and chronology behind humanistic management theory.

Histories of ideologies of the Left have provided important underpinnings for this project. In considering the intellectual and political milieu of the 1960s, particularly the rhetoric of both participation and authenticity, the works of Douglas Rossinow, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, and Jim Miller have proven helpful. These scholars have examined the evolution of democratic and humanistic ideologies (as epitomized by the SDS’s “Port Huron Statement” in 1962), but without granting deserved attention to their emergence in the business arena.⁴⁰ I have also benefitted from studies that connect postwar foundations, social work, and community action, whose intersections climaxed with the War on Poverty's support for community action.⁴¹ I suggest that the same guiding principles and foundations that supported the growth of community action exerted an underappreciated influence on philosophies of participation in the private sphere. Studies of popular psychology and sociology have informed my own understanding of the larger

⁴⁰Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998); Jim Miller, *“Democracy Is in the Streets”*: *From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Douglas C Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*, Contemporary American History Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Also see Tom Hayden and Students for a Democratic Society (U.S.), *The Port Huron Statement: The Visionary Call of the 1960s Revolution* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press; Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2005).

⁴¹ See Alice O’Connor, “Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty The Ford Foundation’s Gray Areas Program,” *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 5 (July 1, 1996): 586–625; Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001). For a case study of community action during the War on Poverty, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003).

conversation surrounding self and society in the 20th century. Philip Cushman, Wilfred McClay, and Donald Myers have offered examinations of psychology's impact on 20th-century ideologies of individualism.⁴² Richard Pell's intellectual history of mid-century social critics, like Howard Brick's examination of post-capitalist visionaries, examines the intersection of social criticism, academic social science, and the public sphere—but again, both writers focus on the world outside of the corporation rather than the brands of dissent issued from inside of it.

Because T-groups and sensitivity training have extended beyond the bounds of corporations and business culture, my dissertation draws on more general histories of encounter and sensitivity training. Kurt Back, Laura Kim Lee, and Jerold Hirsch have told the story of the National Training Laboratories and its T-groups from its development in the 1940s through its application in wider circles through the early 1970s.⁴³ These works provide excellent narrative detail but treat the development of sensitivity training as a trend isolated from other, equally potent behavioral science techniques of the 20th century. It has been helpful to draw upon polemic treatises on sensitivity training and its related popular-psychology cultural expressions, as in the work of Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn, Christopher Lasch, and Wendy Kaminer, who respectively position sensitivity training and the recovery movement as attacks on political

⁴² Philip Cushman, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* (Boston, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1995); Wilfred M McClay, *Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers, a Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale*.

⁴³ Kurt W Back, *Beyond Words: The Story of Sensitivity Training and the Encounter Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972); Back, Ed., *In Search for Community: Encounter Groups and Social Change* (Boulder,: Westview Press for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1978); Jerrold I. Hirsch, *The History of the National Training Laboratories 1947-1986* (Peter Lang Publishing, 1987); Laura Kim Lee, "Changing Selves, Changing Society: Human Relations Experts and the Invention of T Groups, Sensitivity Training, and Encounter in the United States, 1938-1980" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002). Jane Howard's *Please Touch: A Guided Tour of the Human Potential Movement* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970) offers a brief history of the T-group as well as an ethnographic chapter on NTL's Personal Growth Lab—but she writes from a journalistic perspective rather than an academic one.

activism and autonomy.⁴⁴ These works tie into a broader literature on the intersection of sensitivity training and identity politics: women’s consciousness-raising groups, men’s groups, and the spate of recovery groups related to Alcoholics Anonymous.⁴⁵ They also reinforce a body of literature on 1970s narcissism, which presents “talking about me” as an inevitable outgrowth of political disillusionment in the early 1970s.⁴⁶ My work departs from the above literature in its

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn argues that the encounter movement (which she rightfully cites as beginning in the late 1940s) undermined civil rights activism in the 1960s and 1970s by turning it into a project targeting attitudes and psyches rather than structures of inequality. Wendy Kaminer similarly indicts modern self-help psychology in her history of the recovery movement, which she credits as being responsible for the discourse of “victimhood” that permeated identity politics in the late 1970s. See Wendy Kaminer, *I’m Dysfunctional, You’re Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Sensitivity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Norton, 2001). For additional accounts of the political damage wreaked through therapeutic culture, see Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, Norton paperback 1991 ed. (New York: Norton, 1991); Edwin Schur, *The Awareness Trap: Social Awareness Instead of Social Change* (New York: Mc-Graw Hill, 1977).

⁴⁵ See Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 2000); Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983); Ernest Kurz, *Not-God: a History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Center City, Minn.: Hazelden Educational Services, 1979); Michael Messner, *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997); Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity From The Revolution To The Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993). In Jo Freeman’s pamphlet “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” she wrote of consciousness raising groups: “During the years in which the women’s liberation movement has been taking shape, a great emphasis has been placed on what are called leaderless, structureless groups as the main form of the movement. The source of this idea was a natural reaction against the overstructured society in which most of us found ourselves, the inevitable control this gave others over our lives, and the continual elitism of the Left and similar groups among those who were supposedly fighting this over-structuredness. The idea of ‘structurelessness’, however, has moved from a healthy counter to these tendencies to becoming a goddess in its own right.” See Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” *The Second Wave* 2, no. 1 (1972).

⁴⁶ See Peter Marin, “The New Narcissism,” *Harper’s* (October 1975): 45-56; Richard Sennett, *Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1976); Tom Wolfe, “The Me Decade and the Third Great Awakening” in *The Purple Decades: A Reader* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1983). Subsequent historians have embraced the decade’s characterization as one of democratized narcissism in which the ethos of the counterculture and the New Left spread to a sea of new-age Babbitts guided by a bustling new “consciousness industry.” David Frum’s account presents “the public display of one’s suffering, one’s wrongs, one’s pitiableness, one’s misfortunes” as “the distinctive American national style” of the 1970s, when “every Buick owner in the country understood how very dangerous it was to keep his feelings bottled up.” Bruce Schulman’s history of the decade similarly positions the encounter movement as the legacy of sixties radicals who “bequeathed their crusade for self-liberation to the nation,” so that “the phenomenon of personal transformation became broader but also more inwardly focused.” See David Frum, *How We Got Here: The Seventies, The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 79.

examination of sensitivity training in the corporate context, and as a more ideologically complicated project than Kaminer and Lasch-Quinn suggest.

Finally, my dissertation engages with a growing body of literature that takes new age and metaphysical religion seriously as an area of investigation. Catherine Albanese, Courtney Bender, and Sarah Pike, and Jeffrey Kripal have offered scholarly analyses of new age religion as a bona fide religious tradition.⁴⁷ They emphasize inner healing, here-and-now experiencing, and “flow” as principle tenets of new age religion, and frequently include encounter and “self-actualization” (akin to the “divine inner self”) as components of new age religion in the 1960s and 1970s. This project adds a focus on what many ultimately deemed spiritual values within an increasingly expressive and experiential corporate culture.

This dissertation is the first to investigate systematically the rise of participative philosophy and humanistic psychology in the management theory and practices of the middle decades of the 20th century, and the first to link those practices to the broader political and social concerns of that period’s social scientists. Chapter One examines Kurt Lewin’s emergence as a “scientist-citizen” through his early training in Germany, his formulation of his theory of “life force,” his famous “Autocracy/Democracy Studies” at the University of Iowa, and his early industrial experiments at the Harwood Corporation pajama factory. Chapter Two follows a similar chronological trajectory in the life of Rensis Likert. Likert translated his training in attitudinal surveys into the realm of market research and the study of morale among life insurance salesmen, bridging the young fields of survey science and human relations.

⁴⁷ Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2007); Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Jeffrey Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Sarah Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Chapter Three examines Abraham Maslow's early ideological and psychological education, which fueled his formulation of "Third Force Psychology" and its centerpiece, the hierarchy of needs. This chapter aligns Maslow's roots with the early biography of Douglas McGregor, who grew up under the influence of the Social Gospel and found himself, as the first psychologist in MIT's Industrial Relations department, integrating his larger concerns about the social good with more focused concerns about industrial psychology.

Chapter Four returns to Lewin, examining his training of democratic leaders in wartime and his establishment of the two groups that exemplified a lifetime of "action research": the Commission on Community Interrelations and the Research Center for Group Dynamics, which gave rise to the National Training Laboratories for Group Development (and its most popular innovation, the T-group) in the year of Lewin's death. Chapter Five chronicles Rensis Likert's parallel journey from the US government's Division of Program Surveys, where he performed work for both New Deal agencies and military strategists during World War II, to the University of Michigan, where his Survey Research Center embodied his commitment to the democratic function of research and humanistic techniques of surveying. Chapter Six examines McGregor's own psychological explorations in wartime and its immediate aftermath, epitomized by his articulation of Theory Y, his presidency of Antioch College, his collaborations with Lewin and Scanlon at MIT, and his eventual venture into corporate consulting.

Chapters Seven and Eight trace the application of Lewin and Likert's ideas within the corporate sphere. The former examines the establishment of the National Training Laboratories and the spread of T-groups among managers and executives in the US and abroad, and the latter situates Likert's forays into the realm of Organizational Behavior as precedents for his definitive participative management treatise. Both chapters demonstrate how theories of organizational

growth developed largely within non-industrial spheres reached unprecedented popularity within corporate contexts. Chapter Nine examines Abraham's Maslow's own entry into corporate realm, from his publication of his first management treatise to his work within organizations as a consultant in the years preceding his death. This chapter emphasizes Maslow's developing conviction that corporations would be sites of psychological transformation for culture at large.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter 10, an examination of the controversy and ultimate disenchantment that plagued participative and humanistic management theorists from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. By the early 1970s, T-group methods and humanistic psychology had not only spread throughout corporate and bureaucratic culture, but had also been adopted by leaders of the predominantly West Coast "Human Potential" movement. As humanistic methods and theories became centerpieces of the counterculture, their organizational effectiveness fell into hot dispute. A legion of critics argued that after more than a decade of industrial use, there was little to no evidence that participative management or self-actualization had any effect on organizational performance. By the middle of the 1970s, faced with a larger economic crisis, self-actualization and related discourses had disappeared from the agendas of most corporate executives, replaced by a renewed appreciation for the power of managerial authority and hierarchical decision-making.

The dissertation thus leaves us with the central questions that Lewin, Likert, McGregor, and Maslow considered throughout their long careers: Are the psychological needs of organizations and individuals fundamentally incompatible? If not, can they be reconciled for fundamental transformations of democracy and capitalism? The history of participative and humanistic management theory suggests few concrete answers to these questions, but reveals a powerful movement of 20th-century social scientists who considered them on a large scale.

Chapter 1
The Scientist-Citizen:
Kurt Lewin's Interwar Action Research and Democracy at Work

On May 13, 1954, *The Pajama Game* opened on Broadway as the first and only musical to locate romantic intrigue in the industrial strife of a pajama factory. The show, which was based on Richard Bissell's novel *7 ½ Cents* and later turned into a film starring Doris Day, concerns the drama that erupts at the Sleepytime Pajama Factory when a new labor superintendent, Sid Sorokin, comes to town from Chicago.¹ The head of the factory, Myron Hasler, is desperate for assistance: His girls are slowing down, sabotaging the machines, and talking back. Rumor has it that when the union contract goes up for negotiation, they're going to demand a seven-and-a-half-cent raise. Hasler brings in superintendent Sorokin to whip them into shape, and to stand up to the union's ever-agitating grievance committee.

In the cinematic version of the musical, the first tour of the Sleepytime factory introduces viewers to goofy Vernon 'Hinesie' Hines, the "efficiency expert" who is commanding the girls to "hurry up" through song and dance. "I'm a time study man!" he sings. "I've got a stop watch...Can't waste time, can't waste time!...Cut out the laughing!" The workers, feeling defeated by Hines' Taylorist expectations, complain that their wages aren't sufficient to provide them with a decent standard of living. They half-heartedly, haphazardly toss pajama tops and pants into larger piles of the same. The arrival of superintendent Sorokin makes things more complicated when he and the sassy head of the grievance committee, Babe Williams, fall head over heels in love. She resists submitting a grievance against him after a male technician complains of abuse, and Sid later declares his infatuation at a frolicking company picnic. Soon

¹ Richard Adler, *The Pajama Game: A Musical Comedy (based on the Novel "7 1/2 Cents" by Richard Bissell)* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 199AD); Richard Bissell, *7 1/2 Cents* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953).

enough, however, Babe has declared her primary allegiance to the union. During an elegantly choreographed slowdown, she sabotages a machine and leaves Sid with no choice but to fire her. She later resists his overtures to win her back, urging, “You stick to your side and I’ll stick to mine.”

The climax of *The Pajama Game* arrives during a union rally, when the Amalgamated Shirt and Pajama Workers of America Local 343 officially agitate (through song) for their seven-and-a-half-cent raise. The raise may not sound substantial at first, they explain, but the cumulative effect will be great (“I’ll buy myself a pajama factory! Make Old Man Hasler work for me!”). Hasler once objected to making even the slightest concession to their demands, but Sorokin assures him that “Labor problems have got to end up one way: compromise.” Hasler relents, and the workers burst into cheerful song about their raise. Babe and Sid soon marry and perform together in the company’s pajama fashion show (she in just a pajama shirt, and he in the corresponding pants). Industrial and romantic harmony abound.

The Pajama Game offers viewers a surprising portrait of labor relations in the 1950s. Its allegiances are clear: The efficiency expert is an emasculated bozo, while the head of the grievance committee is gutsy, smart, and beautiful. The owner of the factory is a stingy curmudgeon, while the heroic and hunky superintendent ultimately recognizes the union’s right to a raise. Released at a time when the power of American unions had started to diminish, and when time-motion experts were a thing of the past, the musical provided a simultaneously utopian and anachronistic vision of American labor relations.

It turns out, however, that *The Pajama Game* was not woven from whole cloth: It was developed in consultation with the Weldon Company, owned by Alfred Marrow, one of the 20th century’s most prominent promoters of “humanistic” management techniques, and a respected

psychologist in his own right.² While Marrow's pajama factories might not have spawned real-life labor-management romances or song-and-dance numbers, his company was home to a series of ground-breaking experiments in post-Taylorist management—experiments that lasted in some form from the late 1930s into the 1970s. In contrast to the bitter, fictional owner of *The Pajama Game*'s Sleepytime, Marrow decided before World War II that Taylorist management techniques had run their course, and that time-management experts impeded workers' productivity rather than promoting it. For decades, he employed a team of social scientists who promoted what they called "democratic participation" through leadership training, group decision-making, and self-management.³ His factory became a laboratory for multiple manifestations of "participative management" and humanistic management training that flourished in the middle years of 20th century. As Marrow himself traveled through a network of progressive institutions—including the American Jewish Congress, the New School for Social Research, Antioch College, and the Mayor's Commission on Intergroup Relations—he became one of his era's most committed proselytizers of participation, ego-satisfaction, and candid emotional expression at work.

² Alfred Marrow (1905-1978) occupied a wide range of institutional roles throughout the middle years of the 20th century. A trained psychologist, he served as the President of the Harwood Company, which later purchased the Weldon Company. He also served as Executive Chair of the American Jewish Congress, Chairman of the Mayor's Commission on Intergroup Relations, Director of the New School for Social Research, Director of Antioch College, and Director of Gonzaga University.

³ Marrow celebrated these methods through a range of publications about organizational psychology, intergroup relations, and democratic management techniques. See Alfred Jay Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask; Greater Managerial Competence Through Deeper Self-Understanding* (New York: American Management Association, 1964); Marrow, *Changing Patterns of Prejudice; a New Look at Today's Racial, Religious, and Cultural Tensions* (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., Book Division, 1962); Marrow, *Making Management Human* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957); Marrow, *Making Waves in Foggy Bottom; How a New and More Scientific Approach Changed the Management System at the State Department* (Washington: NTL Institute, 1974); Marrow, *Management by Participation; Creating a Climate for Personal and Organizational Development* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Marrow, *The T-Group Experience: An Encounter Among People for Greater Self-Fulfillment* (New York: P. S. Eriksson, 1975).

Marrow credited his enlightened management to the social scientist who inspired and shaped the first phase of experimentation at Marrow's Harwood pajama factory: a man named Kurt Lewin, whom Marrow later credited as being one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century.⁴ Kurt Lewin died in 1947, having bequeathed to the social science community a conviction that social science could save democracy. Lewin was a German psychologist who fled Berlin in 1933 and established himself as a force on the American scene through work with a number of American agencies, from the Iowa Child Welfare Research Center to the Office of Strategic Services. His work in the field he helped christen "group dynamics" shaped two agencies he helped establish: the American Jewish Congress's Commission for Community Interrelations and MIT's Research Center for Group Dynamics, out of which the National Training Laboratories for Group Development was born. In this latter group, Lewin helped develop the "T-group," also known as sensitivity training, which became one of the most celebrated—and then reviled—social science techniques of the century. Although Lewin was broadly concerned with the public sphere, he engaged extensively with the private sector. He authored an indictment of Taylor's scientific management early in his career, and later served as consultant to the Harwood Manufacturing Company where he helped develop the "participatory management" experiments mentioned above. Some scholars have suggested that in spite of his broad political vision, his most lasting impact was upon the field of industrial psychology.⁵

From Lewin's arrival in the United States in 1933 through his death in 1947, every project that he embarked on communicated his zealous advocacy of democracy and participation.

⁴ Note that while Lewin's last name was pronounced "La-Veen" during his early years in this country, he changed the pronunciation to the more American "Lew-in" in the mid-1940s. See Alfred Jay Marrow, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 177.

⁵ Bernard Burnes, "Kurt Lewin and the Harwood Studies: The Foundations of OD," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 2007, no. 43 (2007): 213–231; Michael McGill, "The Evolution of Organizational Development: 1947-1960," *Public Administration Review* 34, no. 2 (April 1974): 98–105; Marvin Ross Weisbord, *Productive Workplaces: Organizing and Managing for Dignity, Meaning, and Community* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).

He immigrated from Nazi Germany with a keen sense of totalitarian's dangers, intent on combating authoritarianism and social conflict through psychological means. His famous method of "Forcefield Analysis" insisted that a person's behavior and attitudes could not be viewed as separate from his or her environment—meaning that reforming an environment could change the individuals within it, and that people have more control over their surroundings than they tend to imagine.⁶ In the 1930s and 1940s, he focused this field theory research on the small group as the primary unit of change. Within small groups, he insisted, all kinds of people (children, factory workers, African-Americans, Jews) could learn to lead and participate in fundamentally democratic ways, and could—by extension—influence all of society. Lewin, whom Alfred Marrow labeled "a natural, spontaneous democrat,"⁷ advocated what he called "action research." Action research challenged the notion that science should be objectively detached from the affairs or political concerns of everyday life. Quite the opposite: Lewin suggested that science could and should be practiced with the intent of fixing the world's troubled social relations. Though he became famous for his saying that "There is nothing so practical as a good theory,"⁸ he firmly believed that theories were not worth developing unless for the betterment of humankind, and that his work as a scientist meant little if not "integrated with his life as a citizen."⁹ Lewin's work spanned a broad range of social contexts – the

⁶ See Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*, Midway Reprints (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁷ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, xi.

⁸ According to Marrow, this quote was often misread. Lewin let his theories evolve over the course of his research, did not keep them set in stone, and believed that "research could be directed toward practical issues so long as it had the theory to guide it through all the stages." See Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 128.

⁹ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, xiv.

industrial workplace, the family, the school, the segregated community—because he believed that democracy could only work if its principles were lived out in every arena of life.

Lewin’s life and work ultimately exemplified a synthesis taking place in interwar social science, both in America and abroad. His commitment to democratic action research – exemplified by his studies of authoritarian leadership and democratic participation among groups of young boys – found its most prolific and lasting impact in the world of industrial research. His early intellectual and life experience, as a German exile and critic of authoritarianism, inspired him to revisit existing theories of human relations and emerge with a participatory model of industrial change. His work at Marrow’s Harwood Plant, originally born in the study of intergroup relations and the problem of prejudice, ultimately transformed the way industrial leaders approached what Elton Mayo had called “the human problems of industrial civilization.”¹⁰

Kurt Lewin was born in 1890 in the small village of Mogilno, in the Prussian province of Posen (now part of Poland). His father, Leopold, owned a general store above which the family lived, and operated a small farm a several miles away; his mother, Recha, energetically encouraged the pursuits of their four children. The family comfortably occupied the middle class, but anti-Semitism pervaded Prussia, and Lewin’s Jewish family encountered persistent, publicly sanctioned discrimination.¹¹ In 1905, Lewin’s family moved to Berlin, where Kurt (then fifteen years old) enrolled in the Kaiserin Augusta Gymnasium. There, he basked in the glories of a humanistic curriculum that stressed Latin and Greek classics and integration of the arts and sciences. Upon completion of high school, Lewin moved on to the University of

¹⁰ See Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1933).

¹¹ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 4.

Freiburg, where he intended to train as a doctor, but having lost interest in biology one semester into his education there, he transferred to the University of Munich and then to the University of Berlin in 1910. It was at the University of Berlin that he found his calling in psychology, which was just emerging as a field distinct from philosophy, and still contained an active strain of philosophical inquiry.

At the University of Berlin, where Lewin ultimately pursued a doctorate in psychology, he found himself uninspired by the autocratic methods of many professors and the attendant passivity – even apathy-- that he witnessed in fellow students.¹² Yet he also entered a community of psychologists who would shape his theoretical orientation for years to come. At the University’s Psychological Institute, he took classes in both philosophy and the theory of science, continually examining the connections between the two fields. He located a simpatico dissertation advisor named Carl Stumpf (both philosopher and psychologist), a “decided empiricist” committed to experimental psychology.

Whereas many of Stumpf’s colleagues disdained the use of experimental method in psychology—preferring methods of philosophical inquiry—he insisted that the scientific method could guide inquiry into matters of the mind. His experimental spirit attracted psychological pioneers like Max Wertheimer, Wölfgang Kohler, and Kurt Koffka to Berlin’s Psychological Institute, transforming it into a hotbed of experimentalism. The four psychologists embraced the emerging field of Gestalt psychology, arguing that perception could be understood in terms of “forms of organized wholes.” Although Lewin never considered himself an orthodox Gestaltist, the “holism” of their ideas appealed to him.¹³ Lewin respected Stumpf tremendously and

¹² Marrow, *The Practical Theorist* 7.

¹³ For the Gestaltist work of Lewin’s Berlin colleagues, see Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (Harcourt, Brace and company, 1935); Wolfgang Kohler, *Gestalt Psychology* (New York: H. Liveright, 1929); Max

ultimately emulated both his experimental spirit and his focus on child psychology (Stumpf was the founder of the Berlin Association for Child Psychology). Lewin also found inspiration among a likeminded group of graduate students at the Institute who believed that psychology could and should address contemporary social problems. With this group of students, he set up a series of evening classes for working-class adults (called “workingmen’s courses”) about which the German authorities were “deeply suspicious.”¹⁴

Lewin signed up for German military service in early 1914, soon before the outbreak of World War I, and served in the army for most of the ensuing four years of fighting. According to Marrow, he “adapted very well to being a soldier,” entering as a private and leaving as a lieutenant.¹⁵ While convalescing, he came up with the idea for what became his first published article, entitled “The War Landscape,” published in 1917.¹⁶ Here, he articulated the theory that later became known as “life space,” arguing that a soldier’s immediate needs (his own “life space”) altered his perceptions of the world around him. The physical environment could look different to a soldier depending on the progress of the war, or the soldier’s need for safety or food. As the soldier approached the front of the war, the landscape’s very boundaries changed in his perception, taking on firm lines of definition. The soldier’s perception of objects would also depend on whether they were “peace things” or “battle things”—associations that they would lose outside of the context of battle. A soldier might view an enemy’s piece of furniture as his

Wertheimer, *Productive Thinking* (New York: Harper, 1959). In the United States, Gestalt was eventually popularized by Frederick “Fritz” Perls. For his classic works on Gestaltism, see Frederick S Perls, *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression; the Beginning of Gestalt Therapy* (New York: Random House, 1969); Perls, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Julian Press, 1971).

¹⁴ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 7.

¹⁵ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 10.

¹⁶ Kurt Lewin, “Kriegslandschaft,” *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* (1917). For more discussion of this article, see Fritz Heider, “On Lewin’s Method and Theory, On Lewin’s Method and Theory,” *Journal of Social Issues*, *Journal of Social Issues* 15, no. S13 (December 1, 1959): 3–13.

own property in wartime, giving him the right to burn it, while he would never commit such an act against a stranger in times of peace. This 1917 article set precedent for Lewin's later examinations of the ways that people's behavior and attitudes shift in accordance with social context.

After the war, Lewin returned to the Psychological Institute at the University of Berlin and began work on his next two articles, in which he articulated ideas about the psychology of work. In the first, published in 1919, he examined the role of the laborer in agriculture¹⁷; in the second, whose title translated to "Humanization of the Taylor System: An Inquiry into the Fundamental Psychology of Work and Motivation" (1920), he critiqued Frederick Winslow Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911).¹⁸ Taylor's scientific management had, by the late teens (and following Taylor's death in 1915) gained great attention in Germany for its promises of maximal industrial efficiency.¹⁹ Taylor proposed not just that managers break down factory tasks to their simplest components to ensure efficient expertise, but also that they vigilantly monitor workers, via time-motion studies, to ensure that they performed at utmost productivity.

On the one hand, Lewin saluted Taylor's efforts to apply scientific method to an everyday arena of human existence; the two men recognized the need for what became known as "behavioral science" in industry decades before the field's industrial applications were commonplace. On the other hand, Lewin expressed deep concern with Taylor's focus on productivity as the only goal of human labors. By mechanizing and reducing work to its most

¹⁷ Kurt Lewin, *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie*, 1919.

¹⁸ Kurt Lewin, *Die Sozialisierung Des Taylorsystems Eine Grundsätzliche Untersuchung Zur Arbeits- Und Berufspsychologie* (Berlin: Gesellschaft und Erziehung, 1920).

¹⁹ Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper, 1911).

minute and basic components, he argued, scientific managers might gain short-term efficiency, but they also spawned feelings of monotony and overspecialization among their workers.

Taylor's system negated the possibility that workers could achieve psychological satisfaction through their jobs, which Lewin called the "life value" of work, and the fact that for many men, work was a defining aspect of existence.²⁰ He loftily explained:

‘The worker wants his work to be rich, wide, and Protean, not crippling and narrow. Work should not limit personal potential but develop it. Work can involve love, beauty, and the soaring joy of creating. Progress, in that case, does not mean shortening the workday, but an increase in the human value of work.’²¹

According to Lewin, industrial experts needed to extend their range of concern beyond efficiency and recognize that jobs filled psychological roles in workers lives; that some jobs suited certain workers better than others; and that, in the words of Marrow, “the work itself must be made worth doing.”²²

As one historian of management has explained, Lewin's emphasis on the idea later labeled “morale” was prescient. By 1920, “Lewin understood (before anybody else) what would later be called job satisfaction. Psychologists and efficiency experts, he suggested in a foreshadowing of early work-design practice, should team up to enhance *both* productivity and satisfaction.”²³ Lewin suggested that if work became more fundamentally rewarding, workers would ultimately become more productive, and that with greater levels of satisfaction would come higher levels of output. Though Lewin would not engage directly with industrial

²⁰ For discussion of work's life value, see Weisbord, *Productive Workplaces*; Miriam Lewin Papanek, “Kurt Lewin and His Contributions to Modern Management Theory,” *Academy of Management Proceedings* (1973): 317–322. Also see Art Kleiner, *The Age of Heretics: Heroes, Outlaws, and the Forerunners of Corporate Change* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996).

²¹ Lewin quoted in Papanek, 318.

²² Marrow explaining Lewin in *The Practical Theorist*, 15-16.

²³ Weisbord, *Productive Workplaces*, 77.

production for almost two decades after the publication of this article in Germany, he never strayed from his conviction that job satisfaction and economic productivity were mutually dependent in modern society. Through the rest of his career, he conceived of the workplace as the site of complex interpersonal dynamics with powerful economic and psychological repercussions.

Throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s, Lewin gained renown as both teacher and student at the Psychological Institute in Berlin. As a professor, he became famous for his impassioned, sometimes frenetic lectures and deep commitment to his graduate students. Former students later explained to Alfred Marrow that while they could not always follow Lewin’s logic or progression of ideas—often expressed through elaborate charts and drawings on the boards—his charisma and manic enthusiasm made him a contagiously effective professor.²⁴ As a researcher, he began gaining attention across Germany and the Atlantic for his theories of “field force” and “life space.” An individual’s “life space” (an idea that grew from Lewin’s article on perceptions in wartime) was the set of events and experiences – past, present, and future—that shaped his behavior and perceptions in the world around him. By the early 1930s, he was particularly interested in the life spaces of infants and children, and how these life spaces shaped their psychological development.²⁵

If “life space” described the unique psychological landscape of the individual, “field force” described the environmental forces that acted *upon* an individual, specifically through social situations that shaped their goals, behaviors, and needs.²⁶ Lewin grew increasingly

²⁴ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, Chapter 3.

²⁵ For more on Lewin’s concept of “life space,” see Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science*; Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts*; & *Field Theory in Social Science* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1997).

²⁶ See Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science*.

interested in what Marrow has called the “circular causal relationship between self and environment”: the conviction that as environmental factors shape our relationship with the world, our ever-shifting psychological landscapes alter the ways in which we perceive the world around us.²⁷ Though Lewin focused in his early “field force” work on the effect of environments on child development, these two theories exerted tremendous force on his and others’ analysis of events that soon unfolded on the national and international stage.

In January 1933, Adolph Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany and began to transform Weimar Germany into the Third Reich. Lewin, having risen as high in the ranks of the academy as possible for a Jew (associate professor without civil service rank) recognized that he and his family needed to leave Germany swiftly. (The other three of the “Big Four” German psychologists—Wertheimer, Koffka, and Kohler – decided to do so at the same time.) Thanks to Lewin’s increasing renown in the psychological community, he had begun to build relationships with American social scientists, and had recently visited both New York and California in May 1932.²⁸ Before his emigration in August 1933, he was recruited for a two-year position in the Home Economics Department of Cornell University, thanks to his friendly relations with a colleague named Ethel Waring in that department.²⁹ Cornell proved to be a poor match for Lewin: Its academic atmosphere provided far less stimulation and excitement than his beloved Psychological Institute in Berlin, and his appointment to the Home Economics Department made little sense given his interests. During his two-year appointment at the school, Lewin bided his time conducting studies of nursery children, publishing his first book (*A Dynamic Theory of*

²⁷ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 63.

²⁸ Note that while a guest at the Columbia University Faculty Club in 1932, he was introduced to Gardner Murphy, who is addressed in Chapter 2 because he worked closely with Rensis Likert at Columbia University and was ultimately responsible for introducing Maslow and Lewin.

²⁹ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, Chapter 8.

Personality), and raising funds for the establishment of a Psychological Institute at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.³⁰

In 1935, Lewin won a better suited position at the University of Iowa's Child Welfare Research Station, which was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and already served as an important hub of American psychological research by the time of his arrival.³¹ In addition to existing staff, Lewin soon won a number of fellowships that enabled him to build his own coalition of researchers. Over the course of a decade working in the Research Station, from 1935 to 1945, Lewin basked in the glories of both research and teaching, recruiting and identifying a group of likeminded colleagues who were interested in applying the psychological theories and techniques to contemporary social problems. It was at Iowa that Lewin announced himself on the American scene as a pioneer of social psychology and a shaper of ideas. His decade there cemented his commitment to "action research" and reinforced his sense that, in spite of all the injustices and horrors in the world around him, the field of psychology offered promising solutions to the most unfathomable of social evils. One of his colleagues later reflected admiringly that for Lewin, "[a]ll these terrible events" –the anti-Semitism of his youth, his experience as a soldier in World War I, Germany's violent defeat, the rise of Hitler -- "deepened his commitment to mankind and the betterment of man's lot."³² Alfred Marrow, who became close friends with Lewin during his years in Iowa, compared him to "Toqueville a hundred years

³⁰ Lewin's efforts to build a Psychological Institute in Jerusalem did not ultimately succeed, but he was later able to channel his impassioned Zionism through his work with the American Jewish Congress.

³¹ For a history of the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, which was established in 1917 and originally funded by the state and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, see Joan H. Cantor, *Psychology at Iowa: Centennial Essays* (Psychology Press, 1991); Hamilton Cravens, *Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America's Children* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Education Research* (University Of Chicago Press, 2002).

³² Donald MacKinnon quoted in Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 85.

earlier,” for he “looked at American life using his European experience as a continued and inescapable point of reference” as he tackled the most fundamental issues of social conflict, intergroup relations, and democratic leadership.³³ Increasingly, and especially after Lewin conducted groundbreaking research in the late 1930s, graduate students came to the University of Iowa specifically because they wanted to conduct experiments related to pressing social problems with Lewin and his team.

In 1938, Lewin embarked on a long-term series of experiments that came to define his career. Often referred to as the “Autocracy/Democracy” studies, the experiments (conducted with Ronald Lippitt and later with Ralph White) blazed a new trail in social psychology, even though they were conducted on a relatively small scale.³⁴ In the experiments, Lewin and his team set out to compare the effectiveness of different leadership styles through a series of creative experiments featuring young children and adult mediators acting in different styles: democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire. Their studies not only affirmed the superiority of democratic leadership above alternative methods, but also helped popularize “group dynamics” and “leadership training” as vital areas of study for psychologists in the mid-20th century. Though first presented as a study of different educational methods, the Autocracy/Democracy studies predictably emerged as ammunition in the nation’s ideological war against Totalitarianism, and also propelled some of the most important developments in industrial management of the 20th century.

³³ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 95.

³⁴ For an overall account of the studies, see Ralph K. White, *Autocracy and Democracy: An Experimental Inquiry* (New York: Harper, 1960).

By 1938 Lewin had moved away from his earlier interest in individuals' psychology and zealously embraced the *group* as the foundation for most human social processes.³⁵ He had grown particularly interested in the psychology of anti-Semitism and the perceptions of difference between groups of people. In 1936, he published a paper comparing Germans and Americans in which he concluded that the two cultures were "psychologically opposite" in most ways. He cited German children's servility versus American children's independence, and the "habit of blind obedience" common to most Germans but lacking in the US.³⁶ Lewin had also grown interested in the particular psychological problems facing minority groups, and the ways in which group membership affected the status of the perpetrators and victims of discrimination.³⁷ Lewin saw a social landscape in which group membership determined the status, behavior, and attitudes of individuals. The engineering of social change, by extension, required a clear understanding of group mechanisms and interpersonal dynamics.

The Iowa Studies in Autocracy and Democracy began with a fortuitous encounter between Kurt Lewin and a young graduate Student named Ronald Lippitt. Lippitt arrived at the University of Iowa in 1937 after two pivotal encounters during his undergraduate education at Springfield College: He worked in his "very exciting" junior year with the famous child

³⁵ See Ronald Lippitt, "Kurt Lewin, 1890-1947: Adventures in the Exploration of Interdependence," *Sociometry* 10, no. 1 (February 1947): 87-97. Lippitt wrote, "In his first explorations of social psychology Kurt Lewin focused his attention upon the individual in his social environment. He explored some of the dynamics of the child as a family member an adolescent as the marginal group member, and as a minority group member. These explorations again pushed him on to a new focus, the group as a dynamic whole in a larger field of other social groups." 89.

³⁶ Kurt Lewin, "Some Social Psychological Differences between the United States and Germany," *Character and Personality*, no. 4 (1936): 265-293. The quote comes from Marrow's analysis of the book in *The Practical Theorist*. Note that Lewin's original article was not entirely celebratory of the so-called American psychology: Lewin noted that in spite of Americans' independence of thought, anti-Semitism persisted to a troubling extent.

³⁷ Kurt Lewin, "Psycho-Sociological Problems of a Minority Group," *Character and Personality* (1935): 175-187.

psychologist Jean Piaget³⁸ and in his senior year with a new professor named Harold Seashore, who had just completed his doctorate at the University of Iowa and would eventually serve as Vice President and founder of the Testing Division of the Psychological Corporation in New York City.³⁹ When Lippitt decided to scrap his previous career plans in journalism, Seashore helped arrange for him to earn a slot in the University of Iowa's graduate program in psychology.

Upon arriving in Iowa, Lippitt and the other graduate students received a list of potential Masters Thesis projects on which to work with the program's professors, and he was attracted to a project on "Groups and Influence Structures" listed next to Lewin's. What followed was a fruitful accident: Lippitt met with Lewin and proposed that they produce "a comparative study of different kinds of leadership on children's groups," and Lewin quickly approved, encouraging Lippitt to write a proposal for an experiment comparing autocratic and democratic methods of leadership. Lippitt learned later that what Lewin "really meant" on the original project list was "some development of algebra-type analyses of group structure," but that Lippitt's "'gung-ho' enthusiasm for group work" won Lewin over, and he "never let me know that this wasn't quite what he had in mind." The confusion helped propel Lewin from the field of individual child

³⁸ "History Revisited: Interviews with Prominent Social Psychologists: an Interview with Ron Lippitt conducted by Keith E. Campbell and Thomas T. Jackson of Fort Hays State University on Sept 15, 1980 in Ann Arbor in his home," folder "Biographical/Personal –Memorial Services and Remembrances, 1985," box 1, Ronald Lippitt papers, Bentley Library.

³⁹ The Psychological Corporation will be discussed in length in Chapter 2. It is worth noting that Harold Seashore came from a family deeply steeped in the psychological profession, particularly in the areas addressed in this dissertation. Harold's younger brother, Stanley, helped found the Organizational Psychology Program at the University of Michigan and later served as the Associate Director of the University's Institute for Social Research (see Chapter 5). While working with the Institute, Stanley Seashore conducted research on Alfred Marrow's Harwood Corporation, (discussed above), and later cowrote a book with Marrow about their findings: *Management by Participation*. Harold and Stanley had a cousin named Charles Seashore who studied with Ronald Lippitt and later directed the National Training Laboratories in the 1980s.

psychology, upon which he had focused in the early 1930s, into the growing field of social psychology.⁴⁰

The two men embarked on the experiment in 1938, and were joined in the second stage of their studies by Ralph White.⁴¹ It is worth noting White's recollection of the research team's dynamic:

Ron was unequivocally the Number One person in the triad. It was his experiment from the beginning. If Kurt were here, I think he would be the first to grant that that was true ... It grew out of Ron's highly practical approach, going back to his Springfield College days when the big subject of discussion was how to handle a bunch of kids. And Kurt was simply delighted by the directness of Ron's experimental approach to the practical side of group leadership.⁴²

While Lippitt led the day-to-day activities of the first phase of the Autocracy/Democracy experiments, Lewin "look[ed] on benevolently" and filled a "very democratic" role without taking a firm lead.⁴³

The goal of the first of the Autocracy/Democracy studies, conducted in 1938, was striking in its simplicity: to "develop ... techniques to investigate 'democracy' and 'autocracy' in group atmospheres."⁴⁴ Lewin and Lippitt believed that in order to investigate socio-

⁴⁰ A note on social psychology: In the Campbell/Jackson interview with Lippitt, the interviewers asked Lippitt if he would consider himself more a sociologist or psychologist. He replied, "I guess I never felt a pull, as I think some of my colleagues have. I felt that social psychology in its broadest terms was both sociology and psychology and also applied anthropology, and even some aspects of education." See "History Revisited: Interviews with Prominent Social Psychologists."

⁴¹ All remembrances in this paragraph come from "History Revisited: Interviews with Prominent Social Psychologists."

⁴² Ralph White's reflections on "Working with Ron and Kurt Lewin on Autocracy and Democracy, 1937-39" (Source unclear) – typed by Ralph White, November 16, 1986, folder "Biographical/Personal –Memorial Services and Remembrances," box 1, Lippitt Papers, Bentley Library..

⁴³ Ralph White's reflections, "Working with Ron and Kurt Lewin on Autocracy and Democracy, 1937-39."

⁴⁴ Kurt Lewin and Ronald Lippitt, "An Experimental Approach to the Study of Democracy and Autocracy: A Preliminary Note," *Sociometry* 1, no. 3 / 4 (Jan – Apr 1938), 292. For further descriptions of the Autocracy/Democracy studies, see Lippitt and White; *Autocracy and Democracy*; Lewin and Lippitt, "An Experimental Study of Authoritarian and Group Atmospheres" in *Studies in Topological and Vector Psychology, University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare*, 1940, 1, no. 16; Kurt Lewin and Ronald Lippitt, "An Experimental

psychological problems, they needed to “create a setup where group life might be studied under rather free but well defined conditions.” So instead of observing subjects in a pre-existing social climate—a club, school, or factory—they set out to build their own tightly controlled environment. Lippitt and Lewin selected a small number of 11-yr old children (girls and boys, unlike the later boy-only studies) from the fifth and sixth grade of the local University Elementary School. The researchers divided the children into two groups of five children each, both with the same leader (Lippitt), and the groups went on to meet on twelve different occasions, in half-hour meetings twice a week. In dividing the children into groups, the researchers avoided choosing pre-established cliques—preferring groups of children who had little relation to one another.

The children, all volunteers, were told in a preliminary meeting that they were going to meet after school to make masks for a theater production, and that instead of making the masks as individuals, they would construct one mask at a time as a group. Lippitt led both groups through their six weeks of meetings. In one group, Lippitt played an “autocratic” role. He issued orders regarding when and with whom to work and gave them no say in their creative process. While the children worked, he stayed aloof and refrained from participating. While trying to maintain a somewhat “impersonal” tone in both groups (so as to limit variables in the study), he nonetheless dominated the group and criticized the children’s work freely. In the second group, Lippitt played a “democratic” role. He met with the children before starting their mask-making to develop longterm goals and scheme the best methods for reaching them. He

Approach to the Study of Democracy and Autocracy: A Preliminary Note,” *Sociometry*, Vol 1, No. 3 / 4 (Jan – Apr 1938): 292-300; Lewin, Lippitt and White, “Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created ‘Social Climates,’” *Journal of Social Psychology* 10: 271-299.

⁴⁴ Lewin and Lippitt, “An Experimental Study of Authoritarian and Group Atmospheres.”

explained all steps of the mask-building process (steps including the use of clay molds, papier mache, etc.) and gave the children options to choose from as they developed their techniques. He allowed them to choose their own work teams and decide their own division of tasks, and he “attempted to be a group member in spirit”—offering generous praise to the group as a whole, or constructive criticism when necessary.⁴⁵

As the children in the different groups made their masks, four observers took continuous notes on their behavior. They noted (in both qualitative and quantitative forms) the groups’ changing structures and subgroupings; the “ascendant” and “submissive” responses of participants; running comments from the children; and minute-to-minute “shifts of interest.” The observers paid attention, too, to the volume and tone of social interactions between the children and their responses to Lippitt – particularly their levels of hostility, resistance, cooperation, dependence, competition, and their “I-centeredness’ (ego-centrism) versus ‘we-centeredness’ (group spirit).”⁴⁶ The goal was not to isolate the behavior of individual children, but to trace the dynamics of the group as a whole. Observers looked to detect both levels of the groups’ productivity and the tone of interactions between the children and their leader. When the experiment was complete, Lewin and Lippitt tabulated these results in conjunction with Lippitt’s own post-meeting observations.

Lippitt and Lewin published the results of this first study both in *Sociometry* and as Lippitt’s Master’s thesis.⁴⁷ The experiment had, the psychologists argued, produced clear results. Although the groups exhibited similar behaviors at the outset of the study, they quickly developed opposing sets of behavior and outcomes. In the autocratic group, the children

⁴⁵ Lewin and Lippitt, “An Experimental Study of Authoritarian and Group Atmospheres,” 297.

⁴⁶ Lewin and Lippitt, “An Experimental Study of Authoritarian and Group Atmospheres,” 295.

⁴⁷ For citations, see above.

exhibited a “higher state of tension,” a less stable group structure, and less submissiveness. They engaged in more interactions than the democratic group, yet produced careless and sometimes unfinished work. The children tended to be productive in the presence of their leader, but became disorganized the instant their leader was not present. Lewin and Lippitt were particularly interested in the social dynamics of the group under the autocratic leader, in which the children never developed a strong group identity. Even worse, observers noted almost thirty times as much hostility in the autocratic group than in the democratic one, and cited a disturbing pattern: Over the course of twelve meetings, the autocratic leader’s subjects had developed two “scapegoats.” “[T]he group combined its aggression against one individual” and in both cases, the scapegoat quit the experiment entirely.⁴⁸

Analyses of the democratic group’s behavior stood in striking contrast to those results. In the democratic group, the children both asked for and offered much higher levels of cooperation and demonstrated more constructive tendencies in general. They were able to develop clear group goals and “give and take of objective criticism without personal involvement,” which resulted in superior products. The social structure of this group was far more stable than in the autocratic group. Not only did the democratic children never choose scapegoats for their aggression, but they seemed to lack aggressive tendencies in general. They demonstrated “many more occurrences of praise and expressions of friendliness” within their generally more unified group structure. Lewin and Lippitt heralded their achievement as a “greater feeling of “we’ness” than of “I-ness.”

Soon after the first Autocracy/Democracy study was conducted in 1938, Ralph White arrived at Iowa as a General Education Board postdoctoral fellow. He was interested in political science but drawn to the same brand of experimental research as Lippitt and Lewin, so the three

⁴⁸ See Lewin and Lippitt, “An Experimental Study of Authoritarian and Group Atmospheres,” 295-6.

men planned a broader experiment on autocracy and democracy. This time, they limited their experiment to 11-year-old boys (as opposed to a coed sample), whom they assembled in a greater number in four clubs (instead of two), to be led by both White and Lippitt. Club activities would include mask-making as before, with the addition of airplane model construction, painting, and soap carving.⁴⁹ In the interest of controlling the experiment more closely than they had the first time around, the researchers made sure that each boy had experience in both autocratic and democratic groups, and observers carefully monitored the social transitions from one to the other. As a result, Lippitt, Lewin, and White emerged from these studies with six times more evidence than they had gathered in the first.

Though originally designed as a further study of the differences between autocratic and democratic leadership, the project accidentally evolved into something broader, thanks to White's own interpretation of the term "democratic." Lippitt remembered later that Ralph, playing the role of democratic leader,

‘behaved in a way that was quite different from the other democratic-leader roles as we had defined them. He was obviously getting quite a different effect in terms of responses from the children. Kurt’s observation of this, as he stood behind the burlap wall and operated the movie camera, led to an excited gleam in his eye as he perceived a basic genotypic difference between the democratic pattern and what we labeled the laissez-faire pattern of leadership. So instead of correcting Ralph’s style we moved it more toward a pure case of laissez-faire pattern and planned for other leaders to use the same role to get a more complete analysis of the dynamics of the difference.’⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Catherine Mackenzie, "Democracy Wins," *New York Times*, December 15, 1940, 119.

⁵⁰ Lippitt quoted in Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 124.

Thus the new incarnation of the Autocracy/Democracy study was born, with the addition of “laissez-faire” leadership style—often referred to as “anarchic” in the popular press.⁵¹ The laissez-faire leader, enacted by either Lippitt or White, offered his club members almost no direction or mediation. While not averse to group participation, he did nothing to encourage it.

The findings of the Lewin/Lippitt/White leadership studies reinforced the conclusions of the first. As in the previous study, the researchers found the autocratic subjects more prone to hostility, restlessness, aggression, and scapegoating than the members of the other two groups. The children damaged materials and demanded attention for negative behaviors. They expressed less “individual originality” in the work process.⁵² Tellingly, the four boys who dropped out of the study altogether dropped out of an autocratic group.

The boys in the laissez-faire group demonstrated less hostility and aggression than their peers under autocratic leadership, but the group was by no means functional. The boys in this group accomplished less than their peers in either of the other two groups, with far less “work-centered behavior and discussion,” and a great deal of confusion about goals and tasks. The boys who transferred into this group from an authoritarian group became “frightened and disturbed,” and some of the boys resorted to scapegoating just as the autocratic boys had. Lewin, Lippitt, and White surmised that the “frustration brought on by too little leadership” and “vague feelings of inadequacy” led some of the boys to ridicule others.⁵³ If forced to choose between laissez-faire and autocracy, seven out ten children chose the former over the “hard discipline” of the

⁵¹ See Associated Press, “Child Democracy Excels in Test,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1938, 19; “Anarchy and Autocracy Rejected in Pupils’ Test,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1938, 22; “School Governments Show Autocracies Breed Hate,” *The Science News-Letter* 33, no. 22 (May 28, 1938), 343-4.

⁵² Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 126.

⁵³ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 126.

latter,⁵⁴ but the boys' preference for democracy rang clear. At the end of the study, 19 of the 20 boys ranked democratic leadership above the other two modes.

A New York *Times* article published in 1940 gave readers a window into the interactions within these groups. Catherine Mackenzie, who reported repeatedly on the Autocracy/Democracy studies for the *Times*, described a democratic leader who offered his group a range of options for the completion of a given task: “I know several ways you could fix that,” he suggested “—you could grease it with Vaseline, or use some talcum powder, or they use liquid soap sometimes. Maybe there are other ways too.” After group discussion of these options, he encouraged the children to select a method by vote.⁵⁵ The children expressed universal approval of his methods: “He was a good sport, worked along with us and thinks of things just like we do”; “He never did try to be the boss, but we always had plenty to do”; “Just the right combination—nothing I didn’t like about him.” Of the autocratic leader, on the other hand, the children had few positive things to say. One called him “too strict.” Another complained, “We just had to do things; he wanted us to get them done in a hurry.”⁵⁶ Mackenzie noted the dramatic change in group dynamics when the members of a democratic group transferred to an autocratic leader and the “friendly, open and cooperative group, full of life, came within a short half hour a rather apathetic-looking gathering without initiative.”

Having conducted their series of studies on 11-year-old children, the question remained for Lewin, Lippitt and White: What conclusions, if any, could be drawn from the studies about society or the world in general? In 1938, White resisted extending the studies into the realm of metaphor. The goal of the studies, he explained in the New York *Times*, was “not to test

⁵⁴ Mackenzie, “Democracy Wins,” 119.

⁵⁵ Mackenzie, “Democracy Wins,” 119.

⁵⁶ Mackenzie, “Democracy Wins,” 119.

dictatorships, but to find the best way to educate children.”⁵⁷ In a period of active debate about the virtues of Progressive education—a movement that celebrated children’s participation and creativity in the educational process—the Autocracy/Democracy could be modestly interpreted as confirmation that students perform best when directly engaged in learning.⁵⁸ The findings of the studies did indeed circulate among members of the Progressive education community. At a roundtable discussion on “Bringing Democracy to Our Schools” at a meeting of the Institute of the Ethical Culture Schools in New York City, one presenter cited the Iowa experiments as evidence that “the democratic process provides the best way to educate children.” Democracy could, the panelist suggested, be both a method (through pedagogy) and an outcome (as a learned “way of life”) of the effective education of young people in schools.⁵⁹ The next year, Dr. Goodwin Watson of Columbia University’s Teachers College endorsed the findings of the Iowa studies to a sea of listeners at the opening session of the Child Study Association conference.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Associated Press, “Child Democracy Excels in Test,” *New York Times* September 10, 1938, 19.

⁵⁸ Lewin never met Dewey, but the intellectual connections between Lewin’s intergroup studies and Dewey’s progressive education ideas were clear. (It is worth noting that the National Training Laboratory for Group Development, the experiential training institute that Lewin helped establish immediately before his death, had deep roots in the adult education movement was funded in part by the National Education Association upon its establishment in 1947.) For more on the progressive education movement, see John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Textbook Series (New York: Macmillan, 1922); John Dewey, *Experience & Nature*, 2nd ed., The Paul Carus Lectures series 1 (Chicago, IL: Open Court Pub. Co, 1929); Robert B Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁵⁹ Catherine Mackenzie, “Children and Parents” (column), *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1939, 43. Mackenzie starts this column with a discussion of the 60th anniversary meeting of the Institute of the Ethical Culture Schools in NYC, which examined this issue in a roundtable discussion devoted to “Bringing Democracy to our Schools.” She writes of the meeting: “Not to interfere with a boy when he is drawing an elephant and not to bother a girl when she is making mudpies are elementary lessons in tolerance for young children. Now educators wonder whether a ‘live and let live’ attitude goes far enough in a world far from safe enough for democracy.” At the meeting of the Ethical Culture Schools, she explains, participants “raised the question whether our emphasis on ‘rights’ and ‘freedom’ in upbringing have overshadowed the importance of mutual cooperation and responsibility.”

⁶⁰ “Pupils Most Amenable to Democratic Way, Test of School Methods of Control Reveals,” *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1940, 19.

The Autocracy/Democracy studies quickly took on far greater significance within society at large. Almost immediately after the publication of their results, commentators were citing the studies as confirmation of the American political system and renunciation of autocratic dictatorships. In the popular press, even the titles of articles about the experiments suggested the scope of their conclusions: “School Governments Show Autocracies Breed Hate,” advertised one, while another announced, “Democracy Wins.” In article after article, authors insisted that the subject of the studies had been citizenship, not learning styles. One reporter referred to the creation of “mini-governments” in the study (though “mini-governments” were nowhere to be seen in the craft activities) and called children “the citizens” in an experiment to discover “just what effect government has on the individual.”⁶¹ The scapegoats of the study were “refugees” from an autocratic system whose “citizens...cannot work together.”⁶² Mackenzie of the *New York Times* situated the Iowa studies in the context of ideological warfare. “It is a proud boast of autocracy that it is efficient,” she wrote, because “It makes the trains run on time,” and “[n]ow the question of whether it is more efficient than democracy is being tested on a world scale by contending armies.” She argued that the Iowa studies clearly contributed ammunition to the anti-autocracy cause. Not only did autocratic governments fail to inspire cooperation or harmony among their citizens, but they were less efficient as well.⁶³ Lewin, Lippitt, and White had furnished precisely the right research for their ideological moment, in spite of their more limited stated intentions.

For Kurt Lewin, the studies had grand implications. He later wrote of the experiments:

⁶¹ “School Governments Show Autocracies Breed Hate,” 243-4.

⁶² “School Governments Show Autocracies Breed Hate,” 243-4.

⁶³ Mackenzie, “Democracy Wins,” 119.

‘On the whole... I think that there is ample proof that the difference in behavior in autocratic and democratic situations is not a result of differences in the individuals. There have been few experiences for me as impressive as seeing the expression on children’s faces during the first day under an autocratic leader. The group that had formerly been friendly, open, cooperative, and full of life, became within a short half-hour a rather apathetic-looking gathering without initiative. The change from autocracy to democracy seemed to take somewhat more time than from democracy to autocracy. Autocracy is imposed on the individual. Democracy he has to learn!’⁶⁴

From the experiment, he extrapolated the idea that genuinely Democratic leaders promoted cohesion, cooperation, “we-feelings,” and productivity at the same time. In enabling participation, they delivered what Lewin had celebrated in his critique of Taylor’s scientific management: Higher levels of productivity and work quality along with the sustained “ego satisfaction” of all involved.⁶⁵

No matter how persuasive the results of the Autocracy/Democracy study, the research lacked the quality of real-world application that Lewin so often sought in his studies. So democratic leaders were more effective than autocratic ones. What to do with this knowledge?

⁶⁵ It is worth noting an alternative point of view expressed in Henry S. Kariel, “Democracy Unlimited: Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 3 (November 1, 1956): 280–289. In this article, Kariel turns Lewin’s so-called embrace of democracy on its head, highlighting the difference between Lewin’s interwar brand of democracy and a postwar, distinctly liberal brand of democracy. Kariel resents Lewin’s privileging of the group over the individual and critiques his conception that the best group is the cohesive group in which everyone is one board and follows the leader without being forced. Kariel writes that Lewin was dangerously consumed with this emphasis on the power of the group and the ideal of interdependence and the common good, and the cherishing of belongingness. (Jeffrey Sklansky has argued that the cultivation of “interdependence” was a fundamental mission of early 20th century social psychology, which displaced economic conceptions of selfhood with social ones. See Jeffrey P Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002].) In his discussion of the Autocracy/Democracy experiments, Kariel charges that the so-called “democratic” group promoted conformity by aligning the boys in service of a common cause and a “homogenous outlook.” In contrast, Kariel celebrated conflict and the empowerment of individuals. This debate about the nature of the so-called democratic personality would become a staple of intellectual and social-scientific discourse throughout the mid-20th century.

Where was the action research for which Lewin the “scientist-citizen”⁶⁶ was becoming known? Fortuitously, at just the time that Lewin oversaw the Autocracy/Democracy experiments at the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, he received an opportunity to test principles of democratic participation in a real-world context: one of Alfred Marrow’s pajama factories. It was at Marrow’s Harwood Corporation that Lewin first connected his theoretical revisions of Taylorism, the findings of the Autocracy-Democracy studies, and new principles of industrial management. At Harwood, Lewin and his disciples launched an extensive action research program that extended democratic principles to the shop floor. His Harwood work ultimately had profound implications for the theory and practice of participatory management.

Lewin had first met Alfred Marrow in 1934 when Marrow, then a young PhD student at New York University, sought Lewin’s advice on his psychology dissertation about “Goal Tensions.” Lewin, then in his second year at the Home Economics Department of Cornell University, invited Marrow to visit his home in Ithaca and stay overnight to discuss ideas. The two men clicked and stayed in touch over coming years as Marrow completed his doctorate and Lewin moved to Iowa. By 1939 they were close friends, and Marrow found himself in a predicament. He was at this point dividing his time between teaching in New York (where he had also become involved with the American Jewish Congress) and overseeing his family’s business, the Harwood Manufacturing Company (later renamed the Weldon company). Harwood, a pajama company, had been founded by Marrow’s grandfather. When his father died in 1940, Marrow became president.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Lippitt refers to Lewin as a “scientist-citizen” in his obituary of the psychologist: Lippitt, “Kurt Lewin, 1890-1947. Adventures in the Exploration of Interdependence.”

⁶⁷ For background on Marrow, see Burnes, “Kurt Lewin and the Harwood Studies: The Foundations of OD.”

By the late 1930s, it had become clear that Harwood's labor relations were troubled. Marrow approached Lewin to discuss the problems at one plant in particular, in Marion, Virginia. This rural plant, staffed almost entirely by young women from the surrounding mountain region⁶⁸, was suffering from high levels of turnover and absenteeism. Workers' output there was significantly lower than at Harwood's other plants. After the customary twelve weeks of training, workers in Marion were producing only about half as much as their peers in the North.⁶⁹ Marrow noticed particular problems surrounding the plant's attempts at modernization of machinery. The production workers balked at the prospect of changing machines or learning new skills, and plant supervisors struggled to keep productivity rates high in the face of change. Marrow struggled to make sense of his 300 workers' inefficiency. While it was true that the women rarely arrived to Harwood with any factory experience, he found them to be generally "eager to work," and couldn't account for the profound difference between their productivity and that in "the industrialized areas of the north."⁷⁰ Marrow asked Lewin if he would visit the plant in rural Virginia, to meet with workers and supervisors and assess the plant's problems with an objective eye.

Lewin made his first trip to the Marion plant in 1939, beginning a collaborative relationship with the company that would last until his death in 1947. Upon arriving, he met with a plant manager who explained Marion's problems in his own terms. On the one hand, he said, the workers' wages were higher than those they had been earning before as waitresses or

⁶⁸ The average worker at the Marion plant was a 23-year-old woman with eight years of education. The men who worked at the plant were largely technicians or involved in "heavy work, such as shipping." See draft of "Overcoming Resistance to Change" report, folder "1: Harwood Studies," Box M1940, Alfred Marrow papers, AHAP.

⁶⁹ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 141. Chapter 14 of Marrow's biography of Lewin details the program of "action research" at Marion and in Harwood in general.

⁷⁰ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 141.

domestics, and he observed that the women “felt good about their jobs.”⁷¹ Yet turnover remained high, and the plant suffered heavy losses. When supervisors put pressure on the workers, turnover increased. When management offered different systems of rewards for production or attendance, they were greeted by only small improvements if any.⁷² In the late 1930s, such labor predicaments were the norm, yet Harwood’s managers struggled to reconcile the differences between their plant’s productivity and others in the corporation.

During Lewin’s visit to the Marion plant, he met with managers and workers and observed the production process on the floor. He emerged with a clear diagnosis of Marion’s problems: The production goals were too high. Harwood’s quotas were, in fact “impossible to attain,” and were so unrealistic that they lacked a “social reality,” so workers stopped putting pressure on themselves to achieve them.⁷³ Lewin made a series of recommendations for turning things around. First, he suggested, supervisors needed to stop putting pressure on individual employees; they needed to deal with workers as members as small groups instead. Second, management needed to find ways to “give the group the feeling that the standard was realistic and could be reached.”⁷⁴ Management, guided by Lewin’s suggestions, instituted a system of more realistic goals and “sub-goals” designed to give workers a sense of satisfaction as they

⁷¹ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 142.

⁷² A typical example of a reward is outlined in a January 12, 1944 memo from the Marion Plant in VA: The company announced that any girl who maintained perfect attendance for six weeks could “win an attractive white smock.” It goes on to explain, “Every worker at Harwood is important! Not a single garment can be shipped until every operation is completed. YOUR job is vitally important and until it is done the work of many others is of no use. So the Company is offering this award in recognition of the fact that YOU are needed here all day and every day.” See Memo from Harwood Corporation to Employees of the Marion Plant, 12 January 1944, folder “6: Harwood Studies Correspondence,” box M1948, Marrow Papers, AHAP.

⁷³ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 142.

⁷⁴ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 142.

strode toward production quotas.⁷⁵ They witnessed some improvements, but not enough to make their plant competitive. Harwood's next step, at Lewin's recommendation, was to start hiring more experienced and skilled operators from communities outside of Marion, and to integrate them with the plant's less experienced workers. Because these new workers made quotas look feasible, output slowly improved.

Marrow asked Lewin if he would be willing to visit the plant over coming years. The German psychologist had, Marrow later reflected, become "popular with production workers and supervisors alike," and had "won their confidence by his warmth, his understanding of their problems, and his good humor."⁷⁶ In the eight ensuing years, Lewin sometimes had closer contact with the employees than Marrow himself, because Marrow was based at the company's main office in New York City and maintained contact largely via letter and telephone.

From 1939-1947, Lewin launched the first period of what officially became known as the "Harwood Studies": an extended series of "action research" projects that addressed a wide range of industrial problems and involved a growing cast of social psychologists. Management historian Bernard Burnes has suggested that for Lewin, Harwood became the "main vehicle" for the application of his research to the "real world." His consulting work there became "a logical extension of earlier work he had conducted with Lippitt and White," for it allowed him to study the impact of different modes of leadership among controlled work groups. "In a world where autocratic management was the norm," Burnes has explained, Lewin introduced a distinctly

⁷⁵ According to a later talk by Marrow, the new multi-pronged "goals" system reduced turnover by 50% the following year. See Alfred Marrow's talk "Effective Understanding of Employee Thinking and Psychology" delivered at the Industrial Management Institute Seminar #8, May 10-11, 1951 at the Industrial Management Institute at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, folder "14: Training Sessions," box M1948, Marrow papers, AHAP.

⁷⁶ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 143.

participative brand of management and group decision-making that “was not only a breath of fresh air, but it also brought impressive results.”⁷⁷

This is not to say that change at Harwood came about easily. Lewin visited the Marion plant in 1944, when Harwood was manufacturing both civilian and military supplies, and found that many of the difficulties he had first observed in 1939 persisted, reporting to Marrow that “the situation at the factory as a whole seems quite difficult.”⁷⁸ He noted several primary symptoms of distress: girls were still quitting in disproportionately high numbers; efficiency had dropped substantially and, as a result; and the cost of each unit produced had risen from \$.85 per work hour to \$1.01.⁷⁹ Once again, Lewin set out to locate the root of the low production and low morale. This time, he found that both sank when Harwood’s employees were forced to transition from one machine or garment to another; that as methods of production changed, workers became discouraged and either quit or slow down. He also learned that workers could not earn overtime pay unless they produced a certain number of garments in a given day, and the decline in available overtime hours felt to workers like punishment.

Lewin met with the plant’s team captains (discussed below), who observed the “feeling of failure” in their ranks. They described one common sentiment expressed by their workers: “I

⁷⁷ Burnes 258.

⁷⁸ Kurt Lewin, report entitled “Observation about the Present State of the Plant at Marion and Some Suggestions,” 12 February 1944, folder “16: Executive Management Seminar,” box M1948, Marrow papers, AHAP. For context of Lewin’s visit, see folder “16: Harwood Mfg. Corporation Papers,” box M1940, Marrow Papers, AHAP. This folder contains a collection of memos from the Supervisor Meetings of Harwood Management, from January and February 1944, all of which reveal the fretting that overtook Harwood’s management in this period. The memos present statistics similar to Lewin’s about the sharp decline in productivity at the plant and present a range of possible actions: The offering of free smocks to employees who work six consecutive weeks without absence (noted above) and the greater responsibility of supervisors to serve in the capacity of managers and take stronger hands in discipline. This latter responsibility became a major focus of the leadership training Jack French conducted with the company the following year.

⁷⁹ Lewin wrote in “Observations about the Present State of the Plant at Marion and Some Suggestions” that total production was 130,000 units per month in September, October, November, and December – but had dropped to 119,000 units in January.

can't make the units....Therefore, I can't get overtime.' Therefore, '[I] quit.'"⁸⁰ Lewin immediately proposed the loosening of overtime restrictions, which would cost Harwood more in terms of overtime pay, but less in terms of turnover and training costs. He also suggested that managers be candid with their workers about impending production changes, so as to not raise workers' hopes for an unrealistically smooth transition, and that they set more realistic quotas for productivity. Finally, Lewin proposed the establishment of regular meetings between workers and management, so that line workers could keep higher-ups apprised of their challenges and dissatisfactions.⁸¹

As Lewin continued his work with Harwood in the late 1930s and 1940s, he urged Marrow to hire two of his Iowa students, Alex Bavelas and Jack French, to conduct more regular studies of productivity and morale at Harwood. The studies conducted by these two men, who were joined by Lester Coch in the period immediately preceding Lewin's death, became legendary in the field of participative management. Under the guidance of Lewin and with the support of the unusually progressive Marrow,⁸² Bavelas and French approached Harwood as a testing ground for multiple manifestations of Lewin's democratic management philosophy –

¹Lewin, "Observation about the Present State of the Plant at Marion and Some Suggestions." Lewin presented statistics on the last nine quitters at the Marion Plant: Six quit because they disliked their job or wanted a different job; the rest quit for personal or family reasons. In Henry's department of 48 "girls," he explained, seven had recently quit, and of these all but one seemed to be related to the newly decreased availability of overtime.

⁸¹ Lewin offered some additional suggestions in his memo, "Observation about the Present State of the Plant at Marion and Some Suggestions": That Harwood establish a bonus plan for supervisors and give the title of "experienced operator" to workers with production rates of 50-60 (to increase their ego-satisfaction). He also recommended that the company start conducting more routine diagnostics: to 1) keep a "quitters' chart" that would explain people's reasons for quitting; and 2) give a monthly "morale questionnaire" to all workers and supervisors.

⁸² Burnes notes that some critics have commented that we should disregard, or at least understate, the lessons of the Harwood studies precisely because they took place in such an unusual context: in a company whose president was not only a social psychologist himself, but also a zealous advocate of democratic participation with particular openness to group experimentation. The researchers did not come "'cold' to the company," in other words, and "and the employees were predisposed to to respond well to the participative approach." Burnes cites Carleton S Bartlem and Edwin A Locke, "The Coch and French Study: A Critique and Reinterpretation," *Human Relations* 34, no. 7 (July 1, 1981): 555–566. Burnes himself does not find these criticisms to be particularly valid.

from “self-management” and group-decision making among workers to role-playing leadership training of supervisors. All of their studies rested on the principle that modern factory labor would work best if companies discarded outmoded, authoritarian methods of scientific management.

As a result of this research, Harwood emerged as an emblem of effective corporate democracy, the real-life embodiment of Lippitt and White’s “democratic” play group, in which efficiency and harmony peacefully coexisted. Furthermore, the coalition of researchers cemented an increasing institutional circuitry that had started to develop among Group Dynamics advocates. As Burnes has written, “Harwood acted as a revolving door for people and ideas”: Bavelas traveled back and forth between Harwood and the University of Iowa, establishing a steady chain of communication between the organization and his colleagues, and French soon joined him in his itinerant endeavors.⁸³ Meanwhile, Marrow observed operations from his office in New York City while practicing as an academic and actively working to develop the intergroup relations division of the American Jewish Congress. By the end of the 1940s, these groups and individuals constituted a tangible community committed to the research of group dynamics.

Alex Bavelas arrived at Harwood in the late 1930s to become the company’s first onsite researcher, intent on studying the “human factors of management,” and particularly the role of small groups in an industrial setting. Bavelas’s studies involved most of the Marion plant’s 200 workers and almost all of the managers between 1940 and 1947.⁸⁴ In his first experiment, Bavelas began meeting informally several times a week with a group of “high-producing operators.” In group discussions, they explored the difficulties involved in increasing

⁸³ Burnes 227.

⁸⁴ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 143.

production, which led to a discussion of the different methods that different workers used to attain their goals and the challenges that blocked their progress. As the operators revealed roadblocks, management worked to fix them.

Next, Bavelas asked the group to vote on the issue of increasing their daily output. Surprisingly, they decided to lift the daily output from a ceiling of 75 units to 87 units, “a level never before attained.”⁸⁵ They aimed to reach that goal within five days, and when they succeeded, they raised the goal to 90 units. Having reached that goal, they maintained it for five months. Lewin, learning of the experiment with awestruck delight, concluded that Bavelas’s group had been successful because the very act of group decision-making had solidified their motivation and commitment to a task. Because the group had devised concrete goals and strategies, their meetings carried more weight than open-ended, non-goal-oriented discussion. Bavelas confirmed these findings in his next study on what he called “Self-management,” in which he offered a small group of workers the chance to plan their own hourly rates using what he called “pacing cards.” As long as they kept at or above a minimum quote, he explained, they could determine their own hourly and daily rates of production. The workers involved in this study soon increased their production from 67 units a day to 82, and then stabilized at that level.⁸⁶

Bavelas repeated a similar version of this experiment in 1943, when he appointed a committee of twenty “team captains” (nineteen of them women; one from each production line) from Harwood’s workforce to meet weekly as part of a labor-management committee. Harwood’s higher management resisted at first, fearing that the committee might “stir up

⁸⁵ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 144.

⁸⁶ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 144-145.

trouble” and bring them one-step closer to unionization.⁸⁷ They finally relented to the team captain system, but on the condition that the captains discuss only factory procedures—not “management prerogatives” like wages and hours. In the early meetings of the committee, the captains, having “no previous experience in democratic participation,” were mostly “passive” and quiet. As they gradually spoke up, they tackled a number of innocuous plant projects: They organized war bond drives; scheduled weekly prayer services to be conducted over the Harwood PA system; instituted a system of “employee choice of industrial music” to be played over Harwood’s speakers throughout the day; and lobbied for improved lunch room services.⁸⁸

Gradually, the team captains started participating more in meetings and expressing themselves freely; at the same time, they expressed a sense of greater “responsibility to their constituents.” As their confidence increased, management grew more confident in them, and began turning to them for input on a range of issues: Harwood’s absenteeism problem, discipline issues, and methods for improving the quality of their products. At the same time, workers on the shop floor learned to use their team captains to communicate their “desires and grievances” to management. “As in our political democracy,” a company memo explained, “such actions by the workers occurred most frequently where there were dissatisfactions.”

Harwood’s Democratic communication system worked. At one point, the workers submitted a petition for a 5-cent pay raise – the kind of situation that often “leads to months of negotiation if not strikes and lockouts” (see the fictional drama of *The Pajama Game*) – but management agreed to it. They agreed that the raise was “justified and desirable” and could be used as an incentive for more production. Management also agreed to increase in the minimum

⁸⁷Memorandum mislabeled “PACING CARDS, 1937-1938,” begins with first page, “Encouragement of Employee Participation at the Shop Level,” folder “12: Harwood Studies,” box M1940, Marrow papers, AHAP.

⁸⁸“Encouragement of Employee Participation,” 4.

daily pay after discussing the issue at length with team captains. By the end of the specified time of the experiment, the team captains' recommendations were "almost identical" to those put forth by management. The company's report on the experiment celebrated it as "the conscious effort of a group of psychologists to introduce democratic participation in the factory of Harwood."⁸⁹

With the arrival of social psychologist Jack French, whom one author has described as "a Lewinian's Lewinian,"⁹⁰ Harwood expanded its social psychology experiments to include the training of managers and supervisors, as opposed to focusing exclusively on shop floor. French, inspired by the Autocracy/Democracy Studies, began to focus in the early 1940s on methods of democratic leadership training. He was particularly interested in the liminal role of supervisors (also known as "foremen") at Harwood and elsewhere. Supervisors lacked both the authority of managers and the power of workers to determine production rates; they were, in many ways, the most powerless members of the corporate hierarchy, often viewed as management by workers and as workers by management. After Harwood's troubling production and turnover difficulties in early 1944, French devised a program of leadership training for all levels of supervision. It would include role-playing, "sociodrama,"⁹¹ problem solving, and other "action techniques," with an emphasis on experiential learning as opposed of lectures or discussions of theory.⁹² Harwood issued a Supervisor's Memorandum in December 1945 explaining that French's

⁸⁹"Encouragement of Employee Participation," 1.

⁹⁰ James S. House, "John R. P. French, Jr.: A Lewinian's Lewinian," *Journal of Social Issues* 49, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 221-226.

⁹¹ "Sociodrama" was a term coined by psychologist Jacob Moreno for his famous role-playing techniques. See Jacob L Moreno, *Psychodrama*, 3d. ed., with new introduction., Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy Monographs no. 32, 43 (Beacon, New York: Beacon House, inc, 1959). Moreno would argue in the early 1950s that Lewin's students had used his techniques heavily in the field of Group Dynamics without ever giving him proper credit. See JL Moreno, "How Kurt Lewin's 'Research Center for Group Dynamics' Started," *Sociometry* 16, no 1 (Feb 1953): 101-104.

⁹² Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 146.

training would help supervisors deal with the effects of “girls failing to make their units,” and that one of the primary emphases would be helping supervisors motivate and discipline their underlings.⁹³

French went on to conduct six role-playing sessions at Marrow’s plant in 1944 and 1945, and soon thereafter published an article in which he outlined the “promising results” of his endeavor.⁹⁴ (Marrow himself later referred to role-playing as “one of the more successful techniques used to elicit participation.”⁹⁵) French’s first role-playing exercise, in December 1944, involved four Harwood supervisors: Roy Blanchett, Frances Williams, Viola Sawyers, and Myrtle Hopkins.⁹⁶ French opened the session by explaining that it was intended as a clinic—not a class or lecture—to which supervisors could bring problems, and urged them to begin by making lists of the most pressing problems they encountered on the job. Reading the lists aloud, it became clear that they shared a preoccupation with one problem in particular: the tendency of the “girls” they oversaw to talk too much and too loudly while on the job (“That’s pretty much our biggest problem,” affirmed Frances Williams).⁹⁷ French devised a role-playing

⁹³ Alfred Marrow, “Report for Christmas 1944,” folder “16: Harwood Mfg. Corporation Papers,” box M1940, Marrow papers, AHAP. Marrow later reflected: “The overall purpose of the leadership-training experiment was to equip the supervisors with more effective methods of winning cooperation, building trust, improving morale, and handling the disciplinary problems of their subordinates. Training these supervisors for practices of self-examination, feedback, openness, confidence building, and group problem solving—all new in industry. The success of the experiment at Harwood encouraged French to employ many of the same techniques at the first session of the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine in 1947. Since then the leadership training methods begun in industry have become integral parts of sensitivity training programs.” 146.

⁹⁴ John R.P. French, “Role-Playing as a Method of Training Foremen,” *Sociometry* 8, no. 3/4, *Group Psychotherapy: A Symposium* (August-November 1945):172-187. Note that the transcripts of all six sessions can be found in Folder “14: Training Sessions,” box M1948, Marrow papers, AHAP.

⁹⁵ Alfred Marrow’s talk “Effective Understanding of Employee Thinking and Psychology” delivered at the Industrial Management Institute Seminar #8, May 10-11, 1951 at the Industrial Management Institute at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, folder “14: Training Sessions,” box M1948, Marrow papers, AHAP.

⁹⁶ “Report on Training Sessions: December 7, 1944,” folder “14: Training Sessions,” box M1948, Marrow Papers, AHAP.

⁹⁷ “Report on Training Sessions,” 2.

exercise in which two of the supervisors pretended to be workers talking on the job, while another supervisor walked up to them and tried to quiet them. The supervisors approached the task awkwardly at first (Roy: “Well, Viola, if we’ve got to talk about something, we might as well talk about this idea. What do you think of it, Viola?” French: “No, that’s not it. Girls wouldn’t talk about that...Come on, be girls. Go ahead and talk about what you did last night.”) But soon enough, they’d fallen into the rhythms of shop floor conversation and cathartically enacted some realistic confrontations:

Frances, acting as supervisor: [In a scolding tone of voice] You girls are making much too much noise.

Roy [acting as worker]: We’re just talking.

Frances: You’re not supposed to talk.

Viola: Why we’ve got to talk. You can’t live without talking.

Frances: You can’t talk. It bothers others. Now quit talking.

Viola: If I can’t talk, I’m going to kick somebody.

Frances: Okay. Suppose you go tell Mr. Green down in the office.

Viola: Ok, I will!

Roy: If you’re gonna talk that way, I quit!⁹⁸

After enacting multiple confrontations between supervisor and worker, which repeatedly escalated in both tone and the scale of both parties’ threats, French asked the participants, “Do the girls really talk back to you the way you did to Frances?” “Roy assured him, “They sure do!” and the other supervisors nodded in emphatic agreement.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ ”Report on Training Sessions,” 3-4.

⁹⁹ ”Report on Training Sessions,” 4.

The group then went on to discuss what they had witnessed in each other's performances. One supervisor concluded that she and her peers too often cited the authority of their manager, Mr. Green, instead of invoking their own clout, and that this tendency threatened to undermine their status. Another suggested that if supervisors leveled with workers and respectfully explained the rationale behind company policy, they wouldn't have to do so much scolding. Another suggested taking a sensitive approach to communication, citing a moment when a worker whom she asked to stop "yelling" had "flared up and got real mad. So I said that I hadn't talked hateful to her and there was no reason for her to talk hateful to me. She said, 'I'm sorry,' and after that was nice and quiet."¹⁰⁰

By the end of the first session, the supervisors had agreed both to continue management techniques in their small group, and to meet with their workers to calmly explain company policy. French pointed to these outcomes when he publicized the experiment in *Sociometry*. He explained that role-playing worked not just because it served as a forum for the discussion of organizational problems, but because it taught foremen social skills and helped them form a strong, supportive group of their own. Labeling it a form of "sensitivity training," French explained that "supervisors (even the women) are often insensitive to both the reactions of their workers and their own methods of leadership."¹⁰¹ Role-playing simultaneously offered opportunities for cathartic discussion, reflective self-analysis, and the planning of change.

Though Bavelas and French continued to conduct studies at Harwood throughout the 1940s¹⁰², no single experiment proved more significant than French and Coch's 1947 experiment

¹⁰⁰ "Report on Training Sessions," 8

¹⁰¹ French, "Role-Playing as a Method of Training Foremen," 184.

¹⁰² Marrow referred to another one of their significant experiments as "Changing a Stereotype": French was aware that businessmen often harbored stereotypes toward their workers. In the case of Harwood, there was a common attitude that "older" women workers (over the age of 30) did not perform machine jobs as well as younger workers.

in “Overcoming Resistance to Change.”¹⁰³ This experiment involved the most direct application of Lewin, Lippitt, and White’s studies to the context of a factory, offering its researchers the opportunity to watch autocratic and democratic leadership play out in an industrial context. (It also inspired the most heated critiques for years to come.¹⁰⁴) As noted above, the Harwood company struggled in the 1940s to maintain productivity as they modernized their production process. One plant manager explained:

‘Our product is pajamas. We have to make changes on our assembly line, whenever we put out a new model. That causes all sorts of labor trouble for us. Yet we can’t help ourselves, because the changes are imposed on us. We have to keep ahead of our competitors. As it is, we face each new season with dread; as soon as the assembly-line routine is changed, we have an immediate jump in resistance by workers: they produce less, to show their resentment; the absentee rate rises sharply; many of our best people quit. Can anything be done about it?’¹⁰⁵

But World War II led to a labor shortage and made it necessary to hire, or consider hiring, women over 30, and supervisors “vigorously resisted” this development. French started by presenting the supervisors with objective evidence that women over 30 could be just as effective at jobs as younger workers—but the supervisors held onto their stereotypes. He realized that these supervisors needed to “discover the facts for themselves.” He suggested that the company’s top staff members take on their own research project, to determine how much money the company was losing by retaining older women on the work force. Staff members conducted the research all by themselves, deciding on the best methods of research, methods of data collection, etc. The study lasted several months. The results “revealed surprisingly that the older women not only equaled but actually surpassed the younger women in work performance” and “learned new skills more rapidly;” they also showed that older women had lower rates of absenteeism and turnover. In conclusion, the older workers were as effective as younger workers if not more so. Yet staff researchers stuck with their old stereotypes in spite of this evidence. French and his company collaborators had to work on a large-scale reeducation process, which eventually worked—and the idea of hiring older women became accepted. See Alfred J Marrow et al., “Changing a Stereotype in Industry, Changing a Stereotype in Industry,” *Journal of Social Issues*, *Journal of Social Issues* 1, no. 3, (August 1, 1945): 33–37.

¹⁰³ Coch and French later published the results in Lester Coch and John R. P French, “Overcoming Resistance to Change,” *Human Relations* 1, no. 4 (November 1, 1948): 512–532. Also see “Employee Participation in a Program of Industrial Change” by Jack French, IC Cross, S Kirby, JR Nelson, P Smyth, folder “Group Dynamics 1957-58,” box 1, Dorwin Cartwright papers, Bentley Library; First draft of “Resistance to Change” (appears to be an early draft of French’s paper) in folder “1: Harwood Studies,” box M1948, Marrow papers, AHAP.

¹⁰⁴ See Eric B. Dent and Susan Galloway Goldberg, “Challenging ‘Resistance to Change,’” *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 35, no. 25 (March 1999): 25-41; Kilian M. Bennebroek Gravenhorst, “A Different View on Resistance to Change”, Paper delivered at the “Power Dynamics and Organizational Change IV” Symposium at the 11th EAWOP Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, 14-17 May 2003; Bartlem and Locke, “The Coch and French Study: A Critique and Reinterpretation”, *Human Relations* .”

¹⁰⁵ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 1.

According to one report, the turnover rate after a production change could be as high as 60%, even though the workers, who were protected at this point by a strong union, received “transfer bonuses” and incentive pay with no maximum daily rate.¹⁰⁶ “Attempts to reason with the highly emotional girls,” one report explained, “were futile.”¹⁰⁷ Coch and French set out to find out why the girls resisted and what might be done to earn their cooperation.

French and Coch began their experiments at the Marion plant, but later expanded the study to include all three Harwood plants (a total of approximately 800 employees).¹⁰⁸ In classic Lewinian fashion, they began by diagnosing the root of the problem at Harwood. Why did workers dislike change so much? They concluded that when workers moved onto new machines or new tasks, they lost the status and confidence that came with mastering their previous job. It was hard to feel like a “beginner” again, and learning a new skill could be exhausting. Furthermore, if forced to leave one work team for another, a worker lost the social support of her old team and “she might never feel at home again.”¹⁰⁹ One report explained, “Her complex of emotional attitudes—her fatigue, humiliation, loneliness and resentment—inhibit her from regaining her former skill” and feeling discouraged, she “no longer expects to excel.”¹¹⁰ One of the first steps suggested by Coch and French, therefore, was to transfer workers as groups instead of as individuals, so that their social bonds could remain intact.

The larger question remained, however, of how to “transform the attitude of the whole group” upon being transferred to a new task or machine. Coch and French insisted that intra-

¹⁰⁶ First draft of “Resistance to Change.”

¹⁰⁷ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 3.

¹⁰⁸ “Employee Participation in a Program of Industrial Change.”

¹⁰⁹ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 5.

¹¹⁰ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 6.

group relationships were far more important than any other dynamics at the plant – more important than workers’ relationships with management, and more important than their relationships with the remote leadership of the union. “What concerns the woman operator in the plant,” they insisted, “is the good opinion of the girls who work at the sewing machine alongside her, with whom she gossips and shares her lunch.”¹¹¹ The social scientists determined that in order to increase Harwood workers’ productivity, they needed to expand those workers’ sense of group membership to include the company as a whole. They needed to feel that they were “truly part of the company, that in some sense it was their enterprise,” and their managers needed to truly believe this to be the case as well.¹¹² Building on knowledge gained at Harwood after almost a decade of experiments, Coch and French concluded that “workers should participate in the definition of change to the maximum possible extent.”¹¹³ Soon after Lewin’s death of 1947, they decided to draw from methods used in the famous Autocracy/Democracy studies of the late 1930s.

French and Coch broke the Marion plant employees into three groups with three different levels of collaboration with management: total participation, some participation, and no participation. The “zero-participation” group members were given no say in the process of production change. As was standard practice, their supervisors simply called them into a conference room, informed them of changes to come, demonstrated new production techniques, and outlined the new piece-rate pay scale. The “some-participation” group had the opportunity to choose spokespeople to “sit down with management and discuss the task.” Workers were shown two garments, one manufactured at about half the price of the other, and told to discuss

¹¹¹ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 4.

¹¹² “Employee Participation in a Program of Industrial Change.”

¹¹³ “Employee Participation in a Program of Industrial Change.”

potential methods of lowering cost with their elected representatives. The third “total participation” group “did not deputize a committee...but instead participated as a whole” in conversations with management so that “every member of the group had a direct voice.”¹¹⁴ Together, supervisors and staff reviewed all aspects of the problem with equal respect given to all.

Coch and French immediately noticed stark contrasts between the performances of the groups. In the “zero-participation” group the workers demonstrated typical levels of hostility and resistance in the face of change. Their production went down by 35% the day after the meeting and stayed that low for a month. It came out later that there was a “deliberate pact” among the women to “get even” with management by slowing down their rates. Within two weeks, 9% had quit, and others filed grievances about their pay rate. The group was eventually disbanded because of its quarrelsome nature.

In the “some-participation” group, the women “responded enthusiastically,” offered practical suggestions to their representatives, and began to talk about Harwood in terms of “we.” They adjusted to their new routine in a “remarkably short period” and recovered a standard production rate in two weeks. By the end of 30 days, production was higher than it had been before. Supervisors observed “smiles and good-humored banter” among their workers. For the first month and a considerable time after, no one quit.

Group 3, the “total-participation” group, “jumped into the lead immediately.” In this group, “Practical suggestions came so freely, and were offered so eagerly, that the stenographer could hardly keep up” and the group reached “a consensus without difficulty.” The researchers

¹¹⁴ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 8.

later heralded these meetings as “a triumph of spontaneity” and goodwill.¹¹⁵ They were back to their previous pace of work within two days after the production change, and were soon operating at a rate 14% more productive than before the experiment began. Observers noted that they got along “excellently with foreman” and no one spoke of quitting. Without question, this was the most successful group. When a new job opened at the plant ten weeks later, the disgruntled zero-participation group was reunited and the psychologists tried offering them total participation in the design of a new production process. The results were excellent, with workers achieving “a new and much higher level of production in almost no time,” along with “an unprecedentedly friendly spirit toward the foreman.”¹¹⁶

For Coch and French, the results of the experiment were strikingly clear. Participation lifted both morale and productivity in the face of change, as long as opportunities for participation were “genuine” and not mere “lip service,” with supervisors truly listening to the suggestions of their underlings.¹¹⁷ At its best, participation would lead to the worker identifying with her job to an unprecedented extent, feeling that, instead of being a mere “hired hand,” “his brain has also been employed.”¹¹⁸ Coch and French had affirmed the findings of Lippitt, Lewin, and White’s Autocracy/Democracy studies. Participative democracy, it turned out, was good for both the personalities and efficiency of all involved.

¹¹⁵ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 8.

¹¹⁶ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 10.

¹¹⁷ Coch and French explained that supervisors must be ready to hear things from workers that they did not like when soliciting participation, and that participation could not simply involve steering workers toward a predetermined conclusion. “Workers can quickly spot a ‘phony,’” they wrote, and they resent being manipulated, for the average worker is “too intelligent to be taken in.” (“Resistance to Change,” 11)

¹¹⁸ First draft of “Resistance to Change,” 12.

Alfred Marrow, president of the Harwood Manufacturing Company, later referred to these results as “clearcut and dramatic.”¹¹⁹ He initiated a plant-wide policy of participation at Harwood, and became a zealous advocate of so-called participative management for years to come. Presenting at conferences in the early 1950s, Marrow cited the French/Coch study as evidence that full participation was “the best method of obtaining cooperation and satisfying the basic psychological needs of personnel at all levels of an industrial structure.”¹²⁰ Such participation, Marrow promised, “results in an ego-investment” among workers that fuels corporate productivity and makes their own lives more satisfying. Invoking Lewin’s earlier critique of Taylor’s scientific management, Marrow lamented:

Work is no longer a part of living. There is no relationship between the doer and the job done. The assembly line has replaced self expression with frustration. Industrial life is so organized and administered as to keep workers, most of whom are ready for training in self-discipline, self-rule, and social responsibility, in a state of supervised conformity.¹²¹

He also criticized the potential for worker engagement in labor unions, explaining that while unions emphasized the role of employer-employee communications, they “restricted worker participation to members of the bargaining and grievance committee,” limiting full participation to representation.¹²²

In his endorsements of workplace participation, Marrow invoked the American political tradition. Autocratic management methods and the corporate “chain of command,” he explained, stood in “striking contrast to the democracy of community life in which the worker and

¹¹⁹ Marrow *The Practical Theorist*, 151.

¹²⁰ Alfred Marrow paper, “Emotional Problems of the Adult Worker” delivered November 11, 1950 at the NJ State Psychological Association Meeting, folder “3: Marrow Papers,” box M1940.1, Marrow papers, AHAP; Marrow, “Effective Understanding of Employee Thinking and Psychology.”

¹²¹ Marrow, “Emotional Problems of the Adult Worker,” 2.

¹²² Marrow, “Effective Understanding of Employee Thinking and Psychology,” 5.

executive can participate on a level of equality.”¹²³ The average worker was a “citizen of his country but only a subject of his industry,” and “[t]his contrast between the democracy in the community and autocracy in industry is responsible for much of the frustration that leads to industrial conflict.”¹²⁴ Taylorist management techniques endangered the nation as a whole. And unlike other corporate heads and managers who employed participative management for explicitly economic ends, Marrow remained committed to the role of participation in promoting the productivity of the corporation, the ego needs of the individual, and the functioning of the democratic system writ large. He continued to reiterate his message for decades to come, publishing multiple books on participative management and working closely with social scientists on longitudinal studies of his plant.¹²⁵

¹²³ Marrow, “Effective Understanding,” 3-4. Marrow did concede that management had changed significantly in the past 20 years. Management used to be all about fear and punishment, he explained, but by 1951 was more about “concession and rewards.” Marrow urged listeners to recognize, however, that rewards and material incentives did not sufficiently meet the psychological needs of workers. Corporate recreation rooms, athletic teams, and even health insurance “are most compensatory” but they do not deliver “self-respect, status or prestige.” He insisted that the “true ego satisfaction “came from participation and teamwork, through which “selfish demands will be socialized and will yield to cooperative satisfaction.” (See “Effective Understanding,” 9.)

¹²⁴ Marrow, “Emotional Problems of the Adult Worker,” 2.

¹²⁵ Marrow remained in close contact with Jack French when, after Lewin’s death, French moved to the University of Michigan to work at the Institute for Social Research with Rensis Likert—to be discussed in Chapters 2, 5, and 8. The Institute for Social Research used Harwood as a site for experiments in industrial productivity for decades to come, resulting in the publication of *Management by Participation*, coauthored by Marrow with ISR social scientists Stanley Seashore and David Bowers, about the merging of the Harwood Company and the Weldon Company in 1962. Marrow’s books on managements included *Making Management Human* (1957); *Management by Participation: Creating a Climate for Personal and Organizational Development* (Jan 1967); and *The Failure of Success* (1972). In the 1960s, Marrow became an outspoken supporter of corporate sensitivity, or T-groups, to be discussed in Chapter 7. He wrote three books about T-groups: *Behind the Executive Mask: Greater Managerial Competence Through Deeper Self-Understanding* (AMA Management Reports - 1964); *Making Waves in Foggy Bottom: How a New and More Scientific Approach Changed the Management System at the State Department* (with Chris Argyris, 1974); and *The T-group Experience: An Encounter Among People for Greater Self-Fulfillment* (1975). Marrow was also deeply involved with the anti-discrimination, intergroup experiments of the American Jewish Congress, and wrote two books related to their efforts: *Living Without Hate: Scientific Approaches to Human Relations* (1951); *Changing Patterns of Prejudice: A New Look at Today’s Racial, Religious, and Cultural Tensions* (1962).

The Harwood Studies had provided the ideal real-world context in which to test Lewin's broader concerns about intergroup dynamics and participatory communication. Ground-breaking in both theory and practice, they demonstrated the compatibility between broadly anti-authoritarian social science principles and the realities of industrial management in the first half of the 20th century. From Kurt Lewin's anti-authoritarian convictions and his commitment to real-world applications sprang a model of humanistic management that went on to have a profound effect on postwar management theory and the "enlightened" capitalism of corporate leaders.

Chapter 2

Building the Psychological Corporation: Rensis Likert and Interwar Survey Research

In a 1935 article in *Advertising and Selling*, market researcher Henry Link announced some new revelations about the art of cigarette selling. He explained that ever since Dr. John Watson's test showing that habitual smokers could not distinguish between cigarette brands, the project of selling cigarettes had become one of "creating such differences in people's minds."¹ His article drew from extensive research conducted by a surveying agency called the Psychological Corporation, for which he was employed. The Corporation's researchers, funded by RJ Reynolds Tobacco (the manufacturers of Camel cigarettes), had surveyed 4000 smokers in 47 cities and towns and concluded that smokers cherished their habit not because of cigarettes' taste or smell, but because smoking "calms the nerves." The survey results led the Psychological Corporation to suggest:

What should be done is to compliment [customers] by suggesting that they are important enough to occupy positions where a tense or difficult situation may be encountered, and that a Camel can be their companion when doing things, big things. Thus, when a man smokes a Camel when he has jangled nerves or is excited, he finds that it satisfies him.²

The market researchers also recommended that cigarette packaging be made more appealing to women (by fitting easily into small purses), and that advertisements associate smoking with leisure time and sociability. Link concluded in his report, "The changes in people's cigarette

¹ Henry Link, "Significance of Change in Cigarette Preference," reprinted from *Advertising and Selling*, June 6, 1935, folder "The Psychological Corporation Background Files: Cigarette Preference Study, ca. 1934," box 21, Rensis Likert papers, Bentley Library.

² Assorted Materials from the Cigarette Survey, 1930s: Questionnaire and Interpretation of Results, folder "The Psychological Corporation Background Files: Cigarette Preference Study, ca. 1934," box 21, Likert Papers, Bentley Library.

habits have depended largely on changes in their minds and feelings[,] and these changes were bought and paid for."³

The Psychological Corporation promised repeatedly to its clients in the mid-1930s – producers and advertisers of alarm clocks, cold remedies, and auto liability insurance – that the study of motivations and behaviors would be the first step in a larger process of consumer manipulation. As Link frankly promised in an address to life insurance salesmen, “Psychology is the science of measuring people’s reactions in order that those actions may be better understood and controlled.”⁴ To understand a consumer’s mind was to predict and ultimately engineer his actions.

The Psychological Corporation was one of a growing number of market research services in the interwar period. Its mission reflected, on the one hand, social scientists’ increasing recognition of the profitable connections between survey research and consumer culture. Beyond these profit-oriented aims, the Corporation also sated its social scientists’ hunger for real-world contexts in which to test hypotheses about human motivation, one of the most prominent areas of inquiry in interwar psychology. Market research offered unprecedented opportunities to gather concrete data about the links between attitudes and behaviors, perceived needs and expressed desires.

The Psychological Corporation helped launch many a social-science career in the 1920s and 1930s. One of its success stories from that time was Rensis Likert, a social scientist whose intellectual trajectory encapsulated the tangled web of commerce and scientific inquiry of

³ Link, “Significance of Change in Cigarette Preference.” Also see Letter, Henry Link of the Psychological Corporation to William Etsy, 1934, folder “The Psychological Corporation Background Files: Cigarette Preference Study, ca. 1934,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library. This letter explains the details of the cigarette study and explains that the Corporation studied the smoking habits of 4000 men and their wives in 47 cities and towns.

⁴ Henry C. Link, “Psychology and Waste in Selling Life Insurance, Address,” 3 April 1934, folder “The Psychological Corporation Methodology Papers,” box 21, Likert Papers, Bentley Library.

the interwar period. Originally schooled in attitude research at Columbia University, and later known for his establishment of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Likert was drawn to the Psychological Corporation's opportunities for in-depth, large-scale, well funded research projects. But it would be a mistake to label Likert a primarily profit-minded researcher, or to detach his work in market research from the lofty concerns of his day. In fact, market research provided an important entry into a world of democratic, idealistic social science research that characterized much of Likert's career. Through his work with the Psychological Corporation and related organizations, Likert gained knowledge of survey techniques and principles that he believed would propel total reform of American society and its foundational institutions.

Upon Likert retirement from the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR) in 1971, the Institute's newsletter reflected on his legacy in an ode entitled "Using Science for Man: A Gentle Revolution." The article articulated the lofty mission of Likert and the ISR, the institute he had founded in 1946. According to the article, Likert, more than any other social scientist of his day, promoted "social science as a valuable tool in building a more humane society."⁵ He envisioned

the kind of society that is more responsive to people's needs and gives them a greater sense of pride and worth by tapping their basic motivations. For Likert, it is a society that is eminently possible, and the idea continues to excite him, to drive him... It's not the kind of excitement one would expect from a man who has devoted his life to the laborious and exacting task of quantifying attitudes and behaviors.⁶

⁵ "The Career of Rensis Likert: Using Science for Man- A Gentle Revolution," *ISR Newsletter* (Winter 1971), folder "Biographical Material [1-2]," box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁶ "The Career of Rensis Likert," 2.

Likert was, from the 1920s through the 1970s, a social scientist committed to both rigorous quantitative research and humanistic goals; he spent his career employing modern survey technology for utopian ends. Rensis Likert believed that bureaucratic organizations – the reputedly cold, faceless foundations of 20th century society – could be “humanized” with the right kind of leadership, and that scientific methods could identify the ideal contours of that leadership. Conceding that science was responsible for much of the counterproductive rationalizing of modern organizations, he nonetheless insisted that it offered the best hopes for humanistic reform.

Likert’s career appears on first examination as an unrelated collection of organizational endeavors. Having trained as a psychologist, he spent the first half of his career conducting research on advertising effectiveness, college student attitudes, and the morale of life insurance salesmen. In the late 1930s, he shifted into the public sphere, working for the Department of Agriculture’s Department of Program Surveys and the Office of War Information, before founding the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan, where he applied the lessons he had learned working for large-scale government agencies. After leaving ISR in the 1970s, he started a management consulting firm called Rensis Likert Associates, which offered corporations training in the system of “participative management” he had coined in his earlier writing and research.

While Likert’s research spanned a wide-ranging set of subjects – from advertising and agriculture to wartime bombing and industrial management – his endeavors were united by a singular conviction: that social science research would be the most important agent of democratic reform in the twentieth century. He believed that any social process could be studied, diagnosed, and ultimately transformed through the collection and analysis of data. For

Likert, one tool reigned supreme: the survey. He spent the first part of his career perfecting a form of survey research that was unprecedentedly far-reaching and richly detailed, combining the open-ended research techniques of humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers with the largescale “sample survey” techniques introduced by researchers like George Gallup and Elmo Roper. The survey techniques he promoted in the Psychological Corporation, at the ISR, and in his own management consultancy firm reflected dual commitments to “objective” science steeped in data and the subjective “human” factors he believed had been neglected in previous generations of social study. Likert applied his convictions about social science, research, and leadership enthusiastically to any sphere that would have him, and made few distinctions between the methodology most useful to a public school, government agency, or life insurance firm. His disparate areas of study were united by a commitment to the humanistic potential of social science.

Likert cemented his reputation through his work for American corporations. In 1968, he was named by the National Industrial Conference Board (cite) as one of the six most important behavioral scientists working in industry. He had risen to prominence through his development of “System 4”: a management theory that urged managers to replace “authoritarian” techniques of domination with participative, cooperative forms of supervision. First popularized in his 1961 *New Patterns of Management* (cite), System 4 (also known as “participative management”) eventually became shorthand for Likert’s philosophy of management and society in general. System 4 offered an alternative to the human relations theories of Frederick Winslow Taylor and Elton Mayo. It dictated that organizations functioned best (in terms of morale and productivity) when their leaders invested their underlings with freedom and responsibility. Thousands of surveys, Likert argued, suggested that workers produced most in the long-term when they were

treated as “human” individuals—when their superiors valued their opinions and expressed concern toward their personal lives. System 4 dictated that organizations would be more productive, profitable, and personally satisfying if they encouraged shared responsibility and creativity as opposed to top-down impositions. Likert built upon this theory in subsequent books and articles and in the consulting agency he established after retiring from ISR.

Likert’s development as a theorist and practitioner was marked by a consistently participative philosophy. This philosophy found expressions in the open-ended survey techniques he promoted throughout his career, and in his commitment to democratic rhetoric and behaviors in both private and public organizations. On the one hand, Likert openly prioritized productivity and profit when pitching System 4 to corporations, and was deeply invested in maintaining the economic and cultural clout of large organizations in the US; on the other, he embraced the democratic principles of the New Left and tried to spread participative methods throughout voluntary organizations. His commitment to democratic principles, as embodied by the mass surveys he popularized, reflected deep concerns about Cold War individuality, authoritarianism, and large-scale capitalism. Likert believed that his particular brand of survey science would propel the US into an egalitarian postwar era.

Likert’s commitment to participative management was an intellectual by-product of his elaborate institutional circuitry, reflecting his lifetime of work for the military, corporations, the US government, schools and voluntary associations. His commitments to New Deal liberalism and vehement anti-authoritarianism produced one of the most influential management theories of the postwar period. This chapter explores the early foundations of his ideological and methodological commitments, from his academic training in survey research to his work for two private firms, the Psychological Corporation and the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau. In

the early decades of his work as a social scientist, Likert immersed himself in modern survey research techniques and emerged with a set of methods that suited his democratic impulses. He also entered the nascent field of human relations, extensively researching the morale of life insurance salesmen and emerging with clear ideas about the nature of leadership and motivation. In the early decades of his social science career, Likert became the first social scientist to bridge the rapidly expanding field of survey research with the new field of management research and training.

Rensis Likert was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1903, the son of George – an engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad—and Cornelia. He began his academic career in his father’s footsteps, studying chemical engineering for the first three years of his undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan. But his experiences in the physical sciences soon unleashed his appetite for the *social* sciences. In his sophomore year of college, Likert was working at the Omaha Union Pacific Railroad in the physical science testing laboratory, conducting complex analysis of metals and alloys like steel, when a strike erupted among the railroad’s workers.⁷ Witnessing the difficulty of negotiations, Likert was “impressed [by]... the irrationality of labor-management relations and the kinds of unnecessary conflicts that occurred because of poor capacity for conflict resolution.”⁸ The experience evoked parallels to the global politics of the period: Looking at the “international situation” of 1922, he observed fifty years later, gave him

⁷ See Colin J Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen’s Strike* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

⁸ James C. Worthy, Interview with Rensis Likert, Meeting of the Academy of Management, 1979, folder “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

“the same impression, that the international conflicts certainly did not reflect an imaginative, competent approach to negotiating or resolving conflicts and differences.”⁹

At the same time, Likert was influenced by his exposure to World War I and the philosophical quandaries it had introduced. He later recalled:

I was fairly active in the student Christian association and there were a lot of questions like there are today--- we didn't have Vietnam or anything like that, but we did have sore repercussions at the end of [World War I] -- and a lot of people were looking at costs and consequences of war and how little had been accomplished by WWI. They were beginning to wonder if, perhaps, there weren't better ways of dealing with international differences than warfare. All these kinds of questions began to ferment, and to the student Christian movement, [the] YMCA ... this became quite an important kind of issue. And ... the more I thought about it the less sense to me it seemed to make.¹⁰

Likert's subsequent career trajectory can therefore be viewed as a product of the labor conflict and global instability that followed World War I, which convinced him that “his interests were more in people than things.”¹¹

At the University of Michigan, he shifted his attentions from the world of chemical agents to human ones. He enrolled in Carter Guttridge's courses in labor economics and Charles Cooley's courses in the nascent field of sociology.¹² Likert never surrendered the optimism he possessed as a 19-year-old engineering-student-cum-social scientist, nor his conviction that the world of human interactions, with all its messy conflicts and unstable relationships, could be made as simple as the realm of the physical sciences if its researchers developed the right set of

⁹ Worthy 2.

¹⁰ Oral history with Likert, marked “12/70, between Doug and Ren,” folder “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

¹¹ ” BIOGRAPHY of RENSIS LIKERT – DRAFT 4/28/78,” folder “Box 1, Folder: Biographical Material [1-2],” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

¹² For more on Cooley, see J. Sklansky, “Corporate Property and Social Psychology: Thomas M. Cooley, Charles H. Cooley, and the Ideological Origins of the Social Self,” *Radical History Review* 2000, no. 76 (January 1, 2000): 90–114. For broader context, see Jeffrey P Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

tools. Likert spent the rest of his career experimenting and refining those tools, from surveys and measurements to theories of behavioral science. His entire career rested on a conviction that the meticulous collection of social science data could bring a permanent end to conflict of all stripes.

Having graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Sociology, Likert spent a year at the Union Theological Seminary and then decided to pursue a PhD in Psychology at Columbia University. He arrived at an important moment in the history of the social sciences, when men like Elmo Roper, George Gallup and Paul Lazarsfeld were heralding the survey as a revolutionary new tool of data collection.¹³ Likert, who had never taken a psychology course, wanted to focus on issues of “human motivation,” and found a mentor in the form of professor Gardner Murphy. Murphy had received a grant of \$3600 from the Columbia University Council on the Social Sciences, via the Rockefeller Foundation, to research student attitudes.¹⁴ He prepared a lengthy student questionnaire on contemporary issues related to race, politics, religion, and economic affairs. The first survey took an hour and 45 minutes to administer, and it was followed by a more descriptive second questionnaire containing more questions about the history of the individual. According to Likert, the key questions he and Murphy aimed to answer in the survey were, “What determines a person's attitude? And what makes it change?” This survey, which was ultimately administered to eight more schools (including the University of Michigan and Oberlin) marked Likert’s initiation into one of the most vital areas of social research in the early 20th century.

By the end of his graduate school career, Likert had co-written a book with Murphy (*Public Opinion and the Individual* [1938]) and published his dissertation in the *Annals of*

¹³ For more on the history of polling and surveys, see Sarah Elizabeth Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ “Oral History 12/70.”

Psychology in 1932.¹⁵ This latter work, *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes*, introduced the “Likert Scales” for attitude measurement: a five-point scale used in personnel surveys designed to convey respondents’ attitudes. A Likert-scale survey offered the respondent a statement and asked him/her to rate the extent to which that statement reflected his/her attitudes: “1. Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly agree.” The choices, which Likert listed next to the survey statements, as marked by small circles, could then be added up to arrive at final summative scores. This technique (still used today) marked a distinctly early phase of Likert’s methodological evolution. Likert never renounced the value of his scale, but as he grew increasingly committed to open-ended survey questions and a more qualitative approach, he found himself struggling to bridge subjective, narrative data and static scores.

In 1931, having completed his preliminary exams for his PhD, Likert took a job that had opened up at the University College of NYU at University Heights in the arts and engineering colleges. This opportunity marked a turning point in his career as a surveyor and shaped his methodology for years to come.¹⁶ An early epiphany came in the form of an ostensibly simple recommendation from a supervisor. When teaching psychology to aspiring engineers, Likert tried to bridge the language of his discipline with the essentially quantitative language of theirs, emphasizing the behaviorist logic of early 20th-century psychology. Behavioral psychologists ruled the disciplinary roost in this still-early phase of psychology’s legitimation as an academic field. They emphasized the application of the scientific method of their work, conducting

¹⁵ Gardner Murphy and Columbia University, *Public Opinion and the Individual; a Psychological Study of Student Attitudes on Public Questions, with a Retest Five Years Later* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1938); Rensis Likert, *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes*, Archives of Psychology no. 140 (New York: s.n., 1932).

¹⁶ “Oral History 12/70,” 9.

laboratory experiments on behavior using small rodents or children. They aspired to locate the ingrained links between people's mental processes and repeatable behaviors.¹⁷

Likert assumed that the behaviorist language of science and experimentation would appeal to the engineering students. But early in his tenure at NYU, he was approached by Joseph Roe, the chairman of the department of industrial engineering, with some sobering words, which he remembered years: "'Ren, what you've got to do is forget teaching psychology to engineering students in terms of white rats. They couldn't care less about a white rat. You've got to teach them psychology in terms of human behavior."¹⁸ This sentiment—that psychology was a fundamentally *human* endeavor – informed Likert's work for the rest of his career. In rejecting the behaviorist language of cause and effect, Likert embraced the subjective, complicated, and even impressionistic aspects of his discipline. He spent the remainder of his time as a psychologist applying the methods of social science for what he imagined to be essentially “human” ends.

Likert's tenure at NYU also included his first foray into the study of industrial organizations—albeit through unconventional methods that he would never again employ in pursuit of organizational data. When teaching an industrial engineering class for seniors at NYU, Likert and his students started wondering if the systematic methods used to study attitudes

¹⁷ For the history of behavioral psychology, see Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Rebecca M Lemov, *World as Laboratory: Experiments with Mice, Mazes, and Men*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

¹⁸ Worthy 16. Likert repeated this sentiment soon thereafter in a speech at a meeting of the Psychological Corporation at the Columbia University Faculty Club. There he suggested, “Psychologists should pay less attention to laboratory tests and more to human activities and problems... A study of the everyday life of man, with the aim of establishing a science of human behavior, should be the goal of the profession of psychology.” According to a report in the *New York Times*, he then “urged psychologists to take advantage of commercial opportunities” and emphasized practical applications in the corporate realm. See “Study of Man Held Key in Psychology,” *New York Times*, Sept 5, 1934, 23.

could be used to measure morale, which “had never been measured in a quantitative way.”¹⁹ They decided to conduct interviews with workers, who would respond to statements about their morale using the 1-5 measurement of the Likert Scale. There was only one catch, Likert later explained: “I tried hard to get firms in the NY area to let us make a study of their employees and none of them wanted to.” So Likert and his students resorted to covert tactics. The class of ten students picked a firm about which they already had some information, then gathered outside the gates of that firm during lunch hour. As employees came and went, the students would administer their surveys on morale. In some cases, they “even made appointments with some of the girls who worked in the plant to take them to movies, and interviewed them at some length.”²⁰ Having collected this data, Likert and his class analyzed the data and drew the appropriate conclusions about the morale of workers at this particular plant.

Though Likert had been interested in the broad dissection of attitudes he conducted with Gardner Murphy at Columbia, it was the more specific study of morale that persisted in the work he pursued thereafter, permeating his work in corporations, governmental bodies, and non-profit organizations. The study of morale offered an opportunity for Likert’s ideal social-scientific intervention: He could measure the morale at a given institution; tweak factors related to communication and leadership; then return to measure any changes that had resulted from his efforts. Likert’s early exposure to organizational research helped catalyze his enthusiasm for organizational psychology and the nascent field of human relations, and ultimately fueled his commitment to the social scientific study of corporate management.

¹⁹ “Oral History 12/70,” 9.

²⁰ “Oral History 12/70.”

In 1935, Likert left NYU to become a researcher at the Psychological Corporation -- a relatively brief stint that offered him critical initiation into the world of market research and corporate-sponsored social science. The Psychological Corporation, which started out in the early 1920s designing aptitude tests and employee personality surveys, had transformed by the mid-1930s into one of the most prolific producers of market research data in the country. Through his work at the Corporation, where Likert studied the effects of advertising on milk consumption and cigarette smoking, he entered a community of social science researchers who had found similar application for their research skills—namely Paul Lazarsfeld and George Gallup. The Psychological Corporation’s relentless gathering of research data reinforced Likert’s pre-existing interest in cataloguing the motivations that fuel human behavior. The Corporation also showed Likert the ways in which psychologists could control or manipulate consumers through meticulously gathered research, and attached impressive dollar signs to that work. By the time Likert left the Psychological Corporation in the mid-1930s, he understood the intimate relationship between business and psychology that came to define mid-century management theory.

The Psychological Corporation was established in 1922 by a group of 20 psychologists who hoped “to make...psychological research earn its own way.”²¹ The officers of the corporation -- J. McKeen Cattell (Columbia University), Walter Dil Scott (Northwestern), Edward Thorndike (Teachers College), James Angell (Yale) and others – came together with a mission: to persuade businessmen of psychology’s utility in economic life. Thanks to the prominence of psychology in World War I military operations, Cattell explained in a press release, “psychology has become a word to conjure with” and “scientific control of conduct may

²¹“Scientists to Have a Human Nature Trust,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 February 1922, 3.

become of greater economic importance than the uses of electricity or steel.”²² The psychologists who organized the corporation insisted that they did not do so for personal economic gain, but rather to enhance their discipline: Most of the money they earned through business consulting would generate additional psychological research, and this research would further legitimate their field.²³

The founders of the Psychological Corporation belonged to a larger pursuit known as Applied Psychology, whose practitioners insisted that psychology was a tool to be used in everyday life; that their work advanced fundamentally pragmatic aims, even as it tackled nebulous matters of the mind. A 1922 *New York Times* article endorsed the pursuit: “The behavior of the mind” is “really vital to every business,” the article explained, “and the larger this human factor, the more practical the psychologist’s part becomes.” The psychologist stockholders behind the corporation were, in conclusion, “pragmatic people, not business mystics” who “aim to be brought in as appraisers and not as prophets.”²⁴

By the end of 1922, 166 psychologists owned the shares of the Psychology Corporation and the Corporation had branches in most states.²⁵ It had earned a reputation for producing intelligence and aptitude tests like the ones used in the military in World War I. (According to the Corporation, psychologists had administered such tests to nearly 2,000,000 recruits in the War).²⁶ The Corporation’s psychologists confidently assigned monetary value to their work,

²² “Scientists to Have a Human Nature Trust,” 3.

²³ Gardner Jackson, “Are You Honest? Are You Smart? Do You Remember Faces Well?” *Boston Daily Globe*, 14 January 1923; A3. According to this article, all but 6% of the Corporation’s profits went back into research, as opposed to the pockets of the shareholders.

²⁴ “A Psychological Corporation,” *New York Times*, 27 December 1922, 12.

²⁵ Jackson A3.

²⁶ “Tests To Ascertain Fitness Of Workers,” *New York Times*, 26 December 1922, 22.

promising that “it would be possible to increase by \$70,000,000,000 the national wealth each year by properly fitting every man, woman, and child to the kind of work each could best perform.”²⁷ The psychologists’ tests epitomized the late Progressive Era’s emphasis on efficient social engineering. If workers’ strengths and weaknesses could be ascertained *before* being hired, employers could maximize productivity and profit. The Corporation’s motto said it all: “Meet our price and we’ll fix you up!”²⁸

Throughout the 1920s and ‘30s, the Psychological Corporation designed aptitude tests for a wide range of jobs and skills. A test designed for an aspiring typist measured her “general intelligence and special training” by having her type a business letter, copy and correct her own handwriting, and sort things alphabetically.²⁹ Another designed to ascertain the “social instinct” of train conductors measured mens’ abilities to remember faces.³⁰ In 1925, taxi cab companies in Pittsburgh and Chicago began administering tests that measured prospective chauffeurs’ alertness, reaction time, and ability to complete a written maze.³¹ Perhaps most famously, Corporation Psychologist C.E. Seashore designed a test to determine the innate aptitude of musicians. “[T]here is the a whole world of aspiring people who think they may be noted musicians some day,” President Cattell explained, so the corporation had developed “a sure preventative to keep them from the disappointment which so often comes after years of hope and

²⁷ “Psychology to Fit The Job to The Man,” *New York Times*, 17 February 1922, 1.

²⁸ Jackson A3.

²⁹ “Tests To Ascertain Fitness Of Workers,” 22.

³⁰ Jackson A3.

³¹ “Psychology Tests Reveal Chauffeurs’ Reliability,” *New York Times*, 13 September 1925, X13.

struggle. ‘We can determine in one hour,’ he said, ‘whether people can detect one tune and pitch from another...[T]here are so many who think they can, who can’t.’³²

In addition to helping business avoid the “loss of time and wasteful experience” that resulted from poorly equipped employees, the Psychological Corporation promised the more abstract rewards of social harmony and self-awareness.³³ As the *New York Times* explained in 1922, the “heaven sprung message of the olden time” of “‘Know thyself’ ... is now becoming not only the adage of the life insurance companies, of the life-prolonging institutions and of the schools, colleges, and universities, but also the motto of business. Intelligence tests are the order of the day.”³⁴ In one 1924 speech, the Corporation’s president Cattell celebrated the potential of psychological progress in the modern era. He explained that the 19th century had witnessed the flourishing of scientific advancement, the rise of universal education, and the spread of democracy; science had, by the early decades of the 20th century, quadrupled the wealth that each man could produce, and doubled the length of each life. Having accomplished those goals, Cattell suggested, it was time to advance toward “a true social and political democracy. Cattell promised that psychology would increase the productivity of labor; would “double or quadruple the part of the life of each that is spent worthily and happily”; and would even “teach Americans how to distribute wealth wisely.”³⁵

By the time Rensis Likert arrived at the Psychological Corporation in the early 1930s, its methodology had evolved dramatically. Whereas the Corporation had indentified itself primarily with intelligence and aptitude tests in the 1920s, it had expanded by the 1930s into an

³² Jackson A3.

³³ “A Psychological Corporation.”

³⁴ “A Psychological Corporation.”

³⁵J. Mckeen Cattell , “More Successful Life Is Psychology's Promise,” *New York Times*, 20 January 1924, Xx3.

increasingly profitable realm for social scientists: market research. By this period, corporations and advertisers had begun to rely heavily on studies that gauged the reactions of consumers to both products and advertisements. If the advertising of the early 20th century had focused on informational and educational appeals to consumers, the interwar period was marked by increasingly emotional tactics – advertisements that appealed to consumers’ sentimentality, fantasies, or fears.³⁶ Marketers began to conceive of their job as a fundamentally psychological effort, in which they assigned emotional values to commodities that lifted them out of the material world and into the realm of fantasy. But to successfully make meaning, advertisers and marketers needed to understand the hearts and minds of consumers themselves. The Psychological Corporation met their gaping need with hundreds of pages recounting consumer reactions to products and advertisements—from cigarettes to cold medicine to a car insurance and milk.

Social scientist Paul Lazarsfeld was one of the researchers who most famously applied social science techniques to market research in the first half of the 20th century. Lazarsfeld, who was born in Vienna in 1901 and immigrated to the US in the 1930s, applied his pioneering sociological research techniques to a complex circuit of non-profit and corporate agencies. He conducted research for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the National Youth Administration, and Columbia University’s Bureau of Applied Social Research (which he founded), in addition to his aforementioned work for the Psychological Corporation (where a number of his proposed projects were rejected for being insufficiently commercial). When Lazarsfeld first arrived in the US in 1933, he found an “extremely small” community of social

³⁶ For more on the evolutionary of advertising appeals from informational to emotional, see T. J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1994); Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

scientists working on surveys.³⁷ He developed strong ties early on with George Gallup, one of the fathers of the modern survey, as well as with Robert Lynd, co-author of the landmark sociological study *Middletown*. Gallup took Lazarsfeld under his wing and invited him to participate in a monthly meeting of surveyors that would eventually evolve into the Market Research Council.³⁸ Lazarsfeld transformed the field of market research with what he later labeled his “anti-behaviorist” approach, as encapsulated in his 1935 treatise “The Art of Asking Why.”³⁹ Here, he argued that effective market research plumbed consumers’ motivations as opposed to their behaviors: “Don’t ask people what they buy, ask them why they buy.”⁴⁰

According to Gallup and Lazarsfeld, this anti-behaviorism set the tone of the Psychological Corporation’s research in the 1930s. Likert’s friend Henry Link (also a member of Gallup’s Market Research Council) had helped redefine the function of the Psychological Corporation’s surveys—encouraging the Corporation’s psychologists to shift their emphasis from workers’ existing attitudes and aptitudes to the more elusive realm of motivation, association, and desire. Joining the Corporation in the early 1930s, Likert fit right in, having experienced a similar evolution in his own interests.

By the time Likert joined the staff of the Corporation, it had evolved (according to its promotional literature) into “the largest organization exclusively of professional and scientific research men in the field of marketing.” The Corporation boasted that it could complete 50,000

³⁷ Memo, Jean M. Converse to Rensis Likert, 22 May 1979, with attached excerpt from Columbia University’s Oral History Interview with Paul Lazarsfeld, folder “Transcripts of oral history interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³⁸ Lazarsfeld Oral History, 106.

³⁹ Lazarsfeld Oral History, 103; see also Paul F. Lazarsfeld, “The Art of Asking WHY in Marketing Research: Three Principles Underlying the Formulation of Questionnaires,” *National Marketing Review* 1, no. 1 (July 1, 1935): 26–38.

⁴⁰ Lazarsfeld Oral History, 103.

interviews in 250 cities and towns in three weeks, with over 1000 interviewers working under the supervision of 100 psychologists.⁴¹ It had worked with companies including Metropolitan Life Insurance, the National Broadcasting Corporation, and Colgate-Palmolive-Peet. Since 1931, the Corporation had even run a “Psychological Brand Barometer” subscription service: Interviewers hired by the organization visited 4,000 homes in 47 cities every two months to survey trends related to hundreds of brands; company subscribers could request that they be mailed these bi-monthly reports related to particular industries like beverages, food, automobiles, etc. The organization had expanded to include 300 psychologists, and had earned several grants from the Carnegie Foundation (which Link cited as the ultimate emblem of non-profit legitimacy).⁴²

Henry Link recruited Likert to join the Psychological Corporation’s market research division soon after he established it, in the early 1930s.⁴³ Link had worked as the vice president of Gimbel’s Department store in the early thirties, until the Depression left him unemployed. Because he was interested in marketing, he approached Paul Achilles at the Psychological Corporation and persuaded him to let him set up a market research division. Link built his reputation on a technique that tested consumers’ associations with heavily advertised brands. Likert later remembered that Link would test advertising effectiveness by asking, “What product advertises...’Maybe your best friend won’t tell you” or “‘Good to the last drop.’”⁴⁴ Link recruited psychologists from across the country to administer interviews for pay.

⁴¹ “The Psychological Corporation: With Special Reference to its Market Research Activities,” folder “The Psychological Corporation Market Research Statement, Feb 4, 1935,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁴² “The Psychological Corporation: With Special Reference to its Market Research Activities,”

⁴³ Sarah Igo analyzes the deep link between market research and civic opinion polling in the interwar period. See *The Averaged American*, 113.

⁴⁴ Angus Campbell, Dorwin Cartwright, Jean Converse, “Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76,” folder “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 1.

Likert, then teaching at NYU, was one of the psychologists Link hired to do interviewing in New York. Likert, in turn, found that “it was great for training students in interviewing skills” and enlisted his graduate students in the effort. Unfortunately, his students became a little *too* boisterous about their work for the Psychological Corporation. A group of four graduate students rallied a team of undergrads to spend a weekend interviewing 1,000 New Yorkers about their attitudes toward the Soldiers’ Bonus Plan (formally called the World War Adjusted Compensation Act), and then sent the results off to Washington, DC. The chairman of the department got wind of their extracurricular adventures and “issued a memorandum saying that no student can work with any member of the faculty on any project without written permission of the chairman of the department in advance.” Likert rightfully interpreted the memo as a personal affront, but refused to bend. Soon after, he started looking for another job.⁴⁵

Likert’s largest research endeavor for the Psychological Corporation was sponsored by the Milk Research Council, which had grown concerned about the declining rates of milk consumption among American adults. Working as one of two directors of Field Studies [Check] for the “Study of Psychological Factors Influencing Milk Drinking” (along with Paul Lazarsfeld on “Special Counsel”), Likert helped gather hundreds of pages of data on the how’s and why’s of adult milk consumption. For this study, 75 interviewers in the greater New York area interviewed more than 2000 adults, gathering qualitative data as well as punch cards whose responses could be tabulated by machine (a process that the research committee deemed “absolutely essential”).⁴⁶ They were instructed that the purpose of the study was to “discover

⁴⁵ Campbell, Cartwright, and Converse, “Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76,” 4.

⁴⁶ The Psychological Corporation, ““A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults” made for the Milk Research Council, Inc. by the Psychological Corporation of New York, folder “A Study of the Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults, Jan 29, 1935,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

basic psychological factors in habits, knowledge, and feelings or beliefs about milk as a beverage among adults.” Interviewers visited families in their homes, recording the answers of no more than one member per household, and gathering data along very specific demographic lines: For every ten interviews, six subjects would be women and ten would be men; half should be aged 20-30 and the other half should be 30-50. Interviewers were instructed to read their questions “word for word” because “the change of a single word or phrase may alter the meaning of a question.”⁴⁷

The resulting study comprised a veritable tome on American milk consumption. The interviewers targeted a demographically diverse pool of interviewees spanning gender, age, and educational level and plowed the milk-drinking landscape for every nugget of variation. The survey began with straight-forward questions about consumption: How many glasses of plain milk did the subject drink per day or per week, and with what meals did he/she drink it? For those adults who had stopped drinking milk, the interviewed asked when and why they had made this transition. For others, the survey asked what snacks or foods milk drinking accompanied and inquired about the motivations behind milk-drinking (“Why do you drink it? If answer is ‘Because it’s nourishing, perfect food, or I like it,’ ask: In what particular way or why? How do you know this?”) The interview also included questions about the taste of milk, the health benefits of milk, and the impact of milk advertisements (“What milk advertisements have you noticed recently?”).⁴⁸ Its methodology bridged Likert’s early work in attitude surveys (in which respondents checked off a single number correlating with their stances) and his later work in what was termed “in-depth interviewing.” Interviewers gathered raw data and checked off

⁴⁷ “A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults”, Instructions to interviewers, 7.

⁴⁸ “A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults,” 5-6.

boxes, but they also plumbed respondents for the more qualitative components of their milk-drinking: their impressions, motivations, and reactions.

The Psychological Corporation's final report on milk consumption concluded that "Adults already have a high regard for milk and its many good properties," and that the solution to increasing milk consumption "is not simply one of telling them how good milk is but of making them aware of specific possibilities and stimulating them to action."⁴⁹ The report concluded that 57% of people drank plain milk every day; that men drank more than women; that education played a strong role in increasing the consumption of milk; that advertisements for milk had less impact than ads for "products of less importance."⁵⁰ The motivations behind milk drinking proved difficult to assess: "it is not a habit to be explained in a sentence or in a paragraph. Indeed, it represents such a complex set of influences, most of which have long ago passed from the conscious into the unconscious realms of the mind."⁵¹

The Milk report ultimately affirmed Lazarsfeld's conviction about the "why's" of market research: that questions about consumer motivation invited a stream of post-consumption rationalizations, simplified and superficial reductions of complex subconscious desires.⁵² The report from the Psychological Corporation's report thus reflected a critical moment in the history of market research, when psychologists made the transition from studying people's habits and behaviors to studying subconscious impulses and desires. The Corporation report concluded that

⁴⁹ "A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults," 3.

⁵⁰ "A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults," 3.

⁵¹ "A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults," 20.

⁵² Note that Paul Achilles, the Managing Director of the Psychological Corporation, forwarded the final report on milk drinking to Edward Brown of the Milk Research Council with a note of gratitude: The Corporation appreciated the opportunity, he wrote, to conduct "this fascinating study" and to examine taste as "a psychological complex due to many influences of training and experience, rather than to a simple factor of physical taste." He hoped that the survey would "be of practical value to you and your associates, in developing influences which will keep people from acquiring a distaste for milk, or which will influence them to taste milk more often." See attachment to "A Study of The Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults."

taste was itself a psychological construct-- not a physical quality-- to be manipulated by advertisers.

The Psychological Corporation's profit-oriented mission did not sit well with all members of the professional social science community. At the 1933 meeting of the American Psychological Association, psychologists from a cadre of respected universities challenged the legitimacy of a so-called independent research body funded almost entirely by private enterprise. Dr. A. W. Kornhauser of the University of Chicago wondered aloud "whether the psychologists, by aiding business firms . . . to sell their wares were not thus aiding them to exploit the public." "It all seems to me," he explained, "to be in the service of the businessman. Nothing we do is in the service of the consumer or in larger terms of social implication." Henry Link framed his defense in the terms of market democracy: "Fifteen years ago the question was how to overcome sales resistance, or how to sell someone something he or she didn't want. Today the reverse is true. We first try to figure out what the consumer wants and then give it to him."⁵³ Throughout the late 1930s, in the years after Rensis Likert's departure, the tension surrounding the Corporation only intensified.⁵⁴

⁵³ William Laurence, "Scientists Spar on Business Fees," *New York Times*, Sept 9, 1933, 14.

⁵⁴ In considering the Psychological Corporation's alleged conflict of interest, it is worth noting that the Corporation released a number of reports in the 1930s confirming not just the economic, but the social and moral value of big business in contemporary society. Its reports consistently situated business leaders at the helm of social change. A 1934 report claimed that housewives' faith in the NRA was declining; a 1937 survey concluded that the majority of Americans thought the New Deal government was "hurting business"; and that large corporations like Ford, Chrysler, an US Steel "did more good than harm"; a 1939 report claimed that the public trusted business leaders more than they trusted politicians. Ten years later, the Psychological Corporation released reports concluding that "union members do not consider themselves as well off in the scale of living at present as to non-union members" and that the owners of small businesses resented big government more than they resented big business. Few reports better exemplify this pattern than that which concluded in 1936, "Large Ratio of Workers Held 'Mildly Crazy'" -- as indicated by the 20-30% of workers who demonstrated propensity for "too much day-dreaming, insubordination, ... over-suspiciousness of associates and superiors, ...[and] extreme defensiveness," among other allegedly pathological conditions. Though the Psychological Corporation professed ideological neutrality, its surveys consistently drew the conclusions its corporate patrons would have liked to hear in the turbulent labor economy of the 1930s and 1940s. See "Large Ratio of Workers Held 'Mildly Crazy';" *New York Times*; February 8, 1936, 18; "Opinions Of Public On New Deal Shift," *New York Times*, December 14, 1937, 8; "Public Ranks Business Leaders Over Politicians in Special Poll," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 1, 1939, 6; "Survey Casts Doubt On Unions'

Though Rensis Likert's tenure at the Psychological Corporation was relatively brief—he worked there for less than two years while teaching at NYU – the organization left a profound imprint on his identity as a social scientist. First of all, the Corporation exposed Likert to the symbiotic bonds that could exist between commerce and social science. He would recreate some semblance of this arrangement through his work for the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau, his endeavors as a management consultant, and, most notably, through the Institute for Social Research, which derived much of its funding from corporately commissioned studies. As Sarah Igo has pointed out, such intimate public-private ties were extremely common in the social science community of the early 20th century, and the field of industrial psychology emerged from the close collaboration between private funders and scientists eager for financing and experimental playgrounds.⁵⁵

The surveys Likert conducted for the Psychological Corporation also helped shape the methodologies he would employ from that point forward. Unlike the attitude surveys he administered during his work with Gardner Murphy, which respondents could complete with pen and paper while alone in a room, members of the Psychological Corporation insisted on the importance of the in-depth, one-on-one interview.⁵⁶ Paul Lazarsfeld had suggested in “The Art of Asking Why” that the best interviews probed subjects about their motivations by asking

Benefits,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1948, 53; “Big Business Held No Cause For Fear,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1949, 25.

⁵⁵ Igo, *The Averaged American*. See also Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power; a History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1960); Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ Note that not everyone in the Psychological Corporation agreed about the best method of interviewing. See Henry Link, “An Experiment in Depth Interviewing on the Issue of Internationalism vs. Isolationism” by Henry Link, Director of Social and Market Surveys, The Psychological Corporation, May 16, 1943, folder “The Psychological Corporation Methodology Papers,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library. In this report, Link suggested that there was no reason to believe that “Depth Interviewing” elicited “truer” responses from people than so-called superficial surveying, and that “depth interviewing” allowed too much room for the interviewer’s own subjective responses and agenda.

strings of follow-up questions and asking them to clarify and complicate their answers. By pushing a subject to flesh out his answers, he suggested, the interviewer could access the subconscious. The technique could take hours as opposed to minutes, he conceded, but produced far more useful data.⁵⁷

In-depth interviewing became a trademark of Likert's work for the rest of his career. Lazarsfeld himself later explained in an oral history that Likert had joined him in his "anti-behaviorist stand" ("Don't ask people what they buy, ask them why they buy") but alleged that Likert had adopted his technique without offering proper credit. As Lazarsfeld explained in his interview, "The idea of the open-ended interviews became very much a battlecry of the Likert crowd....But Likert (this is a bit characteristic of Michigan) never referred back to that -- to the fact that staff had originated from his association with me. It was quite interesting, because I started this extreme tradition of open-ended interviews."⁵⁸ Likert himself refuted this charge (writing in the margins of his copy of Lazarsfeld's oral history, "NO.") and most vocally credited his methodological inspiration to the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers, whose role will be addressed later in this chapter. Regardless of who "fathered" the open-ended, one-on-one interviewing style employed by researchers at the Psychological Corporation, its emergence and popularity marked a pivotal turn in social science surveys—from quantitative collections of data to qualitative relationships between interviewer and interviewee.

⁵⁷ Lazarsfeld, "The Art of Asking Why."

⁵⁸ Columbia University Oral History with Paul Lazarsfeld, 103. Lazarsfeld also noted in this interview that he himself ended up gravitating toward structured rather than unstructured interviews, which "led to the funny situation that Likert, who had taken over this idea of interviews from me, became the exponent of the (unstructured? open-ended?) interviews, and I more of the structured interviews." In the margin of this transcript, Likert himself responded, "No." According to Lazarsfeld, Gallup himself took Lazarsfeld's side in the battle. He shows the oral historian a card that Gallup wrote to him in 1951, for his 50th birthday. Gallup wrote in this card: "One of his ideas was that the questioning of the respondents should go much farther than was customary in those days, that interviewers should go deeply into the whys and wherefores. Some years later, Rensis Likert tried to patent the idea under the title of interviewing 'in depth' but the real and legitimate father of this technique and of many others is our own Paul Lazarsfeld." In the margins, RL has once again written, "No." 105.

Likert's stints at the Psychological Corporation and NYU ended in the winter of 1935; in March of that year, he began a brief tenure at the Newell-Emmett advertising agency, where he helped set up a division of market research and worked on their Texaco account.⁵⁹ In a 1935 letter to Newell, Likert applauded the company's "economic research, analysis of markets, and research into behavior," but criticized its failure to analyze consumers' "buying motives" or to effectively test the success of advertising.⁶⁰ Likert proposed a \$12,000 - \$15,000 research program in which trained interviewers would "determine the actual motives of consumers" through in-depth conversations about buying behaviors, impressions of ads, and experiences with different brands. Likert's pitch was successful: Newell hired him to work in the Texaco team's market research division. He worked on the project for just a few months before the project lost its funding, at which point Likert started teaching at Sarah Lawrence.

Likert had taught at Sarah Lawrence for just one semester when he was recruited to establish and head the Research Division of the Life Insurance Salesmen Research Bureau (LISRB) in Hartford Connecticut. Over the course of almost four years as head of the Research Division, Likert established a new identity for himself within the field of human relations. Whereas his previous work had centered around personality, attitude, and aptitude testing, his research into life insurance selling brought his attention to a different aspect of work performance: management. His research at the LISRB awakened him to the ways in which leadership shaped the attitudes and morale of workers he had been studying since his surveying

⁵⁹ Rensis Likert Oral History, 10/19/76, 4. Note that Likert was laid off from Newell-Emmett when Texaco decided that "that wasn't the thing to do."

⁶⁰ Memo, Rensis Likert to Mr. Newell, 7 October 1935, folder "Newell-Emmett Company Miscellaneous Research, 1935," box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library. Likert explains that the Newell-Emmett Company has been using the Clark-Hooper method to study advertising, but that this method is outdated and has been proven to be ineffective.

days at NYU, persuading him that employees could not be analyzed in isolation from the foundational relationships in their work lives. Likert's work at the LISRB provided a foundation for the decades of management training and theorizing that came to define his career.

The LISRB (later called the Life Insurance Management Association) was founded in the early 1920s to study the problems of insurance distribution and competition between companies. By the mid-1930s, two primary factors inspired expanded research on insurance salesmen and their managers. First, the rapidly growing fields of human relations and industrial psychology seemed to promise new possibilities for revitalized sales. Walter Friedman has chronicled the early-20th-century attempt to make salesmanship "scientific" in his history of modern sales training.⁶¹ Walter Dill Scott was one of the first applied psychologists to encourage a psychological approach to both consumers and salesmen, recognizing that successful selling depended on the application of psychological principles. He argued that that buying was an emotional activity, not a rational one, and thus required agents fluent in the emotional vocabulary of persuasion.⁶²

Second, the Great Depression of the 1930s marked a lull in sales of life insurance and a decline in the stature of salesmen themselves. According to Friedman, salesmen in this period came to be viewed as hucksters or (in the case of Eudora Welty's "Death of a Traveling Salesman" and Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt") tragic figures—emblems of a bloated, wasteful distribution system. Salesmanship entered a crossroads: it needed to be "sold" to the public as a decent occupation with decent aims. Having made salesmanship "scientific," its proponents had

⁶¹ See Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁶² Scott's Bureau of Salesmanship Research studied what successful salesmen were made of and what criteria should be used in hiring them. He advocated the use of psychological tests and emphasized the link between salesmen's self-esteem, enthusiasm, and their efficiency on the job. "With the right incentives and encouragement," he argued, "the average man could increase his efficiency by 50 percent." Friedman 82.

to retreat and make it “human.”⁶³ Companies like Equitable, Aetna, and Metropolitan Life enlisted contemporary social scientists whom they hoped could help them improve not only their profits, but their public images.⁶⁴

The Life Insurance Salesman Research Bureau’s newly established Research Division reflected both of these developments in the industry’s genesis. In a 1935 letter to insurance managers in 1935, the LISRB’s W.W. Jaeger reported that he had recently attended a meeting with representatives from thirty different insurance companies. For the first time in the industry’s history, he explained, these representatives agreed that they could benefit from a research bureau dedicated to the study of effective selling.⁶⁵ Three months later, the executive committee of the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau met and agreed to expand their research program with Likert at the helm. His work there would be funded by 44 life insurance companies, which would collectively provide \$34,000 in the first year, for the study of “the selection, training, and compensation both of managers and agents.”⁶⁶ A memo from the year of Likert’s arrival suggests the range of difficulties that plagued life insurance companies in the mid-1930s: Providence Mutual, one of the companies participating in the LISRB’s work, issued a list of ten goals that they hoped would be addressed in the research: to lower rates of agent turnover; improve training of agents; increase sales; and make advertising more effective.⁶⁷ The

⁶³ Friedman, Chapter 9.

⁶⁴ Letter, WW Jaeger of the LISRB to Likert, 16 March 1935, folder “Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁶⁵ Letter, WW. Jaeger to IL Devoe, Manager of Agencies, Bankers Life Insurance Co., Lincoln, Nebraska, of 14 December 1935, folder “Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁶⁶ Letter, WW Jaeger to Likert, 16 March 1936, folder “Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁶⁷ Memo, Likert to Mr. Linton, “Bureau Research Studies (Long- and short-term projects),” 29 November 1935, folder “Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau,” box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

LISRB concerned itself with both employee and consumer morale. A frustrated, despondent salesman might fail to communicate enthusiasm about the product he hocked, or a string of disinterested customers might extinguish the optimism of an otherwise motivated door-to-door salesman. The researchers at the LISRB envisioned a science of selling that would prevent both occurrences.

The LISRB continued to administer attitude and aptitude tests to salesmen, as had been its tradition since the early 1920s. In 1935, Likert enticed Albert Kurtz to leave his post at Procter & Gamble and develop procedures for administering tests to salesmen at the LISRB. The aptitude tests would be used by managers before hiring people, to “decrease the probability of failure because at that time they were hiring an awful lot of people who didn’t succeed.”⁶⁸ One of the resulting tests bore striking semblance to the Meyers-Briggs personality tests that gained popularity after World War II, with questions designed to gauge candidates’ levels of extroversion, work habits, and problem-solving techniques.⁶⁹ The 1938 Aptitude Index for Life Insurance Salesmen asked respondents, “Do you enjoy being in a crowd? . . . Are you frequently bored? . . . Do you like to have people look you straight in the eye when they are talking to you? . . . Do you often daydream? . . . Do you often point out people’s faults to them?” While Kurtz focused on the survey, Likert devoted himself to a pioneering management study.

Likert later referred to his LISRB research as “the first real substantial study of management that I did.”⁷⁰ Beginning in 1936, he rounded up ten of the most successful life insurance agencies and ten of the most “mediocre” (“not the poorest,” because “the poorest were

⁶⁸ Rensis Likert “Oral History 12/70.”

⁶⁹ The Meyers-Briggs test itself, which is still used in corporations today, was derived from Carl Jung’s work of the 1920s, but Meyers and Briggs did not develop it until after World War II.

⁷⁰ “Oral History 12/70.”

so poor there was nothing to study”).⁷¹ Likert earned the trusting cooperation of life insurance agencies that hungered for more scientific knowledge of their work, a far cry from the covert tactics he had resorted to during his days of industrial research at NYU. He refined his methodology in the first four agencies and then introduced it to all twenty. He first administered written questionnaires to the employees of an agency about their work, and then initiated a large-scale interviewing process that involved agency managers, supervisors, and salesmen.⁷² The interviews themselves became a model for the methods Likert later employed at the Department of Agriculture. He referred to them as “fixed question, free answer” – a model in which interviewers would start by asking fixed but open-ended questions, and would move from general to specific follow-up questions based on a respondent’s answer.⁷³ The results of Likert’s study read now like standard dictum of 20th-century human relations. He concluded from hundreds of interviews that there was a “sizeable relationship” between a manager’s leadership style and his sales agents’ attitudes, which in turn had a profound impact on the productivity of a firm.⁷⁴

Laurence Morrison summarized the results of Likert’s study in a 1939 address to the Association of Life Insurance Agency Officers in Chicago, entitled “Morale – The Priceless Ingredient.”⁷⁵ Morrison began his address by contrasting the poor morale of the Egyptian Pyramid builders –slaves driven by brute force—with the much superior morale of the builders

⁷¹ “Oral History 12/70,” Session 2.

⁷² “Oral History 12/70,” Session 2.

⁷³ “Truox Interview with Likert” (undated, author unknown), folder “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 5-6.

⁷⁴ “Oral History 12/70.”

⁷⁵ See also Laurence S. Morrison, “Selling Methods in Life Insurance,” *Journal of the American Association of University Teachers of Insurance* 6, no. 1, Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting (Mar., 1939): 40-52.

of the European cathedrals, independent artisans driven by "the ideal to express" and "impelled by some inner urge." "They had enthusiasm," Morrison explained, and "the joy of creation -- they had morale."⁷⁶ Morrison cited Marshal Foch's definition of morale: "that which makes men want to carry out the wishes of their superiors," explaining that as organizational morale declines, there is "first passive resistance, then active resistance, and even deliberate sabotage." He distinguished between the work required of life insurance salesmen and those in other trades. A man with poor morale, he explained, could passably run an adding machine without grave impact on his productivity, for "it is a routine task which requires no particular initiative or enthusiasm." He continued, "There are many other such routine jobs, but selling life insurance is not one of them . . . Initiative and enthusiasm are the agent's stock in trade, for the "agent's mission is to transmit enthusiasm -- and how can a man transmit what he does not have?"⁷⁷

Having established the function of morale in selling life insurance, Morrison emphasized the critical role of the *manager* as it had emerged from Likert's research.⁷⁸ The manager's job was a distinctly psychological one: to make his men feel that they were working towards objectives, and to guarantee that their individual objectives were in harmony with the agency's larger goals. He would ensure the success of the agency by supporting the internal needs of his salesmen, anticipating their concerns and motivations. The best executives and managers functioned like teachers, helping underlings attain objectives and communicating investment in their success.

⁷⁶ Laurence Morrison, "Life Insurance Sales Bureau Memo: 'Morale: The Priceless Ingredient,'" 1 November 1939, folder "Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau," box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁷⁷ Morrison, "Morale: The Priceless Ingredient," 2.

⁷⁸ Morrison, "Morale: The Priceless Ingredient," 2.

Morrison explained that, according to Likert's study, the morale of salesmen did not correlate with managers' attitudes about their salesman's welfare, but rather with the agents' accounts of their own morale. In Likert's research, the five best managers (i.e. those with the most productive workforces) consistently *underestimated* the morale of their men, while the five worst managers dramatically *overestimated* the contentment of their workforces. And in survey after survey, agents had reported that their managers' attitudes toward them affected their morale far more than other factors like their material conditions or sense of "vocational competence." They reported that the most desirable quality in a manager was his "[interest] in Agents' Welfare"; the second most important quality was a manager's approachability. "The more one considers the meaning of these results," Morrison concluded, "the more one feels convinced that the qualities which make the greatest contribution to morale are qualities of the heart rather than the head: generosity, sympathy, willingness to cooperate, fairness and sincerity." A business whose profits depended on the sale of "contentment and security" could not rely on sales force of "unhappy and discontented men to whom, in their own lives, security is a stranger."⁷⁹

Morrison's 1939 address to the Association of Life Insurance Agency Officers helped establish Likert as a leader in the evolving field of management studies. It was followed by the publication of seven LISRB booklets between 1939 and 1940, entitled *Morale and Agency Management*, which summarized Likert's research findings in more detail and presented them to a broader audience.⁸⁰ On the one hand, Likert's studies reinforced the findings of Mayo and Roethlisberger's Hawthorne studies, which had also insisted on a relationship between a

⁷⁹ Morrison, "Morale: The Priceless Ingredient," 6.

⁸⁰ *Morale and Agency Management*, A Research Bureau Series, vol. 1: "Morale- the Mainspring of Management", from Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau, c. 1940 [presumably authored by Likert], folder "Morale and Agency Management" – A Research Bureau Series, vol. 1. "Morale- the Mainspring of Management", from Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau, c. 1940," box 21, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

manager's mode of supervision and the morale of his underlings, arguing for a greater attention to the psychic well-beings of underlings. But whereas Mayo and Roethlisberger had promoted a style of caring management—a heightened level of attentiveness to workers' performance—Likert's study signaled a transition to an increasingly humanistic approach to workers' interior lives. Reflecting years later on his work at the LISRB, Likert explained, "All I did then was to see that the more managers behaved in ways which at that time I said met an agent's desire for ego recognition (later on they called it personal worth) . . . , the higher the morale and the more successful the agency was. The more the manager and his behavior deflated the agent's ego, the poorer the agent's morale and the poorer the productivity was."⁸¹

Likert's work for the LISRB marked his segue from the world of market research to that of human relations. Though he was hired because of his expertise in survey-making, he thrived because of his openness to new theories of management. It was at LISRB that Likert became interested in theories of leadership and motivation and committed to the link between high morale and successful organizations. Whereas his earlier work had focused on the attitudes and behavioral patterns of individuals, his organizational studies examined the interpersonal dynamics established in the workplace. Work, he concluded, was not just about the personality of workers and their fitness or unfitness for a given job; it was also about relationships and social systems, the manager and the managed. Though Likert did not at this point identify with the

⁸¹ "Oral History 12/70," 13. It is worth noting that Likert's LISRB report differed from some of his later works in its absence of utopian language, humanitarian goals, or political metaphors. Unlike his later articulation of System 4, which renounced "authoritarian" management practices in favor of "participatory" ones, the language of his LISRB work focused more on the unique psychological needs of individuals. Likert's promotion of agents' "ego recognition" needs stemmed from a set of entirely profit-oriented aims. The ultimate goal of psychologically astute management was, quite simply, higher profits – through increased sales and lower rates of turnover for insurance agencies. As the LISRB later promised in a news release, "Good morale has a value in dollars and cents and, though an unadmitted one, is a sizeable asset on the company ledgers." Reflecting thirty years later on his LISRB work, Likert emphasized the links he had located between "the way an agency manager functioned, his behavior, and the morale (as I called it then), the motivation, the attitudes of the agents and in turn their productivity and sales performance" – which was "also related to the total volume that the agencies sold, the quality of the business." "Oral History 12/70," Session 2.

cohort that included Mayo, Roethlisberger, or Lewin, the LISRB offered him initiation into the field of interwar human relations. His work of this era provided a bridge between his celebrated work as a market researcher and his later legacy as a management consultant. It taught him that the nebulous matters of the heart could be studied by a rigorous scientific mind.

Chapter 3

“A Psychology for the Peace Table”: Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, and the Hierarchy of Needs

In 1954, 46-year old psychologist Abraham Maslow published a landmark treatise entitled *Motivation and Personality*, in which he famously argued that all people are motivated by a “hierarchy of needs.” Having satisfied basic physiological requirements like food and shelter, he explained, they pursue the needs to feel safe, to be loved, and—ultimately—to be “self-actualized.”¹ Self-actualization marked the moment at which a person reached such heights of creativity and self-expression that he became connected harmoniously to the people and environments around him. The term has since become a kind of shorthand for the goals of humanistic psychology, a subfield devoted to positive human emotions like growth, hope, creativity, and love, in contrast to the Freudian fixation on mental illness and neurosis.

Less than ten years after introducing the concept of self-actualization to the American public, Maslow published a meditation on the “hierarchy of needs” in industry. *Eupsychian Management* assembled the journal entries Maslow had produced during his time as a visiting fellow at Non-Linear Systems in Del Mar, California in 1962 and marked his first attempt to apply his psychological theories to the world of work. In the book, he announced his conviction that “the industrial situation may serve as the new laboratory for the study of the pseudo-dynamics, of high human development, of the ideal ecology for the human being.”² Given the primacy of work in the lives of most human beings, Maslow explained, “proper management of the work lives of human beings, of the way in which they can earn a living, can improve them

¹ Abraham H Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1st ed., Harper’s Psychological Series (New York: Harper, 1954).

² Abraham Maslow, *Maslow on Management* (New York: Wiley, 1998) ,viii. Note that this work was originally published as Abraham H Maslow, *Eupsychian Management: A Journal*, The Irwin-Dorsey Series in Behavioral Science (Homewood, Ill: R.D. Irwin, 1965).

and improve their world and in this sense can be a utopian or revolutionary technique.”³ Citing the limits of other modern therapeutic interventions, Maslow suggested that *organizational* reform was the most promising avenue for sweeping social change.⁴ By the mid-1960s, he had concluded that large organizations would be the next frontier of human potential, and managers the most effective catalysts of change.

Maslow’s writings on the “ideal ecology for the human being” might strike contemporary readers as a lofty relic of the Affluent Society, produced by a theorist who resided outside the boundaries of corporate or industrial America. Maslow was, after all, a man who mingled with hippies, delivered seminars at “personal growth” centers, and exuded a passionate optimism about human nature. But it would be a mistake to dismiss Maslow’s theories about the corporate environment as optimistic reverie, for few thinkers influenced management theory more in the 1950s and 1960s than Abraham Maslow. Maslow supplied a wave of postwar management theorists with the terminology they sought to articulate a powerful conviction: that corporate culture (itself a new concept) would be central to the realization of human potential in civilization writ large. According to this group of “Maslowian” management theorists, better management could propel all of society into an era of psychological fulfillment.

For decades after World War II, Maslow’s popularized terms “self-actualization” and the “hierarchy of needs” persisted as a buzzwords in management theory, inspiring torrents of enthusiasm and controversy. Maslow’s theories influenced major management thinkers like Chris Argyris, Rensis Likert, Frederick Herzberg, and, most famously, Douglas McGregor—whose landmark treatise *The Human Side of Enterprise* endorsed the Maslowian management style with its central concept, Theory Y. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many of the

³ *Maslow on Management* 1.

⁴ *Maslow on Management* 1.

management theorists who celebrated “participative” and “democratic” management cited Maslow’s theories as a central inspiration, making the psychologist’s name a buzzword in business schools and corporations across America.

This chapter introduces Abraham Maslow’s development of what he called “third force psychology” and examines his early impact on one fellow psychologist in particular: Douglas McGregor. McGregor, whose work in industrial relations was profoundly affected by Maslow’s idea of the “hierarchy of needs,” eventually inspired Maslow himself to study the industrial sphere. Teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology while Maslow taught at Brandeis, McGregor infused the field of industrial relations with a humanistic perspective that guided academic management theory for decades. His Theory Y urged managers to assume fundamentally optimistic attitudes about workers’ nature and the capacities of human beings, to offer underlings opportunities for creativity and challenge as an alternative to stultifying Tayloristic tasks. Maslow and McGregor shared a conviction that modern work could and should be meaningful, that American workers could achieve fulfillment through their jobs as opposed to their leisure time, and that every human being contained the potential for creative self-expression on the job.

Critics and historians of business often cite Maslow and McGregor as the faces of “rebellious” management theory in the 1960s. Andrea Gabor included them on her list of paradigm-shifting “capitalist philosophers,” and Art Kleiner championed them as two of management theory’s most influential “heretics.”⁵ In *The Conquest of Cool*, Thomas Frank saluted them for forging an alliance with the counterculture of the 1950s and ‘60s, when they (along with a broader legion of management thinkers) “went through their own version of the

⁵ See Andrea Gabor, *The Capitalist Philosophers: The Geniuses of Modern Business--Their Lives, Times, and Ideas*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Business, 2000); Art Kleiner, *The Age of Heretics: Heroes, Outlaws, and the Forerunners of Corporate Change* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996).

mass society critique...embracing all manner of individualism-promoting, bureaucracy-smashing, and anti-hierarchical schemes.” According to Frank, the writings of McGregor and his comrades reflected an “[i]nfatuation with youthful cultural insurgency” which “came almost as naturally for them as it did for Charles Reich and Theodore Roszak.”⁶

While Frank is right to recognize the surprising and oft-overlooked ideological parallels between the management writings of McGregor and some of his countercultural contemporaries, he offers a misleading interpretation of his intellectual genesis. McGregor, who died in 1964 at the age of 58, began citing Maslow’s principles of human potential and humanistic needs in the 1940s. His commitment to participation grew out of his early exposure to the Social Gospel, progressive education, labor-management negotiations, and interwar social science. Maslow similarly emerged from a pre-WWII tradition of anti-fascist Jewish intellectuals and a revolt against Freudian psychotherapy. By the time of World War II, both men had developed powerful commitments to the promise of humanistic psychology for individuals and capitalist, democratic society writ large. It would be a mistake to trace their intellectual origins to the postwar *Organization Man* critique or the inspiration of 1960s radicalism—especially considering that Maslow remained ambivalent toward the actions of the new left and counterculture until his death in 1970.

This chapter examines Maslow and McGregor—born two years apart, in 1908 and 1906, respectively—as intellectual pioneers who, having lived through the atrocities of both World Wars, political upheaval abroad, and labor strife at home, helped forge new modes of psychological and organizational inquiry dedicated to humanistic concerns. Maslow, greatly influenced by the Jewish Socialist activists of his day, originally dubbed his interests

⁶ Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

“psychology for the peace table.” He hoped his revelations would help combat prejudice by celebrating human beings’ common capacity for good. Never devoted primarily to the health of individuals, he identified psychological health with greater social purpose and insisted that fulfilled individuals could combat the authoritarian dynamics of everyday social relations. Douglas McGregor, emerging from roots in the Social Gospel movement and holding a deep commitment to labor-management cooperation, applied Maslow’s principles to his own vision of democratic participation in large organizations. The early careers of these two men marked a synthesis of humanistic psychology, labor-management relations, and participative philosophy from the interwar years into the 1940s.

Abraham Maslow was born in April, 1908, in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, New York. His parents were uneducated Russian Jewish immigrants; his father ran a cooperage business in Brooklyn and was what Maslow described as a “barrel man.”⁷ Maslow later remembered himself as a “slum boy,” raised by parents who were just barely getting by, who managed to put food on the table but could not provide much else.⁸ It is, in fact, difficult to reconcile the image of Maslow the adult – vivacious, joyful, optimistic—with the image of his childhood self. The young Maslow (oldest of seven children) found himself in an unhappy family, with parents who frequently fought and a father often absent. He later expressed open

⁷ Leonard Zweig, *Being Abraham Maslow - An Interview with Warren Bennis* (Maurice Bassett, 2008). Also see Correspondence between Abraham Maslow and Warren Bennis about the film (containing seven pages of film transcript), undated, folder “Miscellaneous,” box M449.24, Abraham Maslow papers, AHAP. For Maslow’s definitive biography, see Edward Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow*, (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1988).

⁸ Note a discrepancy: In the film *Being Abraham Maslow*, Maslow says that as a kid, his father “just barely got enough money to eat.” In Hoffman’s article, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management,” Hoffman writes that Maslow’s father was a “successful small businessman,” and that this success freed Maslow from the obligation to spend a lot of time working (which in turn granted him “lots of leisure time” to be immersed in books). See Edward Hoffman, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management.,” *Training* 25, no. 9 (1988): 79–82.

contempt for his father's cruel demeanor and his mother's ignorant, Old World, superstitious ways.⁹ His parents represented many of the characteristics against which Maslow would later align himself.

Growing up as a Jew in the “immigrant jungle that was Brooklyn” in the years following World War I, Maslow experienced “awful,” pervasive anti-Semitism and was the perpetual outsider in his neighborhood. His peers mocked him and his teachers, responding to his Judaism and his preternatural intelligence, persecuted him as well. From the age of four, Maslow later remembered, he expressed the inquisitiveness and skepticism of a scientist: “I’ve been bucking the establishment since I was a kid,” he explained in a 1968 documentary.¹⁰ His mother, true to her old-world superstitions, would caution him that he would go blind if he crawled through a particular window; Maslow, ever the anti-authoritarian, would crawl through said window and emerge unblinded to demonstrate the emptiness of her theories.¹¹ He exhibited a similar tendency in the classroom, continually questioning received wisdom, not believing his teachers’ lessons until he could prove them on his own terms.

As a high school student, Maslow was introduced to the novels of Upton Sinclair—a moment in which his social conscience was “first pricked”¹²—and through those works, became a democratic socialist “committed from that point on to making a better world.”¹³ At the time, the quest for social justice and pervasive spirit of “possibility and hope” were critical

⁹ See Gabor, *Capitalist Philosophers*, and Hoffman, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management.”

¹⁰ *Being Abraham Maslow*.

¹¹ *Being Abraham Maslow*

¹² Gabor 156.

¹³ Hoffman, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management.”

components of the Jewish political experience.¹⁴ Maslow later remembered, “There was always the hope...It was never considered unrealistic to work for a better world...and my father and uncle and everybody went along with it. *Of course* there would be a better world.”¹⁵ The idealism of secularized Jewish social activism shaped his political and academic pursuits for the rest of his life. Maslow emerged from the slums of Brooklyn determined to build a more just society.

In 1926, Maslow earned a scholarship to attend Cornell University. Though Cornell was one of the few Ivy League universities accepting Jews at the time, he encountered so much anti-Semitism that he returned home to New York City within the year. Enrolling in the City College of New York with a major in psychology, Maslow experienced his first academic epiphany: A psychology professor introduced him to the work of John B. Watson.¹⁶ Watson was the founder of behavioral psychology – the subfield dedicated to the idea that all human behaviors are rooted in environmental conditioning-- and had been responsible for propelling behaviorism to the forefront of the field in the early 20th century. At Johns Hopkins, he had famously institutionalized the “lab rat in a maze” experiment, with its inquiries into issues of stimulus, response, and habit formation. His work effectively made psychology a matter of the body as opposed to the soul.¹⁷ Though Maslow rejected many tenets of behavioral psychology, he was

¹⁴ See Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ *Being Abraham Maslow*. Also see Deborah Dash Moore, ed., *American Jewish Identity Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008); Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Deborah Dash Moore, *The Emergence of Ethnicity: New York's Jews, 1920-1940* ([New York: s. n.], 1975).

¹⁶ Gabor, *Capitalist Philosophers*.

¹⁷ See Chapter Two of Rebecca M Lemov, *World as Laboratory: Experiments with Mice, Mazes, and Men* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005). It is worth noting that, after being unseated by an academic scandal in 1920, Watson went to work at the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson. As a part of that workforce, he promoted the idea that one could engineer consumer_habits in the same ways one could engineer the habits of a lab rat (i.e. behavior

drawn to Watson's commitment to social change: Watson employed behaviorist techniques to understand and combat ethnic discrimination, racial prejudice, and the corporal punishment of children.¹⁸ Maslow later remembered "dancing down Fifth Avenue with exuberance" after his first exposure to Watson's work, which struck him as beautiful: "I was confident that here was a real road to travel: solving one problem after another and changing the world."¹⁹

Though City College had exposed Maslow to that critical connection between psychology and social change, he did not remain enrolled there for long. City College proved to be too close to his home (and his dysfunctional family) and too close to the love of his life: his first cousin, Bertha Goodman. Maslow and Goodman had met and fallen in love when they were 16 and 15 years old, to the consternation of family and friends, and Maslow decided they should have a cooling off period before making the decision to marry (which they did, four years later. The two remained married until Maslow's untimely death in 1970.)²⁰ Having reached his verdict, Maslow left New York City in for the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he entered the program in psychology, "off to...save the world."²¹ He completed his Bachelor's there and went on to earn his PhD in 1934.

The University of Wisconsin proved to be a vital, energizing intellectual home for Maslow. Thanks in part to the earlier influence of Wisconsin governor Robert La Follette, whose progressive agenda had shaped the state's educational system, the University had become

modification). His approach thus overlapped with some of the market research that social scientists like Rensis Likert and Henry Link were conducting in the 1920s at the Psychological Corporation. For more on Watson's work at J. Walter Thompson, see Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*.

¹⁸ Gabor 156.

¹⁹ Edward Hoffman, "The Last Interview of Abraham Maslow," *Psychology Today* 25, no. 1 (Jan 1992): 68-89, 71.

²⁰ Gabor, *Capitalist Philosophers*; Hoffman, *Right to Be Human*.

²¹ Hoffman, "The Last Interview," 68.

widely known as a bastion of academic freedom and the cultivation of knowledge for the public good. It was also, according to writer Andrea Gabor, a “hotbed of leftist radicalism.”²² No environment could have better suited Maslow at this formative stage of his professional development. Though the Psychology Department at the school was dedicated to largely pragmatic and behaviorist pursuits, discouraging Maslow’s interest in more qualitative studies like the aesthetics of music appreciation²³, Maslow located mentors and peers who encouraged his voracious appetite for psychological knowledge. He worked closely with Harry Harlow, the psychologist known as “Monkey Man” because of his revolutionary work in primate learning and behavior.

First serving as Harlow’s research assistant and then as his PhD student, Maslow ultimately spent two years at Madison’s Vilas Park Zoo, producing prolific research on primate mating rituals, eating habits, and dominance behaviors. Watching these monkeys, Maslow became particularly drawn to one behavioral phenomenon: After monkeys’ appetites had been satiated through regular meals, they continued to crave and demand snacks like peanuts and chocolate. To Maslow, this suggested something significant: that there was a substantial difference between “hunger” and “appetite”—or, in other words, between need and want. The monkeys’ endless appetites for sugary, salty snacks inspired Maslow’s lifelong study of motivation. Once our raw, physiological needs have been satisfied, he asked perpetually in his research, what do we want? How do we express and satisfy those desires?

Unfortunately, the Wisconsin faculty did not prove receptive to Maslow’s interests in human wants and needs, which they deemed to be fundamentally *philosophical* concerns. They also dismissed the group of psychologists to whom Maslow was drawn in the early 1930s:

²² Gabor 157.

²³ Gabor 157. Also see Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human*.

Sigmund Freud (who emphasized the role of subconscious sexual desires), and émigrés like Alfred Adler (who studied humans' quest for power), and Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer. All of these men diverged markedly from the behaviorist path.²⁴

Having earned his PhD in 1934, Maslow returned to New York City in search of a job. He entered a miserable, Depression-era job market, searching fruitlessly for work until he stumbled upon the educational psychologist Edward Thorndike. Thorndike, a professor at Teachers' College at Columbia University, had also served as one of the founding members of the Psychological Corporation (discussed in detail in Chapter 2).²⁵ Thorndike had received a \$100,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation to develop scientifically rooted social policies for problems like poverty, illiteracy, and crime.²⁶ He brought Maslow on board to study the extent to which certain behaviors were rooted in either environmental or hereditary factors. In spite of his sympathies for the premise of the study, Maslow soon grew bored with his work for Thorndike. The young psychologist grew convinced that their work rested on a fundamentally false dichotomy between environmental and hereditary influences. All behaviors were rooted in *both* kinds of factors, Maslow argued, and it was futile to try to categorize particular traits as either one or the other. Thorndike released Maslow from the work, recognizing the incompatibility of

²⁴ Gabor 157-8.

²⁵ Thorndike shared a number of institutional links with social psychologist Rensis Likert. In addition to being one of the founding members of the Psychological Corporation, he (like many psychologists) also served the State Department during World War II. For more on Thorndike, see "Scientists to Have a Human Nature Trust: Form Psychological Corporation," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 17, 1922, 3. For more on psychologists' wartime government service, see Dael Wolfe, "Psychologists in Government Service," *Psychological Bulletin* (May 1943).

²⁶ Gabor 158.

the young man's interests with his Carnegie-funded endeavor, but a lifelong relationship developed between the two men.²⁷

In New York, Maslow fortuitously found himself amidst many of the radical psychologists he had once admired from afar, who had recently emigrated from repressive European regimes. While working at Columbia, Maslow began to pursue face-to-face relationships with his intellectual heroes, a cadre of Jewish, European psychologists who were actively redefining their field. "My teachers were the best in the world," he later explained, and "I sought them out: Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Ruth Benedict, Max Wertheimer, Alfred Adler..."²⁸ These scholars' experimental orientations and commitments to social change inspired Maslow to eventually branch off from the two hegemonic strands of psychology that dominated the field before World War II: Behaviorism and Freudianism. Whereas many other psychologists of the period focused on the mental health of individuals—the logic of individual behavior; the roots of individual pathology—a group of these émigrés focused on the mental health of *society*. For them, the study of individuals mattered because of their union in a larger whole.²⁹

In the early 1930s, the psychologist Max Wertheimer had emigrated to New York City and joined the faculty of the New School's University in Exile, where he and Maslow first met.

²⁷ Maslow later remembered that while conducting research for Thorndike, the professor had administered to him a number of intelligence and aptitude tests he was refining. One day, Thorndike called Maslow into his office to tell him that he had scored remarkably high on the battery of tests, and that he had assessed Maslow's IQ at an exceptional 195. (See Gabor 158). Thorndike then explained that although the young man's interests diverged dramatically from his own, he would support Maslow's work for "the rest of his life." According to Maslow, the conversation marked a watershed in his own intellectual self-perception. Having always been timid and full of self-doubt, he slowly "assimilated" this information about his exceptionality and gained a newfound confidence. (See *Being Abraham Maslow*.)

²⁸ Hoffman, "Last Interview," 73.

²⁹ For more on the field of social psychology, see Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jeffrey P. Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

The University in Exile had been established by New School President Alvin Johnson in 1934, envisioned as an intellectual haven for social researchers fleeing oppressive European regimes. Its community of refugee scholars—which eventually included Hannah Arendt, Wilhelm Reich, and Bronislaw Malinowski, among 180 others-- joined a faculty of American researchers already committed to social justice and academic freedom.³⁰ Wertheimer and his comrades rejected the traditional boundaries between self and society, and between intellectuals and the public interest.

As the founder of Gestalt psychology, Wertheimer represented a dramatic departure from both Freudian psychotherapy and behaviorist research: He believed that “[r]ather than learning from trial and error, as the behaviorists insisted, humans achieved true leaps of understanding when they have what [he] called an ‘Aha!’ experience.”³¹ He believed in the holistic and often transcendent nature of the human brain, and became famous for his notion that “the whole is always bigger than the sum of its parts”—meaning that mathematical and scientific breakdowns of neurological processes will always, necessarily neglect the spontaneity and mystery of human experience.³² Wertheimer became renowned for his eccentric pedantic behaviors, leaping on his desk to emphasize points and urging his students to “learn from the ‘unmotivated’ qualities of playfulness, wonder, and aesthetic enjoyment” as opposed to psychology’s typical focus on “goal-seeking behavior.”³³ He also insisted to his students that “most people possess an essential

³⁰ In 1919, a group of unconventional thinkers, including historian Charles Beard and philosopher John Dewey, imagined an educational venue where ideas could be discussed freely, without censorship. They published a brochure listing their lectures and opened their school, which they called the New School for Social Research, to all “intelligent men and women.” The New School was legally incorporated in 1922. It maintained ties to Europe and was in many ways modeled after the Volkshochschulen for adults established in Germany, offering a curriculum for educated adults that emphasized the social, political, economic, and educational issues of the time. Scholars who taught in the early years of the school’s existence included Lewis Mumford, Bertrand Russell, and Felix Frankfurter. For history of the New School, see Peter M. Rutkoff, *New School*, (Free Press, 1986).

³¹ Gabor 159.

³² For more on Gestalt psychology, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

³³ Gabor 159.

goodness and decency,” and that social scientists had a duty to study and nurture these tendencies.³⁴ Wertheimer’s helped inspire Maslow to study what he would later call the “Farther Reaches of Human Nature,” and he became one of Maslow’s examples of a genuinely “self-actualized” human being.³⁵

After Maslow arrived in New York City, he also sought out a relationship with the Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler. Maslow had first learned about Adler during his days at Wisconsin, and soon after his arrival in New York, Adler immigrated to New York from Austria. Adler had begun his career in Austria as a colleague of Sigmund Freud’s, working with him as a core member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. But he eventually branched off from Freud’s own brand of psychoanalysis, favoring a more holistic and optimistic approach to personality development—most famously developing theories about “inferiority complexes,” self-esteem, and the importance of “democratic” family life on early childhood development.³⁶ By the time Maslow met Adler in the mid-1930s, the Austrian psychologist had established an open-house class that met every Friday night at the Gramercy Hotel. Maslow was one of Adler’s first students at the open-house classes, and was drawn to one of Adler’s key principles: that environmental factors have a major impact on the development of human behavior (especially low and high expectations placed on children in their youth) and that, by extension, the reform of social institutions could improve the mental health and performance of individuals in society.

³⁴ Gabor 159.

³⁵ Abraham H Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

³⁶ For Adler’s key works see Alfred Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & co. ltd., 1924); Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (New York: Greenberg, 1927); Alfred Adler, *What Life Should Mean to You* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931).

At the same time that Maslow was attending Adler's open weekly classes, he also attended free weekly lectures that German psychologist Erich Fromm was delivering at Columbia's Institute for Social Research. (Fromm had joined the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in 1930 and emigrated to New York in 1934.) Fromm, author of the classic treatise *Escape from Freedom*, celebrated the possibilities of individual autonomy in the face of authoritarian coercion; he also emphasized the importance of love and creativity in interpersonal relationships.³⁷ Fromm eventually developed a list of eight basic psychological needs—revolving around relationships, creativity, and love—that resonated with Maslow's own conception of personal fulfillment.

In 1937, after working for two years at Columbia University, Maslow began teaching at the newly established Brooklyn College. Around the same time, his friend and Columbia colleague Ruth Benedict—another scholar who eventually earned a spot on his list of “self-actualized” people – nurtured his interest in anthropology and urged him to try his hand at fieldwork. With the help of a grant from the Social Science Research Council, Maslow spent the summer of 1938 on the Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Alberta, Canada.³⁸ Originally interested in studying the Blackfoots' patterns of “dominance and emotional security,” Maslow soon became struck by their rich traditions of generosity and what Benedict would call “synergy”: the phenomenon that exists when individuals' needs are perfectly aligned with the needs of their society, and when an action on behalf of the part necessarily benefits the whole.³⁹ According to

³⁷ Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* was viewed as one of the most important texts of the exiled social scientists in this era. Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1941). His later influential works included Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964); Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper, 1956).

³⁸ According to Hoffman in “Enlightened Management,” Margaret Mead also encouraged the Blackfoot experiment.

³⁹ Benedict was famous for her statement that “any society that is compatible with human advancements is a good one, but a society that works against basic human goals is antihuman and evil, and can be judged as such.” See Ruth

Maslow (and the works of Benedict that he helped publish), the theory of synergy suggested that “it’s possible to set up social institutions that merge selfishness and unselfishness, so that you can’t benefit from yourself without benefitting others. And the reverse.”⁴⁰ The Blackfoots’ culture inspired Maslow to develop his own broad theory of human nature, for his observations of their “innate need to experience meaning and a sense of purpose in life” fell outside the purview of either Freudian psychoanalysis or economic theory.⁴¹ The Blackfoots were (according to Maslow) fundamentally decent and innately cooperative. Maslow craved an explanation of human nature that could accommodate such qualities.⁴²

After researching the Blackfoots, Maslow returned to New York City to teach at Brooklyn College, where he remained until leaving for Brandeis University in 1951. It was during his early tenure at Brooklyn College that Maslow experienced his “epiphany moment”: the moment that later inspired him to develop his famous hierarchy of needs and provided the foundations for Third Force, or Humanistic, psychology. According to Maslow, it “happened very suddenly”:

One day just after Pearl Harbor, I was driving home and my car was stopped by a poor, pathetic parade. Boy Scouts and old uniforms and a flag and someone playing a flute off-key. As I watched, the tears began to run down my face. I felt we didn’t understand—not Hitler, nor the Germans, not Stalin, nor the Communists. We didn’t understand any of them. I felt that if we could understand, then we could make progress. I had a vision of a peace table, with people sitting around it, talking about human nature and hatred, war and peace, brotherhood. I was too old for the army. It was at that moment that I realized the

Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934). For the intellectual connections between Maslow and Benedict, see Abraham Maslow and John T. Honigmann, “Synergy: Some Notes of Ruth Benedict,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series 72, no. 2, (April 1970): 320-333.

⁴⁰ Hoffman, “Last Interview,” 73.

⁴¹ Gabor 160.

⁴² Maslow’s experience with the Blackfoots also reinforced his conception, that “the people around the world are more alike than they are different, and that we all share certain inborn needs and drives.” Hoffman, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management,” 79.

rest of my life must be devoted to discovering a psychology for the peace table. That moment changed my whole life...I wanted to prove that humans are capable of something grander than war, prejudice, and hatred. I wanted to make science consider the best specimen of mankind I could find.⁴³

This epiphany – the idea that there could *be* such a thing as a psychology for the “peace table,” and the conviction that science could uncover the common goodness of mankind—propelled Maslow’s work for the rest of his career, as he narrated the story. The humble, costumed boy scouts convinced Maslow that psychologists had spent too much time researching the pathological, the exceptional; and that in so doing, they had neglected the beauty of the mundane.

Maslow grew determined to develop a “comprehensive theory of human motivation” that could encapsulate the wide range of human experience, and to locate the shared facets of humanity across cultures.⁴⁴ He had already started thinking much more critically about the negative tendencies of Freudian psychology. When Bela Mittelman had solicited contributions for his 1940 volume *Principles of Abnormal Psychology*, Maslow insisted on writing his own chapter on *normal* personalities with an emphasis on healthy traits: self-esteem, self-knowledge, the ability to love, and the ability to question social conventions. Approaching this topic, he was dismayed to find the near total lack of research on healthy individuals in his field.⁴⁵ As he later described it, he recognized a “huge, big, gaping hole” in the field of psychology: “Where was the goodness? Where was the nobility? ...And where was loyalty...and courage?” Behaviorists could not offer insights into these arenas, he concluded, because “you don’t find these things in rats.” As for Freud, he was a “disappointed and unhappy man.” Maslow insisted that without a

⁴³ Hoffman, “Last Interview,” 72.

⁴⁴ Gabor 160.

⁴⁵ Gabor 160.

concept of goodness, psychology “didn’t gel; it was wrong.”⁴⁶ He set about establishing principles and research questions that could propel the study of healthy human beings.

In 1943, Maslow published the first definitive text of Third Force Psychology. Appearing in *Psychological Review*, “A Theory of Human Motivation” presented his concepts of the “hierarchy of needs” and “self-actualization,” which appeared in his work throughout the rest of his career.⁴⁷ In “A Theory of Human Motivation,” Maslow explained that psychologists needed a “human-centered” theory of motivation, as opposed to the “animal-centered” studies of behaviorists like Watson and Skinner.⁴⁸ He also insisted that it was time to develop a specifically *positive* theory of human motivation drawing from the works of people like William James, John Dewey, Max Wertheimer, Kurt Goldstein, and Alfred Adler – scholars who approached human subjects as fundamentally good and capable of growth.⁴⁹ In contrast to those psychologists who viewed people as relatively static products of the securities or traumas of early childhood (like Freud), or as predictable reactors to external stimuli (like the behaviorists), Maslow argued that all people are propelled by inner forces of need and satisfaction. “Man is a perpetually wanting animal,”⁵⁰ he explained, and his restless desires can guide him towards transcendent states of being.

⁴⁶ *Being Abraham Maslow*. Maslow also reflected in this film that fatherhood fundamentally changed his attitudes toward the behaviorists and the psychoanalysts: “When he had our babies,” he explained, they “destroyed” Watson and Freud. Maslow was particularly fascinated by the deep differences between his children, which dated back to their time in the womb (one was very active, and the other very passive). He believed that these differences offered a significant challenge to the idea that environmental conditioning and childhood trauma were primarily responsible for children’s behavioral outcomes.

⁴⁷ Abraham Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370-396.

⁴⁸ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 371.

⁴⁹ At the end of this article, Maslow referenced Adler, Freud, Fromm, Kurt Goldstein, Karen Horney, and Max Wertheimer, among others.

⁵⁰ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 372.

According to Maslow, all people begin with basic physiological needs (the bottom rung of his famous hierarchy). They are hungry; they are thirsty; they crave nutrition, sleep, warmth, and sex. In order to keep their bodies in states of healthy homeostasis, they try to consume appropriate amounts of salt, sugar, protein, fat, calcium, oxygen, warmth. These needs, Maslow explained, are the most “prepotent,” for in “the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be the physiological needs rather than the others.”⁵¹ “For the man who is extremely and dangerously hungry,” he postulated, “no other interests exist but food. He dreams food, he remembers food, he thinks about food, he emotes only about food, he perceives only food and he wants only food.”⁵² For this man, his pressing physiological needs might dictate an entire “philosophy of the future,” in which “Utopia can be defied very simply as a place where there is plenty of food.”⁵³ This man assumes that, should his hunger be sated, he should never want for anything ever again.

But, Maslow wondered, what happens to this hungry man once “there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled?”⁵⁴ What become of his needs and wants? Can he settle for his new Utopia of satisfied hunger? According to Maslow, absolutely not. For once the lowly physiological needs are satisfied, “other (and ‘higher’) needs emerge, and these...dominate the organism”⁵⁵ —until the man has moved all the way up a hierarchy of need and desire. Needs serve as organizing principles of human behavior, Maslow explained, only

⁵¹ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 373.

⁵² Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 373.

⁵³ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 374.

⁵⁴ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 375.

⁵⁵ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 375.

when they are left unsatisfied; once satisfied, the former need becomes seamlessly woven into the “current dynamics of the individual.”⁵⁶

Maslow thus charted the four rungs of the hierarchy above physiological needs, in ascending order. Above physiological needs, he located “safety” needs —best exemplified by the young child who cries whenever removed from the nurturing arms of her mother, or who feels terror upon developing an illness. The child craves stability, routine, and order because the alternative is chaos and danger; it is the job of parents to shield him/her from harm.⁵⁷ Similarly, a peaceful and well-ordered society “makes its members feel safe enough from wild animals, extremes of temperature, criminals, assault, murder, tyranny, etc.”⁵⁸ According to Maslow, the neurotic individual is one who was deprived of safety and security early in childhood, and spends the rest of his life grasping for stability; the unhealthy social group is that which clings to a totalitarian dictator out of a desperate craving for security and routine.⁵⁹

Once basic needs for safety have been satisfied, the individual pursues his “love needs”: needs for affection and belongingness expressed through both the giving and receiving of love. Having satisfied his hunger and achieved a sense of security, “the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and he will strive

⁵⁶ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 375.

⁵⁷ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 378.

⁵⁸ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 379.

⁵⁹ This early-1940s article reflects clear concerns with the some of the same issues that Fromm addressed in *Escape from Freedom*. In it Maslow asked, how much freedom can human beings handle, and to what extent is freedom healthy for society and the individual? Both works represented larger efforts, in other words, to understand how Naziism and other fascist movements could happen. Though Maslow appeared on the surface to be largely concerned with the actualization of the healthy individual, we can glean from these analytical moments that he was also concerned with the health of society and, by extension, interested in diagnosing strands of social pathology.

with great intensity to achieve his goal.”⁶⁰ Having satisfied *these* needs, he will move on to pursuing his “esteem needs.” Maslow defined esteem needs as those that lead us to crave self-respect, achievement, prestige, recognition, and importance—those feelings associated with a job well done or of being generally “useful and necessary in the world.” All people, he explained, “have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others.”⁶¹

Having established these first four basic needs (physiological, safety, love, and esteem) Maslow explained that the hierarchy itself was not fundamentally rigid or fixed. A person might fulfill one of these needs out of the order he presented, or fulfill multiple needs partially without satisfying any all the way. In some people, the needs might exist in different proportions: the ambitious go-getter might prize esteem over love, and the passionately committed painter might forsake food for his art. Furthermore, it could be difficult to attach motivating needs to discrete behaviors, as in the person who eats not because she is hungry but because she seeks comfort. The basic needs might appear in a variety of mutating manifestations.

If there was some flexibility in the bottom four levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, however, its peak remained unshakeable. At the fifth and uppermost echelon of the hierarchy was a concept first introduced by the neurologist Kurt Goldstein: “Self-actualization.”⁶² According to Maslow, self-actualization “refers to the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, the tendency for him to become self-actualized in what he is potentially.” He elaborated, “This

⁶⁰ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 381.

⁶¹ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 381.

⁶² The term “self-actualization” originated with the German organismic theorist Kurt Goldstein, but Maslow brought it to the attention of culture at large. Goldstein defined self-actualization as the use of an individual’s capacities in the world, and the drive that determined an individual’s path in life. See Kurt Goldstein, *The Organism, a Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*, American Psychology Series (New York: American Book Company, 1939).

tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.”⁶³

Maslow eventually became identified with the pleasure-seeking counterculture of the 1960s (an identification about which he felt deep ambivalence⁶⁴), and his conception of self-actualization became shorthand for the individualistic hedonism and narcissistic self-exploration of the baby-boom generation. But Maslow’s original conception of self-actualization was distinctly rooted in his own commitment to social justice and community. Self-actualization occurs, he argued, when an individual locates his or her place in society and finds a way to be useful. Maslow explained that even if the first four levels of his hierarchy were satisfied, “a new discontent and restlessness will develop, unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man *can* be, he *must* be.”⁶⁵ One might find security, love, respect and safety while toiling away at a soulless job, but true happiness could only arrive upon locating one’s calling in the world. Maslow’s idea of self-actualization, far from representing a retreat into the individual psyche, represented a reassertion of Jewish activist ethic and its insistence on the individual’s obligations to the world around him.⁶⁶

Maslow’s first article on the hierarchy of needs was greeted with little fanfare and “attracted only modest attention.”⁶⁷ But in this landmark piece, Maslow had established the central ideas of humanistic psychology. What he proposed was nothing less than a re-

⁶³ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 382.

⁶⁴ For more on Maslow’s ambivalent relationship with the counterculture and the left, see Chapter 9 of this dissertation.

⁶⁵ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 382.

⁶⁶ See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2010).

⁶⁷ Hoffman, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management,” 80.

envisioning of the modern self. Whereas the behaviorists' human subjects had been rooted in a set of predictable stimuli and responses, and Freud's subjects had been shackled to childhood traumas and adult neuroses, Maslow's subjects were capable of perpetual growth. Maslow assumed that all people held the potential for self-actualization; that existence was necessarily a work in progress, characterized by the quest for self-knowledge and psychological evolution. There was something sacred and unique about each self, Maslow suggested, something worthy of cultivation and exploration. In his early 20-page article, with its modest claims of laying out a "new theory of human motivation," Maslow established a new paradigm for selfhood in mainstream psychology.

A decade after the publication of his landmark *Psychological Review* article, Maslow introduced his ideas to a much broader audience. The 1954 book *Motivation and Personality* established Maslow as a critical figure not just in the social sciences or his own field of psychology, but in the broader landscape of American culture.⁶⁸ The book did not introduce much new material, but rather assembled Maslow's previous writings on the hierarchy of needs with new evidence on self-actualized people. In *Motivation and Personality*, he reiterated his protests against Freudianism -- because "the study of cripples, stunted, and unhealthy specimens can yield only a cripple psychology and a cripple philosophy" -- and behavioristic reductionism.⁶⁹ "The science of psychology," he explained,

'has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illnesses, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his psychological health. It is as if psychology had voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction... We must find out what psychology... might be, if it

⁶⁸ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*.

⁶⁹ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 236.

could free itself from the stultifying effects of limited, pessimistic and stingy preoccupations with human nature.’⁷⁰

In *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow outlined the hierarchy of needs, expanded on the principles he’d published in earlier articles, and elaborated on the notion of self-actualization. Self-actualization emerged here as an all-encompassing state of human fulfillment – one that involved acceptance of self and the world, social compassion, spontaneity, independence, artistic appreciation, and some aspects of religious experience.

Maslow built on his generalizations about self-actualization with a set of sixteen people, living and historical, whom he deemed self-actualized, including: Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, Abraham Lincoln, Jane Addams, William James, Eleanor Roosevelt, Aldus Huxley, and Spinoza. He also located nineteen specific characteristics of their self-actualization, including clarity of perception, problem-solving orientation, solitude seeking, ethics, and senses of humor.

Maslow’s book met a positive reception in the psychological community and beyond. According to Maslow’s biographer, whereas his 1943 article had penetrated just a small segment of the psychological community, this new work “catapulted Maslow to national prominence” and was “widely acknowledged as a major psychological achievement of the 1950s.”⁷¹ But the book also met its fair share of skeptics. One reviewer applauded Maslow’s “essentially joyous and optimistic” vision of human personality, which he found to be a “relieving complement to the dreary accounts of human conflict, frustration, and misery which constitute so much of the substance of traditional and especially Freudian lore.” But he cited critics who contended that Maslow’s theories were “better argued than proved,” and that “much of what he says is poetry

⁷⁰ Hoffman quoting Maslow, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management,” 80.

⁷¹ Hoffman, “Abraham Maslow: Father of Enlightened Management,” 80.

rather than science.”⁷² Like the humanistic management theorists inspired by his writings, Maslow would repeatedly encounter criticisms along these lines: that his work expressed a philosophy of human nature—or even a religion—as opposed to empirical, scientifically rooted evidence.

In 1944, Maslow received a letter in response to papers he had written on concepts of leadership and motivation from Douglas McGregor, then a professor of Industrial Relations at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.⁷³ Expressing admiration for the seminal article on motivation Maslow had published the year before,⁷⁴ McGregor explained that he was also “delighted” with Maslow’s recent article on the “authoritarian character structure” and offered, “I could pick for you a number of rather striking examples from among my industrial acquaintances.”⁷⁵ As early as the mid-1940s, McGregor had seized on the potential applications of Maslow’s psychological theories within the industrial arena and begun to espouse them within the hallowed halls of MIT.

Douglas McGregor’s biography, like Maslow’s, spans a range of 20th-century intellectual traditions and institutions. A trained social psychologist, McGregor traveled the vital social-science circuits of the early- and mid-20th century with a broad commitment to economic and political democracy. He hobnobbed with many of the period’s most influential organizational reformers in a time of great anxiety about the future of the country’s powerful institutions, and

⁷² Robert Knapp, review of *Motivation and Personality*, *The Scientific Monthly* 80, no 5 (May 1955): 325-326.

⁷³ Letter, Douglas McGregor to Abraham Maslow, 24 October 1944, folder “Misc. Correspondence J-T,” box M397, Maslow papers, AHAP. For McGregor’s published reflections on Maslow’s ideas, see Douglas McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” *Journal of Consulting Psychology* VIII, no. 2 (March-April 1944): 55-63.

⁷⁴ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation.”

⁷⁵ Letter from McGregor to Maslow, 24 Oct 1944.

with them articulated a particular vision of capitalist evolution. According to McGregor, capitalism could only survive and prosper if its advocates created avenues for genuine communication and – critically, in his mind—participation. McGregor was a staunch supporter of unionization and effective labor/management negotiations; he pushed for democratic decision-making and equitable settlements. As president of Antioch, where he presided for six years (1948-54) between two stints at MIT’s Sloan School of Management, he also advocated for progressive education and democratic governance.

More than perhaps any other figure in the sphere of humanistic management, McGregor moved between organizational environments with a consistent and impassioned commitment to his ideals. He sensed crisis in the proliferation of large-scale bureaucracies and the persistence of Taylorism, spending much of his career decrying scientific management and fighting for “humanized” work places. Ultimately, he made little distinction between different kinds of institutions—be they educational, industrial, social, or political—but consistently and urgently pressed for increased participation in American organizational life.

Douglas McGregor was born in Detroit in 1906, two years before Abraham Maslow was born in Brooklyn. His great grandfather, John Murray McGregor, was a Scotch Presbyterian minister who had “set a standard for the McGregors” with his proselytizing ways.⁷⁶ His grandfather, Thomas, began his career as a piano and livestock salesman, but grew restless in those pursuits and decided to start a mission for transient workers and homeless men—many of them American-Americans—providing them with shelter, food, and opportunities for salvation. Thomas contracted pneumonia after digging the foundations of the mission (which later became

⁷⁶ Warren Bennis’ introduction to Douglas McGregor, *Leadership and Motivation; Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1966), x. See Weisbord and Gabor for biographical information about McGregor.

Detroit's McGregor Institute) and soon died, bequeathing the holy work of the mission to his oldest son (and Douglas's uncle), Tracy, who went on to start other philanthropies in the area.⁷⁷

In 1915, Douglas's father, Murray, became a lay preacher and Director of the Institute. Douglas's wife, Caroline, later recounted the impact of the Institute and its work on her late husband:

'Doug's father became Director of the McGregor Institute in 1915. Family life revolved around his work—a chapel service every evening as well as the feeding and housing of as many as 700 men who were low on the totem pole of human dignity. Dad conducted the service, played the organ, and Doug sometimes accompanied him on the piano...Both Doug and his brother worked in the office and at the desk out of school hours. Many of the staff were rehabilitated homeless men. Mother often had groups of the men for social evenings at the house. Dad had strong religious beliefs, was a zealous Bible scholar and a lay preacher in his own right. As I look back on my first contacts with Doug's family, I am impressed with the deep concern for mankind, which Doug shared, and an equally deep pessimism in respect to man's potential goodness and strength, which Doug continued to challenge in his work and writings.'⁷⁸

The intersection of faith and doubt appears often in analyses of McGregor's early years. One account has noted that while he played piano and sang gospel songs as a boy at work, he listened to the "fire-and-brimstone lectures of his father, who was 'weighed down by the social pathology of the men he sought to save,' convinced of their core sinfulness."⁷⁹ McGregor inherited his father's "compassion for the lost souls of the mission," but rebelled against Murray's "pessimism about human nature," developing instead "a firm conviction in the essential goodness and strength of each individual."⁸⁰ His management treatises would eventually play these two models of human nature off of each other.

⁷⁷ Bennis, *Leadership and Motivation*, x.

⁷⁸ Letter from Caroline McGregor quoted in Bennis, *Leadership and Motivation*, xi.

⁷⁹ Weisbord quoted in Gabor 163.

⁸⁰ Gabor 163.

Just as Abraham Maslow found inspiration among exiled Jews who fused their religion with the ideals of democratic socialism, McGregor emerged from a distinctly reformist brand of Protestantism.⁸¹ According to McGregor's former student and friend, Warren Bennis, the earliest stage of McGregor's upbringing established "the dominant chords in Doug's intellectual origins: religion, the search for meaning, music, and the firmly embedded idea that through productive work man will find his salvation."⁸² His family's mission epitomized the work of the Social Gospel, the turn-of-the-century Christian movement that advocated salvation through service to others and pressed members to suppress their personal needs on behalf of the larger good. But if this liberal expression of Protestantism made an impact on McGregor, he seems to have been equally impressed by the more traditional Protestant work ethic articulated by Max Weber: a "moral code stressing hard work, asceticism, and the rational organization of one's life in the service of God"; the idea that one could achieve salvation through the dutiful performing of one's vocational calling.⁸³ McGregor remained, throughout his life, committed to the conviction that a meaningful life requires meaningful work; that American culture's increasing emphasis on leisure deprived men of their most certain prospects for self-actualization and transcendence.

⁸¹ Note that Art Kleiner has recognized the link between the humanistic management crusaders and the "great American Protestant liberal tradition, the tradition of Quaker meetings, community barn raisings, and Ralph Waldo Emerson," suggesting that "Somehow, these ecumenical WASPs knew how to bring forth mutual understanding." Kleiner, *Age of Heretics*, 48. He links the liberal Christianity of McGregor, Leland Bradford, Kenneth Benne, Carl Rogers, and Ronald Lippitt to their shared determination to "build a better world" and defend their "inbred sense of populist egalitarianism." Yet I would argue that this analysis's emphasis on Protestantism overlooks important changes taking place in both Christianity and Judaism in the first half of the 20th century. The "ecumenical WASP" tradition had clear counterparts in the Jews who established the American Jewish Congress in service of civil liberties, and in the number of Jews who made critical contributions to liberal social science during the period. Perhaps the most significant part of the religious story is the willingness of these men to work together, across faiths, for a shared set of social aims. See Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*.

⁸² Bennis, *Leadership and Motivation*, xi.

⁸³ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

In 1926, McGregor earned a Bachelor's degree from the City College of Detroit (later known as Wayne State)—having left for a semester at Oberlin College when he considered becoming a minister. After a few years of working for the Buffalo Grey Auto Stations as a district manager, he married and moved back home to work nights for the McGregor Institute in Detroit.⁸⁴ He left the family business in 1932 to pursue a PhD in Social Psychology at Harvard University, completing his PhD in 1935 and teaching as an instructor there for two years. While McGregor's Harvard dissertation (*The Sensitivity of the Eye to the Saturation of Colors*⁸⁵) offered little reflection of his interests or professional identity, he began in this time to build a network of colleagues in the young field of social psychology. Most notably, he befriended the esteemed social psychologist Gordon Allport, with whom he remained in contact throughout his career.⁸⁶ Allport, like McGregor and Maslow, rejected Freudian and behaviorist theories of the human personality, arguing that present social contexts predict personality traits better than past histories or physiological conditions.⁸⁷

In 1937, McGregor was hired as an instructor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he helped found the Industrial Relations Department as the first full-time psychologist on the school's faculty. He remained at MIT—save his six-year presidency of Antioch College—for the rest of his life. McGregor's presence at MIT helped critically define the program's identity from the 1930s through the 1960s, both because of McGregor's

⁸⁴ Weisbord 111.

⁸⁵ Douglas McGregor, "The Sensitivity of the Eye to the Saturation of Colors" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1935).

⁸⁶ Weisbord 109-110.

⁸⁷ Gordon Allport's best known works include: Gordon W Allport, *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955); Allport, *The Individual and His Religion, a Psychological Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1954). Also see Ian A. M. Nicholson, *Inventing Personality: Gordon Allport and the Science of Selfhood* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003).

convictions and pedagogical style (he was known for being a warm, casual teacher who sat back and thrust his feet upon the desk in front of him while he taught⁸⁸), and because of the faculty whom McGregor actively recruited. “Under McGregor’s gentle guidance,” Andrea Gabor has written, “the Sloan School of Management’s Industrial Relations section became a lightning rod for important new ideas in human motivation and leadership that were percolating among both psychologists and management experts.”⁸⁹ McGregor actively recruited men like Kurt Lewin, Joseph Scanlon, and Edgar Schein, whose wide range of perspectives and priorities helped shape the experimental atmosphere of the program throughout McGregor’s tenure. McGregor did not publish prolifically—his written legacy consists of several articles and his popular book—but he served a critical function in helping to establish a sort of “brains trust” at MIT, assembling a cohort of peers with whom to ponder the future of American capitalism.

When McGregor helped establish the Industrial Relations section of MIT, industrial social science was a nascent sub-discipline. McGregor reflected in 1959, “The social scientist in industry is a relatively recent arrival. Eleven years ago, when I joined the staff of the newly founded Industrial Relations Department at MIT, I found evidence of the efforts of a mere handful who had preceded me.”⁹⁰ Psychology flourished in the interwar period, he remembered, but “few social psychologists [were] interested in industrial problems” – and those who were tended to focus their organizational work on public opinion polls, which largely neglected the

⁸⁸ See Bennis’s recollections of McGregor’s teaching in *Leadership and Motivation*.

⁸⁹ Gabor 165. Note that the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management originated in 1914 as “Course XV, Engineering Administration,” at MIT, in the Department of Economics and Statistics. Davis R. Dewey was in charge of the course from 1914-1917, at which point Erwin Haskell Schell was hired and became head of the course, a position he retained until his retirement in 1951. In 1925, MIT established a Master’s program in management. In 1926, it introduced courses in finance, accounting, and economic trends. In 1930, Course XV became an independent department, renamed the Department of Business and Engineering Administration. In 1938, a program for executive development was established and in 1960, the school launched a doctoral program in industrial management. In 1964, the school was renamed the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management.

⁹⁰ See Douglas McGregor, “Forward,” *Journal of Social Issues* (1948): 2-4, 2.

dynamics of interpersonal relationships in organizations.⁹¹ McGregor located “some notable case studies” but encountered “literally no unified theories of the why of organized human effort” aside from those of economists, which he found unsatisfactory.⁹² According to McGregor, the work of Elton Mayo and Fritz Roethlisberger at Harvard Business School served as an important springboard for the MIT faculty’s efforts to “make theoretical sense of the vast complex of human relations.” But he yearned for a systematic theory that could transcend the Hawthorne Studies, for “[t]he collection of unrelated hunches, hypotheses, and rules of thumb which cluttered the literature provided little practical help in dealing with the problems we were called upon to solve.”⁹³

In spite of his commitment to the development of management concepts and theories, McGregor later framed the MIT Industrial Relation section’s mission in distinctly pragmatic, terms. “We think of ourselves chiefly as ‘plumbers,’” he explained, “mending leaky pipes in human relations plumbing”—and attending to real-world organizational dilemmas, sometimes at the expense of scholarly production. Twelve years after arriving at MIT, he conceded that his group had “not contributed our fair share of publications to the ‘pool,’” suggesting that “we have been too preoccupied with the everyday problems which we met in the factory” and “too busy trying to communicated our ideas in the classroom and to the union and management people in our industrial laboratories.”⁹⁴ The strife that characterized American labor relations between

⁹¹ For more on public opinion polls in the interwar period, see previous chapter about Rensis Likert. As a fierce advocate of polling, Likert epitomized the early social -science approach to studying large organizations, but his early years also reflected a certain lack of focus in the field: Pollsters typically studied a broad range of topics in American society—from organizational life, to personality traits and aptitudes, to attitudes about world events, to the impact of marketing.

⁹² McGregor, “Foreword,” 2.

⁹³ McGregor, “Foreword,” 2.

⁹⁴ McGregor, “Foreword,” 3.

1935 and 1950, as unions and management competed vigorously for worker loyalty, initially overshadowed McGregor's utopian mission of large-scale organizational reform.⁹⁵

From his early days at MIT, McGregor struggled to establish a field of industrial science rooted in cutting-edge psychological theory while also counteracting "the conviction of many people in industry that psychologists were impractical dreamers."⁹⁶ The remainder of his career found him torn between two factions: hard-nosed industrial realists and idealistic, humanistic theorists. It is a testament to his charisma and resourcefulness that he managed throughout his career to forge alliances with both groups. McGregor emerged as a rare scholar-practitioner who wrote the period's most influential management treatise and spent much of his career consulting with both labor unions and corporations, including the United Steel Workers and General Mills.

In 1942, McGregor published his first major article attempting to bridge the concrete realm of union-management relationships with more abstractly psychological concerns. In "Union-Management Cooperation: A Psychological Analysis," McGregor reflected on his experiences with successful labor/management committees he had overseen during his days at the War Production Board (WPB).⁹⁷ The WPB had been established by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in January 1942 with the purpose of converting peacetime industries into wartime producers, overseeing both rationing and the allocation of scarce materials to wartime production. Its work necessitated forging cooperative ties between labor and management.

⁹⁵ For labor relations of this period, see Elizabeth A Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Nelson Lichtenstein, *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise*, Woodrow Wilson Center Series (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge University Press, 1993); Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II: With a New Introduction by the Author* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003); Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁹⁶ McGregor, "Foreword," 2.

⁹⁷ McGregor and Irving Knickerbocker, "Union-Management Cooperation: A Psychological Analysis," originally published in *Personnel* 19, no. 3 (1942): 52-539. Reprinted in McGregor, *Leadership and Motivation*. Unfortunately, I have located no archival or published sources with additional details concerning McGregor's experience at the War Production Board. For more information about the WPB, see Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home*.

Though many plants had experimented with labor-management committees in the first half of the 20th century and entertained the idea that “cooperation between management and union might be a powerful force to increase productive efficiency,” the WPB was the first agency to attempt these negotiations on a large scale. McGregor had emerged from his time with the WPB with a new appreciation for the potential of such cooperation, but also for the common pitfalls in communication between managers and union leaders. Having witnessed the possibilities of successful negotiations between unions and management, he evaluated the psychological conditions that had made them work.

Too often, McGregor explained, managers approached union leaders with resentment and bitterness as opposed to openness and respect. If both sides could understand and appreciate the nuances of relationships, behavior, attitudes, and personality, they could make strides toward successful negotiations, striking deals that would simultaneously boost productivity and increase workers’ senses of security and prestige. To transcend habits of pettiness and resentment, both managers and labor leaders would need to assume a new approach to their dealings: they would need to conceive of labor-management relations as “a process of psychological growth.”⁹⁸ Employing an analogy that persisted in his management writings for the rest of his career, he argued that it was helpful to conceive of union-management relations as “a process of psychological growth and development similar to that experienced by the individual as he passes from infancy through childhood and adolescence to maturity.”⁹⁹ As with any childhood development, the pace could be “slow and arduous” and could be arrested at any time: “Real emotional maturity is rare among individuals,” and regression is common, so it is “not surprising

⁹⁸ McGregor and Knickerbocker 85.

⁹⁹ McGregor and Knickerbocker 85.

that only a small proportion of union-management combinations have succeeded in reaching a fair degree of emotional maturity.”¹⁰⁰

This early article thus established one of the two recurring metaphors of McGregor’s management theory. On the one hand, much of his management theory drew an analogy between management and parenting—equating the worker with the child who must be stimulated, loved, and given structure, and the boss with the parent who must be caring while also firm and strategic in the nurturing of his child’s needs. This analogy would alternate in McGregor’s writing with a grander metaphor in which he compared the act of managing to that of governance, with the boss emerging as a political leader and his workers as citizens of his state. Both analogies reflect the extent to which the entire notion of “authority” was being questioned and reconsidered in the 1940s: Where do we draw the line between the father or leader who is firm, and he who is authoritarian? How can we reconcile obedience with the active development of children and citizens?¹⁰¹

According to McGregor, union leaders and management should discard the model of “collective bargaining” in favor of “cooperation.” Whereas the former suggested a fundamental competition for resources and lack of shared objectives, the latter implied that both sides could benefit from their negotiations. McGregor explained that cooperation was the more “mature” model—and could be applied to such realms as production, internal wage structures, incentives, and grievance systems. Rather than dwelling on the ins and outs of these procedural matters, he focused on the emotional tone with which they should be carried out. First, it was critical that

¹⁰⁰ McGregor and Knickerbocker 86.

¹⁰¹ For histories of child-rearing in the 20th century, see: Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children* (Vintage, 2004); Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004). For ideas about industrial democracy in this era, see Clinton S Golden, *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy* (New York, London: Harper & brothers, 1942).

management treat both union leader and workers as equals and with “genuine and evident respect,” recognizing that workers possess “highly specific knowledge” about their work, and that union leaders are elected democratically by those who trust them to represent their voices. Only then could he at the bottom of the industrial hierarchy “feel free to respect himself”—a critical step towards emotional maturity.¹⁰² Second, it was critical that the union leader curb his own instincts to rebel against authority, acting with quiet confidence rather than feistiness or even violence. He must strive to understand the manager’s perspective and dilemmas, resisting the impulse to view negotiations as a zero-sum game. Only then could both sides of the equation reach their ultimate goal: to share equitably in the gains from their cooperation—not as acquisitive individuals, but as cohesive groups.¹⁰³

In this 1942 article, McGregor constructed a preliminary bridge between industrial and humanistic psychology, incorporating the most central principles of the new sub-discipline being espoused by the movement’s pioneers, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. McGregor not only framed labor-management negotiations as a process of psychological growth—with “emotional maturity” and independence as aims—but also presented emotional expression as one of the most effective tools of the trade. Two years before Maslow published his seminal article on the hierarchy of needs, McGregor nodded to its principles: “Unless management understands the workers’ desires for security, social satisfactions, prestige, and the recognition of personal worth,

¹⁰² McGregor and Knickerbocker 103.

¹⁰³ For McGregor, “groupness” was also central to his philosophy of labor-management negotiations. He wrote: “The traditional American philosophy has been individualistic. Consequently, it has been natural for management to seek ways of motivating individuals to be more productive, and to reward the individual for his efforts. During the past decade, however, there has been increasing emphasis on collective goals. Social security, ‘share-the-work’ plans, union organizing, wage and hour legislation—all are *group* rather than individual phenomena. It is actually just as possible to harness motives to group effort as it is to individual effort, although we have only recently begun to recognize this fact in industry.” McGregor and Knickerbocker 106. This emphasis was consistent with the work being conducted around the same time by social scientists like Kurt Lewin, who believed that the group was the essential kernel of American democracy.

union-management cooperation will appear to be a utopian idea entirely outside the realm of practicality...” and unless the union strives for a “genuine understanding” of *management* needs and motivations, it will be left constantly viewing management with suspicion.¹⁰⁴ This understanding could not transpire through a mere rational processing of information. Rather, it depended upon the critical skill of empathy that Carl Rogers actively promoted in the 1940s [through his client-centered therapy—in which a therapist’s ultimate goal was to understand the perspective and feelings of his patient. Labor-management meetings “are often carried on in an atmosphere of ‘being logical’ or ‘sticking to the hard facts’”—and “[w]hen this atmosphere exists, a barrier is raised against the expression of feelings and emotions.” McGregor expounded, “Whether or not you ‘understand’ in this case depends not upon a mere knowledge of facts but upon your ability to put yourself in the other fellow’s shoes emotionally.”¹⁰⁵

McGregor concluded his article with a promise to union leaders and management leaders alike:

If they have the patience to accept the inevitable slowness of psychological growth, if each side has enough self-confidence to permit a belief in the ability and honesty of the other, and if they have a real understanding not only of the factual but also of the emotional problems involved, they will, over the next few years, make the transition to a relationship whose potentialities have been only dimly perceived: genuine union-management cooperation.¹⁰⁶

With this declaration, Douglas McGregor united the humanistic psychologists’ greatest concerns—human potential, authentic communication, and emotional expression—with the labor/management agenda of the 1940s.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ McGregor and Knickerbocker 111.

¹⁰⁵ McGregor and Knickerbocker 112.

¹⁰⁶ McGregor and Knickerbocker 113.

¹⁰⁷ See Christopher L Tomlins, *The State and the Unions: Labor Relations, Law, and the Organized Labor Movement in America, 1880-1960* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Two years later, McGregor reiterated some of these principles in a widely read article aimed more broadly at the state of industrial organizations, and more explicitly articulated Maslow's influence on his thinking. In "Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization" (1944), McGregor pondered the principles of successful relationships between superiors and subordinates, returning to the ideas he had expressed about labor/management relations and injecting more explicit evidence from the writings of Maslow.¹⁰⁸ It is clear that by 1944, McGregor had firmly integrated the "hierarchy of needs" into his own management thinking—a move that laid intellectual foundations for his 1960 management classic, the *Human Side of Enterprise*.

In this 1944 article, McGregor set out to analyze "some of the important forces and events in the work situation which air or hinder the individual as he strives to satisfy his needs"—examining not only the "easily observed actions of others," but also the "subtle, fleeting manifestations of attitude and emotion to which the individual reacts almost unconsciously."¹⁰⁹ He framed his analysis in terms of what he called "dynamic psychology," focusing specifically on the interpersonal dynamics that tend to develop between subordinates and their superiors—regardless of the context of unionization."The outstanding characteristic of the relationship between the subordinate and his superiors," he explained "is his dependence upon them for the satisfaction of his needs." Invoking Maslow, he continued:

Industry in our civilization is organized along authoritative lines. In a fundamental and pervasive sense, the subordinate is dependent upon his superiors for his job, for the continuity of his employment, for promotion with its accompanying satisfactions in the form of increased pay, responsibility, and prestige, and for a host of other personal and social satisfactions to be obtained in

¹⁰⁸ McGregor, "Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 3, no. 2 (March-April 1944).

¹⁰⁹ McGregor, "Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization," 55.

the work situation. This dependence is not adequately recognized in our culture.¹¹⁰

Recognizing the fundamental dependence that characterizes the superior/subordinate relationship, McGregor argued, would be a critical step toward transforming the power dynamics of the workplace.

According to McGregor, management in the US had already focused a good deal on establishing financial security for workers: offering them retirement plans, health and accident insurance, guaranteed annual wages, and employee credit unions. But they had neglected the more subtle cravings that workers have for *psychological* security—and this omission necessitated a new wave of reforms. Managers should foster atmospheres characterized by a “genuine attitude of approval,” without which “subordinates are threatened, fearful, and insecure.”¹¹¹ He endorsed relatively permissive punishments, noting that “the behavior of the people in the occupied countries of Europe today provides a convincing demonstration” of what happens when severe discipline is administered in an “atmosphere of disapproval.”¹¹²

After establishing conditions of psychological security, McGregor wrote, the manager could foster his subordinate’s “necessity for self-realization.”¹¹³ Here, the theorist shifted his attention from discipline and rewards to the transcendent ideal at the peak of Maslow’s hierarchy. He explained that having internalized a sense of security in the workplace, the “subordinate seeks to develop himself”; to locate “ways of utilizing more fully his capacities and skills, and of achieving through his own efforts a larger degree of satisfaction from his work.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” 56.

¹¹¹ McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” 58.

¹¹² McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” 60.

¹¹³ McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” 57.

¹¹⁴ McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” 60.

And how might a superior encourage a subordinate to maximize his own capacities? For McGregor, the answer was clear: he needed to offer his underlings increased responsibility and opportunities for participation.

Echoing the calls for democracy issued from many social scientists in the 1940s, McGregor insisted that “[o]ne of the most important conditions of the subordinate’s growth and development centers around his opportunities to express his ideas and to contribute his suggestions before his superiors take action on matters which involve him.” He assured skeptical readers, “The genuine collaboration among all the members of an industrial organization which is eulogized by ‘impractical idealists’ is actually quite possible.”¹¹⁵ McGregor would continue to insist on this principle throughout the remainder of his career: that workers are capable of assuming far more responsibility than managers expect, and that subordinates thrive when offered opportunities for participative decision-making.

On October 24, 1944, McGregor wrote to thank Abraham Maslow for his “good word about my leadership paper,” thus cementing an intellectual bond that shaped McGregor’s work for the remainder of his life and career.¹¹⁶ Though the two men did not meet face to face until the 1960s, the convergence of their worldviews had become clear by the mid-1940s. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs had become a centerpiece of McGregor’s organizational psychology, which anticipated a rising wave of participative management theorists and practitioners in the postwar era. McGregor’s writings would, in turn, have a profound effect on Maslow’s own industrial excursions in the 1960s.

¹¹⁵ McGregor, “Conditions of Effective Leadership in the Industrial Organization,” 62.

¹¹⁶ Letter, McGregor to Maslow, 24 Oct 1944.

Chapter 4

Kurt Lewin's Wartime Democracy and the Rise of Group Dynamics

Dwight Sanderson, the president of the *American Sociological Review*, wrote a rousing presidential address to be delivered at the 37th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society in December 1942. He intended his speech to mobilize his sociologist comrades, waking them to duties of wartime while also asserting the primacy of sociology in a volatile global context. When World War II caused the cancelation of the December meeting, however, Sanderson was left with a quieter platform: the publication of his piece, entitled “Sociology[.] A Means to Democracy,” in the February 1943 issue of the *American Sociological Review*.¹ The fact that he could not deliver his impassioned plea to a crowd of listeners might have easily reinforced a sense that he and many of his colleagues in social science had grown peripheral to the project of wartime mobilization. According to Sanderson, this needed to change.

Sanderson's published address acknowledged the yearning of his colleagues to play a stronger role in wartime. “In these days of tragedy,” he wrote, “many of us often feel ill at ease in not being actively engaged in work to win the war.” He insisted that his fellow social scientists could greatly expand their role in the war effort:

[I]f we take the longer view we become aware that physical victory cannot be forced into the hearts of men. A better understanding of the nature and processes of society, including those human values which make for survival, is essential to enable men to desire real democracy. We must bring men to appreciate that, although force is necessary to police society, only the ideals which rule men's hearts can ever ensure a permanent peace. In this conviction that our work is necessary toward a durable peace may we renew our faith in the responsibility of our profession for discovering and proclaiming those truths concerning social organization which are necessary for creating a wider and truer democracy.²

¹ Dwight Sanderson, “Sociology a Means to Democracy,” *American Sociological Review* 8, no. 1 (February 1943): 1-9.

² Sanderson 9.

Sanderson suggested that sociologists could serve a range of roles in the war effort. Their work would entail not just influencing the “hearts of men,” but also reevaluating the very nature of democracy through social-scientific methods.

Due to events unfolding on the world stage, Sanderson wrote, a legion of American social scientists had begun to reconsider the meaning of democracy already.³ Rather than view democracy primarily as a political system – a rejection of feudalism rooted in universal suffrage and parliamentary representation – his colleagues were defining democracy as a multifaceted social *process* that operated churches, factories, schools, and families. Most importantly, social scientists were starting to locate its principles in the very psyches of American citizens, as what he labeled a “sentiment of personality.” Democracy, Sanderson wrote, “rests primarily upon our attitudes toward others ... “essentially a philosophy of life.”⁴ He went so far as to suggest that democracy was “essentially a religious faith” distinctly rooted in Christian ethics and values, “a spiritual power or product of the people.”⁵

For Sanderson, part of the work that lay ahead for sociologists (whom he addressed interchangeably with social psychologists⁶) was to define democracy in positive terms, not as a set of freedoms but as a set of responsibilities “for one’s self, for the good of the neighbor, for the welfare of the Demos.” Until “every citizen” felt this responsibility as “an inescapable

³ See Carl Becker, *Modern Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); Charles E. Merriam, *The New Democracy and the New Despotism* (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw Book Company, 1939); Merriam, *What is Democracy?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941); John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (New York: GP Putnam an Sons, 1939).

⁴ Sanderson 1, 3.

⁵ Sanderson 2.

⁶ Sanderson defends his nomenclature this way: “Sociology and social psychology (for my present purpose I do not distinguish between them) have shown that human personality is the product of social relations, that we are interdependent, and that the welfare of each is conditioned by the welfare of all.” Sanderson 3. For more on the concept of interdependence in social psychology, see Baritz, *Servants of Power*, and Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy*.

personal obligation” democracy would not be “complete.”⁷ An incomplete democracy would imperil not just the nation’s fight against the axis in World War II, but the survival of its most vital institutions after the war. And here, Sanderson explained emphatically, was where American social scientists came in. If democracy was a psychological and sociological process, social psychologists could play a pivotal role in promoting its spread. Their task would be threefold: to develop a clear nomenclature for the study of democratic processes; to establish strong networks and funding sources for the research of those processes; and to apply their research to “existing situations” in the real world. Sanderson acknowledged that a community of social scientists (including Kurt Lewin, the subject of this chapter) were already working in the field of “applied sociology” and addressing their research explicitly to pressing social problems. He urged them to go deeper.⁸

Two years after the publication of Sanderson’s address, near war’s end, celebrated Harvard psychologist (and friend of Douglas McGregor) Gordon Allport celebrated those psychologists already committed to the war effort. He cited the Office of Psychological Personnel’s estimation that 25% of 4500 psychologists listed in its personnel were in the armed forces –numbers not including those who were linked through unreported community work or “personal sacrifice.”⁹ In “The Psychology of Participation,” an address to the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, he explained that “[w]hat the war has done for the majority of social psychologists ... is to provide them with a direction for future work.” Allport listed

⁷ Sanderson 2.

⁸ Sanderson cited existing work on “the social self,” social status, race, social order, population, and what he called “the cultural lag.” He also cited the increasing popularity of group work and group therapy as vehicles of applied social science.

⁹ Gordon Allport, “The Psychology of Participation,” 1944, Chairman’s address delivered at Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues at Columbia University, folder 12, box M1938, Alfred J. Marrow papers, AHAP.

new techniques of polling, group decision-making, leadership training, and “devices for alleviating minority tensions” as some of the many constructive techniques addressing the “psychology of participation” during wartime.¹⁰ He endorsed psychological research that addressed the participation of everyday citizens – be they industrial workers, school children, or German citizens—in the shaping of their fates. “[U]nless he [your average citizen] is in some areas ego-engaged and participant,” Allport explained, “his life is crippled and his existence a blemish on democracy.”¹¹ American psychologists could help citizens understand that democratic action demanded active engagement, not merely voting.

Some social psychologists gained employment during World War II working directly for the government’s wartime agencies, while others found ways to address their nation’s needs more philosophically. Kurt Lewin did both. From 1942 until his death in 1947, while the Harwood Studies continued under French and Bavelas’s leadership, Lewin contributed his expertise to wartime agencies while also cultivating a vibrant subfield of social psychology devoted to training democratic leaders. He lent his services as a social researcher to the Department of Agriculture and the Office of Strategic Services, where he conducted studies on food consumption and psychological warfare. At the same time, he worked tirelessly to build two new research organizations committed to introducing democratic principles to everyday life. The American Jewish Congress’s Committee for Community Interrelations and MIT’s Research Center for Group Dynamics both exemplified Lewin’s ideal of “action research.” Launched

¹⁰ Allport 25-26. Dorwin Cartwright, one of Kurt Lewin’s close collaborators, later reflected that “Just as the First World War witnessed the establishment of psychological testing as a major field of psychology, it now appears that the Second World War has brought to maturity social psychology.” Cartwright, “Social Psychology in the United States During the Second World War,” *Human Relations* 1, no. 3 (1948).

¹¹ Allport 21.

immediately after World War II, he envisioned these agencies as hubs for socially useful research on small groups, particularly concerning issues of prejudice, leadership, and social change. In establishing these organizations, Lewin launched two major hubs of democratic, activist research that would persist in the postwar era, long after his death. Both groups helped formalize the new subfield of Group Dynamics (of which Lewin is widely heralded as the “father”) and represented Lewin’s conviction that social science could change the world.

Lewin’s first work with a government agency came about at the outbreak of World War II, while he was still working at the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station.¹² Lewin had by 1942 developed an affectionate friendship with the anthropologist Margaret Mead, who belonged to a discussion group he had started on the psychological concept of “Topology.” Mead had been asked by ML Wilson, the Director of Extension in the US Department of Agriculture, to serve as the secretary for the Committee on Food Habits of the National Research Council.¹³ (Wilson recruited many prominent social scientists to serve his agency during this time. See the following chapter for his relationship with Rensis Likert.) Soon after, Mead introduced Wilson to Lewin, about whom Wilson was “enthusiastic,” and the two men discussed various problems facing Mead’s Committee on Food Habits. Mead later explained:

Our committee had been requested to study and advise governmental agencies how to alter habits and tastes so that they would embody the findings of the new science of nutrition and also, during the war time emergency, maintain the health of the American people, in spite of shortages and necessary shifts in types of food. As anthropologists, we came to the conclusion that our first task was to find out what American food habits were, what was the cultural setting within which

¹² This study is detailed in Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 128.

¹³ See Margaret Mead, “The Committee on Food Habits,” reprinted in *Psychological Bulletin* 40 (April 1943): 290-293. Also Mead and Carl E. Guthe, “The Problem of Changing Food Habits: Report on the Committee of Food Habits, 1941-43,” *Bulletin of the National Research Council* 108 (October 1943), accessed May 2, 2011, http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=9566&page=1.

different groups of Americans...selected, prepared, ate, and enjoyed foods that kept them well or indifferently nourished.¹⁴

Lewin, ever the empiricist, designed a laboratory experiment to test psychological approaches to changing food consumption habits.

Combining his psychological, more individual-based approach with Mead's cultural-anthropological approach, the two social scientists arrived at some preliminary conclusions about the "maternal and paternal moral roles in the local Iowa version of American culture." Their final report the data that "Father presided over meat and butter, Mother over green vegetables and fruit juices, while desserts and soft drinks were wholly delightful and approved by no parent at all."¹⁵ Mead and Lewin compiled this information, along with that from additional studies on the family dynamics of meat consumption, into a larger report on "how housewives could learn to eat and serve so-called 'variety meats.'"¹⁶ They went on to study the consumption of whole-wheat bread and turnips (though Mead later quipped that her "high approval of turnips" expressed in the studies "had no effect at all"¹⁷).

The lasting lessons of these experiments related less to meats or vegetables than to the burgeoning field of group dynamics. Having worked closely with groups of fathers, mothers, and even "fraternity students" and observed their approaches to behavioral change, Mead and Lewin concluded that groups of people "do a thing better when they themselves decide upon it, and...they themselves can elect to reduce the gap between their attitudes and actions."¹⁸ Their

¹⁴ Mead quoted in Marrow 129.

¹⁵ Mead quoted in Marrow 130.

¹⁶ Marrow 130.

¹⁷ Mead quoted in Marrow 130.

¹⁸ Mead quoted in Marrow 131. See also Kurt Lewin, "Forces Behind Food Habits and Methods of Change"; "The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits"; and "A

studies affirmed the fundamental lessons of Lewin's research at Harwood and anticipated his later work in community relations.

Over the course of World War II, Lewin also traveled regularly to Washington to conduct work for the Office of Strategic Services. Though records of his work there are limited, we know that he "took the major initiative" in establishing a school for workers in psychological warfare who were about to launch campaigns in the Far East.¹⁹ According to his student and friend Ronald Lippitt, "In this activity he developed a strong interest and made a major contribution to . . . psychological warfare campaigns," and "was particularly active and creative in working on the problems of definition of a specific target population and the planning of a step-wise attitude change campaign through various channels of communication."²⁰

The OSS work suited Lewin well because it linked social science to pressing problems, and because it involved work in changing people's behavior. Marrow writes that the questions most interesting to Lewin were, "What techniques of psychological warfare would most effectively weaken the enemy's will to resist? What type of leadership in military units was likely to be the most successful? How could more such leaders be found and trained?"²¹ While working for the OSS, Lewin was also invited by John MacMillan of the Office of Naval Research (ONR) to review proposal drafts and discuss ONR policy. In this group, he worked closely with the social scientist Rensis Likert, who later lauded Lewin's ability to "identify the major problems on which research was needed" and devise appropriate problem-solving

Group Test for Determining the Anchorage Points of Food Habits," in Mead and Carl E. Guthe, *The Problem of Changing Food Habits: Report on the Committee of Food Habits, 1941-43*.

¹⁹ Ronald Lippitt, "Some Notes on Observations of the Interest and Activities of Kurt Lewin during the Past Three or Four Years," folder 5, box M1938, Marrow papers, AHAP.

²⁰ Lippitt, "Some Notes," 1.

²¹ Marrow 154.

research methods.²² In Lewin's work with the ONR, too, the concreteness of the research problems appealed to him immensely.

In 1944, during the last year of the War and what was to be his last year working with the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, Lewin articulated his increasing commitment to the systematic study of leadership in an article entitled "A Research Approach to Leadership Problems."²³ He explained in the article that the war had, on the one hand, seriously increased Americans' interest in leaders like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Roosevelt, making them potently conscious of the "tremendous consequences toward good or evil that seem to stem from the goals and ideals, the realism and dreams" of political leaders.²⁴ But many people remained confused about what the nature of leadership in a democratic society should be, and also conflicted, for those very leaders "have made us love and, at the same time, hate leadership more."²⁵ On the one hand, Americans worshipped heroes and cherished the idea that "great leaders are born, not made"; on the other hand, they saluted the role and independence of the common man. They remained ambivalent about whether leaders should be strong and in control or more indirect and mediating. Americans also tended to overlook the ways in which different situations called for different forms of leadership.

These issues, Lewin explained, were more important in 1944 than ever, and the stakes of addressing them had grown unprecedentedly high. The social science community was therefore faced with a pivotal task. Psychologists and their ilk needed to start figuring out what democratic leadership consisted of and how it operated most effectively. They needed to clarify

²² Likert quoted in Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 155.

²³ Kurt Lewin, "A Research Approach to Leadership Problems," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 17, no. 7 (March 1944): 392-398.

²⁴ Lewin, "Leadership Problems," 292.

²⁵ Lewin, "Leadership Problems," 292.

and define multiple forms of democracy, along with the functions of direct and indirect leadership within a democracy. Finally, they needed to conceive of group life as a “process of interaction between people” as opposed to a stationary thing. “The success of the war should strengthen the belief in the priority of the democratic form of leadership,” Lewin wrote, while also making evident the pressing need to understand its multiple forms and functions. He warned of “[t]he danger that in politics, in education, and in industry after the war fascistic leadership forms will be propagandized under the name of democratic discipline is by no means past.”²⁶ It was time, he concluded, to bring leadership “from the realm of myths” down to the “level of everyday happenings.”²⁷

Lewin’s invigorated commitment to the study of democratic leadership had a profound effect on the next stage of his career. In 1944, having spent nearly a decade working at the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, he decided to seek an institutional home even more amenable to action research and democratic leadership training. The result was the founding of two groups that had a profound effect on Lewin’s legacy and the field of Group Dynamics in general, although they existed for only two years before his death. The Committee on Community Interrelations, a subgroup of the American Jewish Congress, became a pioneer in the application of human-relations techniques to local problems of discrimination and prejudice. The Research Center for Group Dynamics at MIT not only helped institutionalize Group Dynamics as a major field of inquiry in American social science, but spawned the National Training Laboratories and assumed a prominent role in the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research. Through his short-lived leadership of these two organizations, Lewin was able to direct a prolific number

²⁶ Lewin, “Leadership Problems,” 293.

²⁷ Lewin, “Leadership Problems,” 293.

of research projects that both bolstered and memorialized his commitment to the reeducation of American leaders and citizens.

In the mid-1940s, the American Jewish Congress was one of three major American Jewish organizations dedicated to the eradication of both anti-Semitism and non-Jewish group discrimination. Historian Stuart Svonkin has examined the ways in which the Congress, along with the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, worked tirelessly with social scientists in the years surrounding World War II to combat all social expressions of fascism, constituting an early expression of the civil rights movement in the mid-20th century.²⁸ The American Jewish Congress (AJCong²⁹) was born in late 1918 in Philadelphia, when leaders Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Louis D. Brandeis (a prominent Supreme Court Justice as of 1916) decided to “provide American Jews with a vehicle for aiding the war-torn communities of Eastern Europe.”³⁰

In contrast to the comparative elitism of the American Jewish Committee, the AJCong built a democratically elected, inclusive committee to further this agenda. The group disbanded in 1920 (after sending delegates to the peace conference in Europe), but was soon reestablished under Wise’s leadership. It remained a tiny organization until the late 1930s, when a marked increase in anti-Semitism reinvigorated their efforts. Svonkin attributes this surge to Nazism, pro-fascist organizations in the US, economic tensions related to the Great Depression, and backlash against New Deal liberalism. The “scores, if not hundreds” of anti-Semitic organizations in existence by the early 1940s intensified Jewish groups’ commitment to self-

²⁸ Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

²⁹ I will refer to the American Jewish Congress as the AJCong (as Svonkin does) because the American Jewish Committee claimed the acronym of AJC.

³⁰ Svonkin 12.

defense and civil rights. Groups like the AJCong erected massive propaganda campaigns, infiltrated anti-Semitic groups, launched anti-discrimination legal battles, and initiated large survey projects of American attitudes. Most significantly, they joined forces with leading social scientists to research the causes, effects, and potential cures of discrimination in America.

The efforts of the American Jewish Congress belonged to a larger movement that Svonkin alternately calls “human relations” (a usage distinct from that usually applied to Mayo’s work in the Hawthorne Studies) and the “intergroup movement.” The “big three” Jewish groups viewed prejudice through a distinctly psychological lens, conceiving of discrimination as a social pathology to be cured through attitude modification. Society could, they believed, be “immunized” against discrimination if social scientists could design the right tools. (Svonkin notes that this disease model sometimes prevented leading activists from seeing the ways in which prejudice enlarged the economic power of some social groups at the expense of others.) The AJCong and other leading groups grew convinced that the group was the best unit through which to understand society as a whole. While they found much to disagree about (the best methods of research, the prospect of cooperation with non-Jewish groups, secular v. religious orientation), all three sponsored social research related to a central set of questions: Does discrimination lead to prejudiced attitudes, or does prejudice fuel discriminatory action? Depending on the answer, how might social scientists best work to eliminate future incarnations of intergroup conflict?³¹

³¹ One of the most famous postwar examples of these studies was the American Jewish Committee’s five-volume “Studies in Prejudice” series, which included the publication of Erich Fromm’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (1957).

The AJCong, the AJC, and the ADL shared a broad commitment to building “an America of daily democracy for all citizens.”³² They argued that intergroup conflict impeded America’s victory in WWII, shattering harmony on the home front and contributing ammunition to enemies abroad—especially in the aftermath of racially and ethnically charged wartime riots in Detroit, New York City, and Los Angeles.³³ Looking into the future, they argued that discrimination and prejudice threatened the longterm health of democracy. In this way, Svonkin argues, the Jewish intergroup movement contributed to a postwar consensus ideal of a harmonious nation, with its assumption that conflict was anathema to the American way.

The movement delicately navigated the language of identity, melding an emphasis on “Jewishness” (and many members’ support of Zionism) with larger emphases on the “American tradition” and its attendant cultural pluralism. From the earliest days of the “Big 3,” the Jewish civil liberties groups expanded their focus on anti-Semitism to support and fund the NAACP, the National Urban League, and other liberal causes. By the postwar period, they had come to assert what John Higham (cited by Svonkin) called the “unitary character of prejudice”: the idea that anti-Semitism, white racism and other forms of bigotry were inextricably related and were “inseparable parts of the same phenomenon.”³⁴ By 1944, American Jewish groups like the AJCong had achieved broad support and earned the commitment of many prominent social scientists in the US who believed that improved intergroup relations would improve the lot of minority groups in America, thus solidifying the long-term prospects of American democracy.

Everything about the American Jewish Congress made it appeal to Kurt Lewin as a potential source of support when he began looking for a new institutional home in 1944. A

³² Svonkin 18.

³³ Svonkin 27.

³⁴ Svonkin 18.

German Jewish refugee, he had lost his mother to the Holocaust and watched many of his friends and family members try to flee the Nazi regime in terror. A committed Zionist, he had tried for many years (ultimately without success) to build a Psychological Institute at the University of Jerusalem. Yet his commitment to distinctly Jewish causes never eclipsed his fierce advocacy of American democracy and rights for all underprivileged minority groups. In the AJCong, he found a group that represented his ideological commitments, his personal history, and his zealous dedication to social science methods.

In 1944, Lewin began building a partnership with the American Jewish Congress, whose president, Rabbi Stephen Wise, had (unbeknownst to Lewin) already envisioned a social-science research center aimed at the eradication of group prejudice. Alfred Marrow, a longterm supporter of the American Jewish Congress, helped engineer a meeting between the two men, and Wise “saw in Lewin the kind of scientist such a project would need.” The AJCong tentatively offered Lewin \$1 million for the funding of a new research center.³⁵ Marrow cautioned Lewin that the Congress would likely want a “quick payoff” for their investment, but Lewin forged ahead—writing to Marrow soon thereafter, “The idea of doing pioneer work in ‘action research’ that hopefully might provide an example big enough to revolutionize certain aspect of social life...is too attractive to be delayed. The stake is so high and so difficult that its attainment is more important than any other consideration.”³⁶

Lewin worked with Wise and the other members of the American Jewish Congress to develop plans for a group dedicated exclusively to the study of intergroup relations. The result of their labors opened in February 1945 under the moniker of the Commission for Community

³⁵ Marrow, *Practical Theorist* 161. Note that according to Marrow, many people were skeptical about the AJCong’s ability to actually carry through on these funds. In spite of great leadership at the AJCong, it had limited financial resources.

³⁶ Marrow, *Practical Theorist*, 164.

Interrelations (CCI). From the beginning, Lewin insisted on the intercultural bent of the Commission. He wrote to Rabbi Wise:

We Jews will have to fight for ourselves and we will do so strongly and with good conscience. We also know that the fight of the Jews is part of the fight of all minorities for democratic equality of rights and opportunities, and that the liberation of the minorities will in fact be the greatest liberation of the majority. If we establish a Commission on Community Interrelations we do so with the knowledge that the Jews cannot win their fight without the active help of those groups within the majority which are of good will. It wants to work hand in hand with these groups. It will not try to use non-Jewish friends as a front to spare Jews from doing any of the fighting they themselves should do; but it will try to get positive cooperation between all groups in those areas of community living which count most.³⁷

Lewin attended many months of planning sessions for the creation of the CCI in Cambridge, Washington D.C., and New York City, circulating constantly locations and his home base in Iowa (while also building the Research Center for Group Dynamics, to be discussed below).

In meetings with Wise and others, Lewin helped identify a set of guiding research questions that would shape the research agenda of the CCI: How can intergroup relations be improved in the longterm, rather than in a “shot-in-the-arm” kind of way? What kinds of training and education help minority groups makes adjustments to social change? What problems develop in a community when minority members arrive? Lewin boiled the key themes down to four simple terms: “Tension, conflict, crisis, change.”³⁸ As always, Lewin emphasized the importance of action research and work with “real-life situations.”³⁹ The CCI would work to advance Lewin’s philosophy that discrimination is group-based (rather than the product of antagonistic individuals); that the suffering of a minority harms the democratic majority; that Jews are not alone in discrimination; and that research must be fundamentally community-based

³⁷ Lewin quoted in Marrow, *Practical Theorist*, 175.

³⁸ Marrow, *Practical Theorist*, 176.

³⁹ Marrow, *Practical Theorist*, 191.

and participatory. The American Jewish Congress announced in late 1944 that it had organized the CCI to “take social science techniques out of the academic field and use them as part of the fight against racial prejudice.”⁴⁰

Lewin and Wise recruited Charles Hendry, the former director of the Boy Scouts of America, to be CCI’s Coordinator of Research, and a man named Harry Epstein to be in charge of operations. These two men told the *New York Times* in late 1945 that “the scientific aspect” of CCI’s program “was comparable to modern research in preventative medicine,” with an “accent was on ‘immunizing’ whole communities against the virus of race disturbances.”⁴¹

Marrow, then president of the Harwood Company, was appointed finance chairman. The small advisory council of the CCI included Rensis Likert, whom Lewin had encountered through his wartime work in governmental social science, and the social psychologist Douglas McGregor. Lewin recruited his former students and colleagues Alex Bavelas (of the Harwood Studies), Dorwin Cartwright (soon to be of the RCGD), and Ronald Lippitt (of the Autocracy/Democracy studies) to become part-time members of the staff.

CCI’s staff members and advisory council agreed to a research agenda emphasizing leadership training, intergroup integration, the social adjustment of minority groups, and the relationship between discrimination and progress. Lewin proposed that the group assume as a motto a quotation from the Hebrew sage, Hillel:

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am for myself alone, what am I?
And if not now, when?”

⁴⁰ “New Method Used to Fight Race Bias,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1945, 12.

⁴¹ “New Method Used to Fight Race Bias,” 12.

The motto encapsulated the inclusiveness of the CCI's mission and Lewin's assertion that "[t]he Commission means action, and action now."⁴² Marrow later articulated the mission of the CCI in more counter-apocalyptic terms, explaining that his group had "'sounded a warning that the road of democracy and the path of free science were inextricably woven together and must live or perish together.'" If scientists could not learn to "fight shoulder to shoulder with the common," he warned, then "'in the years to come there may be neither common man nor scientist."⁴³

By late 1945, less than a year after its official establishment, CCI had set up regional offices in Boston and Chicago, and sent workers to Detroit and Baltimore. From these offices, along with its headquarters in New York City, the CCI executed a range of action research projects. A 1945 report from the CCI's Midwest Regional Office in Chicago reported that the group had already initiated a number of case studies with both Jewish and non-Jewish groups, forming partnerships with the Mexican Civic Community (which was working with a group of Mexican-Americans on self-help projects in Chicago's west-side Mexican-American "colony"); a Japanese-American self-help/social welfare project; and an "Inter-racial Camping Experiment."⁴⁴

Most notably, CCI's social scientists in Chicago had become intimately involved with the Gary School Strike, outside of Chicago. In response to the Gary school district's policy of segregated schooling (with the exception for Froebel High, which was bi-racial), the CCI prepared a 60-page report on the underlying causes of the strike, urging Gary's school

⁴² Lewin quoted in Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 193.

⁴³ Marrow quoted in "Jewish Unit Plans Aid to Minorities," *New York Times*, January 27, 1946, 30.

⁴⁴ "Building Better Intergroup Relations: A Summary of the Program of the Midwest Regional Office of the Commission on Community Interrelations of the American Jewish Congress," 1 September 1945 – 31 December 1946, folder "1: CCI – Commission on Community Interrelations of the American Jewish Congress, Book 1B," box M1938, Marrow papers, AHAP.

superintendent to desegregate all schools and sponsor only desegregated social activities. This action had fueled a broader, community-wide protest against segregated schools. The involvement of local citizens validated CCI's position that the problems of minority groups "cannot be solved by agencies or by a few experts" alone, for "These are problems of the people which can only be solved by the people." The Midwestern branch of the CCI endeavored "wherever possible to stimulate and encourage citizen participation in the effort to solve the problem."⁴⁵

Demand for CCI's services quickly increased as the Committee's efforts drew popular acclaim. For Lewin, the popularity of the group was not uncomplicated: he grew concerned that the agency was being used as a "firefighter," brought in to deal with immediate problems rather than problems of more longterm and structural concern.⁴⁶ All told, the CCI committed to fifty projects in the first five years of its existence. Early efforts at CCI headquarters in New York City included an evaluation of the intercultural program at Horace Mann School and a lawsuit against Columbia Medical School for maintaining "Jewish quotas." The group's social scientists also embarked on two particularly fruitful research projects. One, a study of the integration of African-American sales clerks into store staffs, found that customers were far more accepting of African-American sales staff than managers expected them to be—which suggested that many

⁴⁵ "Building Better Intergroup Relations." It is worth noting that this approach anticipated the Community Action strategies of the Great Society's War on Poverty. See Alice O'Connor, "Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty The Ford Foundation's Gray Areas Program," *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 5 (July 1, 1996): 586–625; Robert O Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴⁶In response to the immense demand for its services, the CCI later developed what they called the "Community Self-Survey," a tool that allowed concerned communities to assess their own levels of discrimination. The survey came with an accompanying "Index of Discrimination" and was quickly adopted by seventeen communities. See Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*.

managers' policy of hiring only white sales staff was unfounded.⁴⁷ In a second study, CCI researchers studied integrated and segregated housing projects, conducting lengthy interviews with residents of both that revealed a sharp contrast: Residents of segregated housing projects possessed far more negative attitudes about other racial and ethnic groups than those who lived in integrated housing.⁴⁸ In combination with the research on "Negro Sales Clerks," this study confirmed an extension of Lewin's "field force" theory: discriminatory practices produced prejudiced attitudes, and not the other way around. More importantly, if environments shaped prejudicial attitudes, social reform could transform bigots into open-minded and accepting neighbors.

The CCI gained the most public attention in its early years for a project that it embarked on in Coney Island, Brooklyn, after a group of Catholic teenagers disrupted a Jewish service at the Young Israel Synagogue on Yom Kippur.⁴⁹ Four boys identified with the event were taken under supervision by the local priest and the Catholic Big Brothers, but the Brooklyn Commission to Combat Anti-Semitism was dissatisfied with the police's handling of the matter. The Commission asked the CCI to meet with the Mayor's Committee on Unity, and together they devised a plan. They assembled an internal task force of Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and African-Americans from within the community and sent this team to canvas the attitudes of as many local citizens as possible. In speaking to Coney Island residents, they found that a clear pattern emerged. Many citizens were frustrated and disappointed with the failure of the

⁴⁷ For more information on the "Negro Sales Staff" study, see Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, Chapter 21.

⁴⁸ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, Chapter 21.

⁴⁹ For information about the Coney Island incident, see Memo, Lillian Wald Kay to Alfred Marrow, 7 December 1944, and Letter, Dan Dodson to Hendry, 24 November 1944, folder "13: 1943-45 CCI Correspondence," box M1938, Marrow papers, AHAP. Also see "New Method Used to Fight Race Bias," *New York Times*, November 1, 1945, 12.

community to meet their needs for housing, recreation, transportation, and social gatherings. These chronic tensions had, the CCI concluded, fueled interfaith and interracial hostilities.

The CCI submitted a Coney Island Improvement proposal to the Mayor's Committee on Unity, which promptly acted on the proposal's suggestions. Continuing the CCI's emphasis on community participation and leadership, the Mayor's Committee recruited a number of adults and young people from the community to act as agents of change, and sent them to workshops for community leadership. The youth leaders helped establish a community center called "Youth Town," where young people of all races and faiths could gather recreationally.⁵⁰ Other members of the task force researched the development of low-cost housing development, better housing for African-Americans, and the opening of public school recreation facilities on weekends. The *New York Times* reported in November 1945 that these efforts had brought about "striking improvements" in community relations, and that some of the boys who disrupted the Yom Kippur services were "now among the commission's most active workers."⁵¹ The Coney Island project had confirmed, in short, that the very act of mingling people from different groups could promote the development of accepting attitudes and harmonious behaviors.

The CCI later used the Coney Island project as a template for the creation of the "Community Self-Survey," a printed survey and "index of discrimination" that enabled concerned communities to assess their own levels of discrimination. The self-survey, which was ultimately used in seventeen communities, built on the CCI's principles of self-education and community participation while also reducing the pressure being put on CCI's limited resources.⁵²

⁵⁰ Memo, Kay to Marrow.

⁵¹"New Method Used to Fight Race Bias."

⁵² See Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, Chapter 21.

It is worth noting that the CCI later spread its methods to universities, as well. In February 1950, the assistant to Antioch College president Douglas McGregor wrote a letter to Stuart Cook of the CCI to thank the group for leading a conference on the workshop method in race relations, noting that the techniques had proven “extremely valuable.”⁵³ (McGregor had been close friends with Lewin during their time together at MIT, and approached Antioch College as a site of democratic experimentation of the type that both men celebrated; see Chapter 6.) As a part of the CCI, Lewin had fulfilled his dreams of translating his theories into real-world practice, and of demonstrating the possibilities of participatory, democratic change through social-scientific methods.

In the last two and a half years of his life, Lewin was absorbed by his work for the American Jewish Congress and the group’s tireless quest to end intergroup conflict. But the group that became the most strongly linked to his name after his death was the Research Center for Group Dynamics (RCGD) at MIT, which he helped establish at the same time that he was launching the CCI. The RCGD employed Lewinian theories as the platform for decades of action research, and served as a critical hub for mid-century behavioral scientists committed to the study of group dynamics. After Lewin’s death, its circuitry of behavioral scientists scattered to a number of related organizations which, together, unified and legitimized the field of Group of Dynamics.

During Lewin’s search for funding in the mid-1940s, he had approached Maxwell Hahn, the director of the Field Foundation, as a prospective patron. Hahn was impressed by Lewin and

⁵³ See Letter, Assistant to Antioch College President McGregor (Mrs. Jessie C. Treichler) to Cook and Wolff, 7 February 1950, folder “16: 1950-51 CCI Correspondence,” box M1938, Marrow papers, AHAP.

his group's social science work at Iowa, especially after witnessing an action-research experiment that Alex Bavelas was conducting on worker morale at a factory near the university. In their first meeting, Hahn later remembered, "Lewin outlined convincingly his ideas for an institute to help democracy learn how to handle its group problems more efficiently and less prejudicially."⁵⁴ He pledged a grant of \$30,000 to Lewin, to be paid in two annual installments, toward the establishment of a new research center aimed at "changing the world while simultaneously contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge."⁵⁵

In seeking a home for his hypothetical research center, Lewin envisioned a large university setting, "preferably in a city troubled by the variety of vexing industrial, community, racial, and leadership problems" that could provide research fodder for his social scientists.⁵⁶ He hoped that the center would have autonomy in pursuing its research aims, but also envisioned inter-disciplinary relationships with the university's social science departments. Lewin soon focused in on two choices: the University of California, Berkeley, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was particularly excited about the West Coast alternative, having spent time in the Bay area throughout the 1930s, but Douglas McGregor and his colleagues intervened.

In August 1944, the prominent social psychologist Rensis Likert (then employed by the Department of Agriculture) arranged a dinner between McGregor and Kurt Lewin at Washington DC's Cosmos Club. McGregor was, in the mid-1940s, a professor of Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. He and Lewin exchanged ideas about the "action research" agenda of the proposed center, and left their dinner feeling mutually excited. McGregor returned

⁵⁴ Hahn quoted in Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 160.

⁵⁵ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 164.

⁵⁶ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 164.

to Boston determined to persuade MIT's president, Carl Compton, to offer Lewin a home at the school, and was successful. Meanwhile, the president of UC Berkeley, Edward Sproulat, wavered and dragged his feet on the matter—reluctant to propose the plan to California's Board of Regents. By the time Lewin decided that he needed to leave Iowa (a result, in part, of his colleagues' knowledge of his newly proposed venture), he contacted both universities for a final verdict. MIT's president Compton offered Lewin a formal invitation. By the time Sproulat had decided to do the same, it was too late. Lewin had accepted the offer at MIT.

Lewin spent much of 1944 establishing the RCGD in Cambridge while also laying the foundation for the American Jewish Congress's CCI in New York. He moved his family to Washington, DC to complete his work for the OSS from September 1944 through January 1945, and was ready to open the doors of the RCGD in fall of 1945. Upon its establishment, the RCGD resided in MIT's departments of Economics and Social Science, offering the school's first PhD in Group Psychology, and joining a graduate school program that already combined economics, sociology, and psychology. Lewin and McGregor plotted collaborations between the RCGD and MIT's Industrial Relations program, which was exploring the "human side of enterprise" (as McGregor would label the field in his bestselling 1960 treatise). The Center's early staff was small, but it featured five of the most prominent intellectuals from Lewin's past: John Arsenian, Dorwin Cartwright, Leon Festinger, Charles Hendry, Ronald Lippitt, Marion Radke, and Lewin himself.⁵⁷ In addition to MIT's support, it relied on funding from the National Institute of Mental Health, the United States Air Force, the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations, and the aforementioned Field Foundation.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Kurt Lewin, "The Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology," *Sociometry* 8, no 2 (May 1945): 126-136.

⁵⁸ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 179.

The ideological foundations of the Research Center for Group Dynamics were clear from the beginning. In an early proposal for the establishment of the Center, Lewin explained:

Totalitarian fascism has been quick to study empirically ... socio-psychological forces and to apply them for their purpose. Democracy can hope to survive and to grow only if it applies its traditional rational approach also to its own form of living, if it learns in an empirical down-to-earth fashion to understand itself and to apply this scientific insight for the solution of its everyday problems.⁵⁹

Harmonious group life was central to the successful functioning of a democracy, so social scientists needed to understand how groups worked. Yet democracy could not function through groups alone; it needed leaders who understood “the real dynamics of the face-to-face group” and could use their knowledge to help their groups move toward maximum harmony and effectiveness.⁶⁰

In his pronouncement of the RCGD’s mission in *Sociometry* in May 1945, Lewin established the grand scale of this endeavor with a quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

‘But, my friends, the period of social pioneering is only at its beginning. And make no mistake about it—the same qualities of heroism and faith and vision that were required to bring the forces of Nature into subjection will be required—in even greater measure—to bring under proper control the forces of modern society.’⁶¹

Lewin went on to explain that although World War II had highlighted modern man’s “ability to handle physical forces,” and the war “most impressively document[ed] the supreme power of man over nature,” it had also revealed “our lack of skill in handling social life, and our lack of scientific understanding of social dynamics.”⁶² The RCGD would serve as one of many agencies

⁵⁹Kurt Lewin, “Project of a Research Institute of Leadership and Group Dynamics,” folder “Action Research and Minority Problems,” Box 26, Institute for Social Research papers, Bentley Library, 14.

⁶⁰ Lewin, “Project of a Research Institute,” 4.

⁶¹ Lewin, “The Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology,” 126.

⁶² Lewin, “The Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology,” 128.

that could help American scientists' understanding of social relations catch up to their understanding of hydrogen atoms or mass production.⁶³

Lewin established the immediate agenda for the RCGD as two-fold. First, the RCGD would propel a much-needed integration of the social sciences. Lewin was particularly interested in uniting methods of experimental psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology, three fields that examined the psychological and social factors of modern life but did not frequently benefit from interdisciplinary conversations.⁶⁴ Through the melding of these fields' research techniques, Lewin and his comrades could build a new scientific vocabulary of "group dynamics." The very notion of this subdiscipline was revolutionary for its time.⁶⁵ Alfred Marrow has suggested that group dynamics was an outgrowth of Lewin's earlier "field theory," which assumed that group behavior was determined by the psyches of individuals in interaction with their social settings. Field theory dictated that any group has its own distinct psychology, goals, and pressures—and that one could not alter these components by dealing with individuals alone. To spur change in a family, work group, or religious community, one needed to recognize the powerful influence exerted on individuals by their group affiliations, and approach the group as a cohesive whole.⁶⁶ The RCGD's research would, ideally, generate an entirely new

⁶³ Lewin, "Project of a Research Institute of Leadership and Group Dynamics."

⁶⁴ Lewin, "The Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology," 126-7.

⁶⁵ It is worth noting that in an article published in 1953, the prominent pioneer of psycho-drama and role-playing, Jacob Moreno, argued that he had not been given proper credit for influencing the field of group dynamics, which he claimed he invented. He wrote that Lewin met him in 1935 and absorbed his ideas for the RCGD naively – without malevolent intent—but that Lewin's students were far more Machiavellian. They attended his workshops, then stole his ideas and failed to give him proper credit. Moreno cited Leland Bradford, Ronald Lippitt, Kenneth Benne, Jack French, and Paul Sheats as some of the most prominent perpetrators of this crime. See JL Moreno, "How Kurt Lewin's 'Research Center for Group Dynamics' Started," *Sociometry* 16, no. 1 (February 1953): 101-104.

⁶⁶ See Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 166-168. Marrow acknowledges that the study of groups was not without precedent at this time. Other fields were devoting attention to groups in the 1940s and before (see social group work, group psychotherapy, industrial management, and the field of progressive education, which called for the

set of theories about group life and group identity, through the fusion of ideas and methods from different social science disciplines.

Of course, Lewin was never content to generate theories alone. He insisted in early mission statements that the RCGD would be a hotbed of urgent “action research,” producing practical knowledge about a wide variety of settings, from industry and government to communities plagued by problems of discrimination. In keeping with the larger identity of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lewin framed this action research as a branch of engineering. Whereas the purpose of traditional engineering was the “setting free human energies and enhancing man’s power of dealing with nature” through the “development of machines,” Lewin and his comrades set out to explore “the link between engineering and the total culture of a people.”⁶⁷ Whereas engineers might commonly research the running of a factory through the study of production lines, Lewin and his associates would examine the impact of group leadership problems on morale and productivity. They could then apply these principles to the training of leaders in troubled communities, or to the engineering of harmony between antagonistic ethnic groups. Lewin broke the larger mission of action research into six distinct areas of study: group productivity; communication and the spread of influence; perception of social roles; intergroup relations; group membership and self-esteem; and the training of leaders. Every component of the RCGD’s research agenda was oriented toward a single goal: social change.

Within a year of its opening, MIT’s undergraduate publication, *Tech Engineering News*, celebrated the RCGD as “something entirely new and unique,” praising the Center’s efforts to

collective setting of group goals). But the RCGD was the first center to try to develop a scientific vocabulary that could reach across all these subfields.

⁶⁷ Lewin, “The Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology,” 133-4.

“turn the whole field of group knowledge into a science according to the same standards by which physics or chemistry is considered a science.” In contrast to engineering’s tendency to “treat man mechanically,” the article explained, the researchers at the RCGD acknowledged that “engineering does not operate in a social vacuum” and can in fact have “a great deal of influence on human culture.”⁶⁸ Yet the article also acknowledged one of the potentially troubling contradictions of the RCGD’s mission. “People have a justified dread of group manipulation,” the author explained, “because it denies the fundamental dignity of man.” Yet “management in industry” and in “all other fields is quite legitimate and necessary to the smooth function of society.” Within the framework of the RCGD, in other words, management provided a form of “wise leadership” with great utility to group and leader alike—not the kind of authoritarian social direction one would find among the United States’ ideological opponents.⁶⁹ The potentially delicate distinction between democratic engineering and its less ideologically palatable alternatives would plague the field of group dynamics for decades to come.

The first year of the RCGD’s existence—like that of the CCI—produced a remarkable number of innovative studies and projects. Lippitt, Cartwright, French and Festinger wrote a range of studies on productivity and efficiency at work. Kurt Back, Festinger, and Cartwright studied patterns of communication and influence in a housing project for married veterans at MIT. Lewin, Lippitt and Radke published articles about the origins of prejudice, while Lewin researched the development of low self-esteem in Jews.⁷⁰ Other scientists in the group researched the spread of rumor, social perceptions in education, and the process of introducing

⁶⁸ Edward Miller ’49, “The Research Center for Group Dynamics,” *Tech Engineering News – the MIT Professional Journal of the Undergraduates* XXVII, no 8 (April 1946), folder “Biographical/Personal- Articles about Lippitt, 1946-86, “ box 1, Lippitt papers, Bentley Library.

⁶⁹ Miller, “The Research Center for Group Dynamics,” 326.

⁷⁰ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, 185.

change. Lewin found MIT to be an “ideal institutional setting” for the range of projects he and his colleagues embarked on, and he built relationships with other institutions interested in his work—from Harvard University’s social psychology department to the Tavistock Institute, a British organization dedicated to the study of group relations. Lewin and Eric Trist, the head of Tavistock, decided to launch a professional journal, *Human Relations*, as a joint publication of their respective institutions, and Lewin was invited to Tavistock for a fellowship in 1947-48 (a fellowship halted by his untimely death).⁷¹

No experiment proved more significant for Lewin’s legacy than one conducted at the behest of the Connecticut State Interracial Commission in the summer of 1946. Lewin, preceded by an increasingly prominent reputation for action research with both the CCI and the RCGD, was summoned by the Commission to conduct a study of community relations in light of a recent spate of intergroup conflicts.⁷² He recruited three men to be part of his project team: Kenneth Benne, Leland Bradford, and Ronald Lippitt. These three men had traveled the circuits of adult education and social psychology in the prewar period and emerged with a collective determination to design a method of adult leadership training that would teach individuals how to be “agents of change.”⁷³

⁷¹ Marrow explains this relationship in Chapter 22 of *The Practical Theorist*.

⁷² Leland Powers Bradford, *National Training Laboratories: Its History, 1947-1970: Originally National Training Laboratory in Group Development and Now NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science* (Bethel, Me: Bradford, 1974), 34.

⁷³ Bradford, 1. For more information about the three founders of the National Training Laboratories for Group Development, see Kurt W Back, *Beyond Words; the Story of Sensitivity Training and the Encounter Movement*; Jerrold I. Hirsch, *A History of the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1947-1986*; Laura Kim Lee, *Changing Selves, Changing Society: Human Relations Experts and the Invention of T Groups, Sensitivity Training, and Encounter in the United States, 1938-1980*, 2002.

Kenneth Benne, strongly influenced by John Dewey, had researched experimental adult education at Columbia University's Teachers College and collaborated with Leland Bradford on postwar planning research.⁷⁴ Ronald Lippitt had worked with Kurt Lewin at Iowa and MIT, taught courses at the New School of Social Research in the early 1940s, and taken a job at the Office of Strategic Services in 1943.⁷⁵ Leland Bradford, who came from a background in educational psychology, joined the WPA's payroll in 1937, traveling through Illinois observing the condition of adult education. He later developed a training program for the Federal Security Administration, recruited Lippitt to work for the FSA, and became the Director of the new Division of Adult Services with the National Education Association.⁷⁶ In 1945, when Kenneth Benne was stationed in Washington, Lippitt introduced him to Bradford. By the time Lewin recruited the three men to work with him in Connecticut, they already comprised some semblance of a "team."⁷⁷

Lewin, Bradford, Benne, and Lippitt gathered with a larger research staff of educators, social scientists, and educators at the State Teachers College in New Britain in the summer of 1946, determined to diagnose the extent to which small groups could be used as vehicles of both personal and social change in a community plagued by "burning social problems."⁷⁸ They divided 45 people from the same community into two work groups and established a series of group meetings, both with and without trainers present, assigning observers to record raw data

⁷⁴ Bradford 16.

⁷⁵ Bradford 14.

⁷⁶ Bradford 27.

⁷⁷ Bradford 27.

⁷⁸ See Bradford 34; Back 7.

about group behavior and leadership. Each night, the research staff gathered to discuss the findings of the day.

An epiphany arrived one night when three “delegates” from the training groups approached Lewin’s team of researchers, trainers, and observers, and asked if they could listen to the discussion of their daily happenings. Lewin surprised everyone by saying yes. As the trainees listened to the observers’ and trainers’ accounts and offered their own differing perspectives, “the meeting became quite lively.”⁷⁹ Various members and observers of the groups, it turned out, had widely divergent interpretations of what had transpired during their daily groups. According to Ronald Lippitt,

Lewin got quite excited about the additional data and put it on the board to theorize it, and later in the evening the same thing happened in relation to one of the other two...the three at the end of the evening asked if they could come back again the next night, and Lewin was quite positive they could.⁸⁰

The next night, all 45 trainees came to hear the proceedings about their group interactions and offer their own input, and they continued to do so for the remainder of the workshop.

One night over coffee, Benne, Bradford, and Lippitt discussed what they had gleaned from the large nightly meetings. *Feedback*, it seemed, opened up a whole new set of possibilities for the study of group dynamics.⁸¹ Listening to participants’ interpretations of their own group interactions provided a far greater range of data than simply listening to observers’ analyses of their behavior. The three men wondered “whether this method of feedback for learning might not work on a national level and with a more heterogeneous group of adult leaders,” and they

⁷⁹ Bradford 35.

⁸⁰ Lippitt quoted in Back 9.

⁸¹ Bradford 35.

returned to Lewin with their idea.⁸² What “they didn’t realize at the time,” according to one historian, was “that what they had done was shift the focus from the ‘there and then,’ the situations people dealt with back in their communities and then talked about in the group, to the group itself”; the group “became the laboratory [for] working out interpersonal conflicts and communication breakdowns.”⁸³ The group also emerged as a site of increased self-awareness, in which participants learned about themselves by listening to others’ perceptions.⁸⁴

After witnessing the success of what they decided to call the “Basic Skills Training Group” (later called the “T-group”), Benne, Bradford, Lippitt, and Lewin agreed that the method deserved an institutional platform, and so developed the proposal for an organization called the National Training Laboratories for Group Development. After stumbling upon a remote location—the Gould Academy, a preparatory school in Bethel, Maine, which agreed to rent out its facilities for summer sessions—Bradford secured funding from the National Education Association, along with an endowment from the US Office of Naval Research.⁸⁵ He and his co-founders then recruited staff from centers for the study of behavioral science at MIT and

⁸² Bradford 35.

⁸³ Walt Anderson, *The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the American Awakening* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1983), 83.

⁸⁴ The T-group marked both a departure from and continuation of preexisting methods of group study. The New Britain research team was building on a series of developments that had been taking place in psychology and sociology since the beginning of the century, and Bradford and other historians of the encounter movement have cited a range of influences in the original innovation of the T-group: Jacob Moreno’s early-20th-century “psychodrama” technique, which explored social psychology through spontaneous role-playing; Carl Rogers’ method of “non-directive counseling,” which instructed therapists to create warm, supportive environments for their clients by intervening minimally in discussions; and later, Fritz Perls’ Gestalt Therapy, a group psychotherapy experience that built on the notion that people could achieve “total personality” by surrendering themselves to “here-and-now” experiential groupwork. Bradford also cited the Progressive Education movement’s “workshop method” as an important influence. See Jacob Moreno, *Psychodrama* (New York: Beacon House Inc., 1959-69); Carl Rogers, *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Newer Concepts in Practice* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1942); For Gestalt therapy see Back 144 and Frederick Perls, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Julian Press, 1951). For Progressive Education, Bradford refers us to the adult education journal *The Inquiry*, published 1925-9.

⁸⁵ Bradford 46.

Harvard, men whose interests ranged from rational, scientific research to more experimental methods of social change.⁸⁶ They developed a daily training itinerary centered on the Basic Skills Training Group and planned their first three-week training session for the summer of 1947. (The decades of work that followed at will be explored in Chapter 8).

Unfortunately, Lewin (whom Bradford later christened as the “father of NTL”⁸⁷) did not live to see the first session of the National Training Laboratories, nor did he survive to see more than two years of the RCGD or CCI’s work towards his grand mission of socially useful action research. He died of a heart attack in February, 1947, at the age of 57. By Marrow’s account, Lewin had by that time taken on so many projects with such feverish intensity that he was overexerted and exhausted. Colleagues noted his troubling physical condition in the months before his death, yet he could not suppress his manic commitment to his array of action research projects.

In spite of the abbreviated tenures of his post-Iowa endeavors, Lewin bequeathed to American social science a remarkable number of innovations by the time of his death. He laid the foundations of the new field of group dynamics, legitimized activist social research, helped develop a groundbreaking method of experiential group dynamics training (the Basic Skills Training Group), and established three significant research institutions (CCI, RCGD, and NTLGD). The organizations he left behind became trailblazers in the application of group dynamics research to modern social institutions, particularly industry, in the second half of the 20th century. Though Lewin did not live to see it, the Basic Skills Training Group in particular

⁸⁶ Bradford 39; Back 52. The staff eventually consisted of Lippitt, Benne, Bradford, Robert Polson, Paul Sheats, Alvin Zander, R. Freed Bales, Kurt Back, Morton Deutsch, Henry Reicken, and Stanley Schacter.

⁸⁷ Bradford 4.

emerged as the mid-20th century's most promising tool of humanistic management and enlightened corporate order. With Lewin's intellectual and moral inspiration, the National Training Laboratories went on to redefine the nature of human relations training in education, government, and increasingly industry. His foundational principle—that social science could be used for the advancement of democratic principles and leadership—shaped decades of organizational psychology that followed and inspired heated debates about the potential for true democracy in modern capitalism.

Chapter 5

Likert Goes to Washington and Michigan: Survey Administration in the New Deal, World War II, and Beyond

Like Kurt Lewin, Rensis Likert discovered in the years surrounding World War II that government service offered unprecedented opportunities to study and shape democratic institutions on a large scale. Though Likert had by the late 1930s established himself as a formidable administrator of social science surveys, his work in the field had focused largely on general attitudes and consumer goods. And though his work at the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau (LISRB) had demonstrated his prowess within the field of human relations, his research for the group had reached a relatively small audience. It took the bureaucratic machinery of New Deal liberalism and the emergency conditions of World War II to propel him to the next stage of his career.

Likert's professional trajectory changed dramatically when he was recruited from the LISRB in 1939 to do conduct surveys for the federal government. From his New Deal work in the Department of Agriculture to his later surveys for the Office of War Information, he transformed from a little-known market researcher and vocational surveyor into one of the country's leading theorists and practitioners of mass surveying. In so doing, he transcended the pragmatic motives that guided much of his earlier work (higher rates of productivity in firms; improved sales of consumer goods) and issued an ideological, even dogmatic endorsement of survey research. Large-scale, open-ended surveys, he increasingly insisted, would help the US government engineer a truly democratic national order rooted in participation, communication, and efficiency. They would also help the nation combat fascism abroad.

Likert's work for US government introduced him to a vital network of social scientists who were, like him, interested in administering public surveys for the common good. It also lent

him the professional clout necessary to establish a major research institute after war's end: Having witnessed the tremendous power of social research, he launched the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan in 1946. This institute later joined with Kurt Lewin's Research Center for Group Dynamics under the umbrella of the Institute for Social Research and served as a hub for the nation's most experimental research in both group dynamics and mass polling.

This chapter examines Likert's work in Washington, DC and his early years in Michigan. In the years surrounding World War II, Likert celebrated surveys for their ability to democratically connect leaders with the dispersed needs of a constituency. He increasingly advocated for a participative model of survey administration itself, endorsing the humanistic psychologist Carl Roger's open-ended, empathic methodology, which challenged the authority of the interviewer and privileged the art of listening. The values and methods of Likert's government surveying experience traveled with him to Michigan and to every site of survey research that followed, ultimately shaping the collection of data that guided his seminal participative management treatise.

Rensis Likert joined the Department of Agriculture after the department had experienced nearly two decades of attempted reforms. In the early 1920s, President Warren Harding's Secretary of Agriculture, Henry C. Wallace, established the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in response to an agricultural recession. In spite of the decade's widespread prosperity, farmers who had increased production during World War I (in order to help the United States' domestically and feed a war-ravaged Europe) suddenly found themselves swimming in agricultural surpluses that commanded low prices. Many had to take out loans and mortgages to

keep themselves afloat, and their flailing made Secretary Wallace wonder: What if the government could train farmers to be better businessmen? The first two decades of the century had, after all, witnessed monumental strides in techniques of management and production, from which many farmers had remained isolated. Wallace's brainchild, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), was intended to bridge the worlds of business and agriculture and thus train farmers to manage their production more effectively. Unfortunately, by the time Wallace died unexpectedly in 1924, many of his ideas had "[fallen] on deaf ears" and inspired outright opposition from President Calvin Coolidge.¹

About ten years later, Henry C. Wallace's son, Henry A. Wallace, reclaimed his father's mantle and established a home for systematic research within the Department of Agriculture. The younger Wallace— an analytical man interested in the intersections of math, science, and agriculture (as epitomized by his commitment to "hybrid corn") – joined President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's cabinet as the Secretary of Agriculture in 1933. Like his father, he poured tremendous energy into the BAE and insisted that scientific research would be a necessary corollary to agricultural advancements in the US. In contrast to father's efforts, however, his were generally greeted with enthusiasm, or at least tolerance, because of the dramatic expansion of agricultural programs during the New Deal and its spirit of bureaucratic experimentation.

In the wake of a series of public relations disasters in 1936, the chief economist for the Agricultural Adjustment Association, M.L. Wilson, suggested to Wallace that the BAE start a "grassroots operation" to "find out first-hand what was on farmers' minds" and stay in touch

¹ Kevin Mahoney and David Baker, "The Measure of a Nation: The USDA and the Rise of Survey Methodology," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 71 (2007): 97-113.

with the needs of their constituency.² Wallace enthusiastically obliged, hiring a team of six men to operate as “scout interviewers.” The BAE’s scout interviewers roamed farm areas and interviewed farmers about the effectiveness of New Deal programs. They rapped on doors, appeared on front porches, and generally gathered as many interview subjects as they could find, wherever they could find them. In contrast to the burgeoning realm of survey science, their efforts struck observers as markedly amateur: Likert later commented that “the interviewing was relatively free and casual, the sampling rather unscientific, and little qualitative analysis of the comments was attempted.”³ The BAE also tried sending written questionnaires to farmers through the rural post, but the distribution and collection of these surveys remained unsystematic.

The BAE’s lax approach to agricultural surveying changed dramatically in 1939, when the Department of Agriculture hired Rensis Likert to establish its Division of Program Surveys (DPS) – a Division whose staff of professional interviewers would grow from seven to 200 by the end of World War II.⁴ The DPS was established to scientifically survey farmers’ problems and needs, and to monitor their reactions to federal programs. A departmental memo from 1945 later reflected, “For many years the Department of Agriculture has felt it necessary to maintain a clear channel of communication between itself and the nation's farmers, not only so that it could transmit to farmers the many items of information with which they are concerned but also so that

² Hans E. Skott, “Attitude Research in the Dept of Agriculture” (published pamphlet), undated, folder “Bureau of Agricultural Economics: Division History and Related Materials,” box 1, Rensis Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³ Rensis Likert, “Research: New Weapon of War” from *Tide (The Newsmagazine of Advertising and Marketing)*, 15 April 1944, folder “Rensis Likert- Articles + Reprints”, box 22, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 20.

⁴“ Interview with Rensis Likert from the Meeting of the Academy of Management,” 1979, folder “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

farmers could make their own needs and attitudes known to the department."⁵ Division literature situated the DPS as a watchdog of democracy, bureaucratic efficiency, and agricultural morale.

By the time of Likert's hiring, the BAE had been "majorly reorganized" by Henry A. Wallace, evolving into "the central planning unit of the Department of Agriculture."⁶ The idea for the Division of Program Surveys had come from ML Wilson, by then the Under-Secretary of Agriculture and one of the major leaders of agricultural adjustment in the New Deal order. According to Likert, Wilson had been "impressed by the Gallup Poll and other polls that showed you could interview relatively small samples of people and obtain information that gave you reasonably accurate insights into how people felt, what their motivations were, what their behavior would likely be under given circumstances, and so on."⁷ Wilson thus worked with Howard Tolley, the head of the BAE, to build the informal legacy of the BAE's "scout" interviewers with a more formal system for coding and sampling the attitudes of farmers.

When social scientist Robert Lynd learned that the BAE wanted to start up a survey division, he informed a man named William Gold, who was then working with Likert at the Life Insurance Sales Bureau. Gold told Likert about the new survey division, so Likert contacted Tolley to schedule an interview.⁸ Tolley hired Likert soon thereafter, establishing him as the head of the new Division of Program Surveys and urging him to "set it up on a more scientific

⁵ Typed memo, "Attitude Surveying in the Department of Agriculture", 6 August 1945, folder "Bureau of Agricultural Economics: Division History and Related Materials," box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁶ "Truox Interview with Likert" (undated, author unknown), folder "Transcripts of Oral History Interviews," box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 5-6.

⁷ "Truox Interview," 1.

⁸ Angus Campbell, Dorwin Cartwright, Jean Converse, "Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76," folder "Transcripts of Oral History Interviews," box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 1.

basis" than it had been during more informal times.⁹ Likert recognized that the BAE's interviews had been subjective and impressionistic. He pledged to build the DPS on a foundation of social science and structure, and to incorporate techniques he had refined in his days at the Psychological Corporation and the LISRB.¹⁰

Likert assumed his position as Director of the new Division on Sept 1, 1939, which "just so happened" to be the day war broke out in Europe. The outbreak of World War II shifted the mission of the DPS dramatically. On the one hand, the Department of Agriculture shifted its attention from trying to *restrict* agricultural production to trying to increase it, so as to send supplies to Europe. At the same time, survey research swept across the US government at an unprecedented rate. Within six years, the DPS evolved into the "central attitude-measurement agency of the government."¹¹ Likert was in exactly the right place at the right time.

Reflecting on six years of survey use in 1945, a memo on attitude surveying from the Department of Agriculture celebrated specific instances of increased effectiveness and efficiency that had resulted from the collection of survey data.¹² A survey of dairy farmers in the early 1940s had found that farmers were reluctant to increase milk production at the beginning of the war because they were nervous about unstable milk prices. In formulating and publicizing legislation from that point on, the Department emphasized price supports and stability for farmers connected to milk production.

Other surveys of farmers regarding peacetime production helped the Department of Agriculture understand their expectations for price controls, agricultural policy, and production

⁹ "Truox Interview," 5.

¹⁰ "Truox Interview."

¹¹ "Attitude Surveying in the Dept of Agriculture."

¹² "Attitude Surveying in the Dept of Agriculture."

adjustment programs. The consensus from California and the Corn Belt, for instance, was that farmers wanted the government to continue some degree of planning of the agricultural economy after the war was over. A report on this survey was given to the Secretary of Agriculture, who helped distribute hundreds of copies within assorted government agencies. The Office of Information also presented the survey results within an illustrated pamphlet, which was then given to hundreds of rural radio stations. Over the course of its 7-year history, the Division of Program Surveys would produce hundreds of equivalent agricultural surveys on topics such as, “Farmers' Views on Postwar Wheat Problems,” “Attitudes of Rural People Towards Radio Service,” and a slew of highly specific, regional reports: “Farmers’ Attitudes Toward the Labor Situation in Copiah County, Mississippi” and “Farmers’ Views on Production Plans of Soybeans, Peanuts, and Flax for 1943.”

During Likert’s tenure, DPS publications celebrated surveying as a tool of increased efficiency and democracy, the twin stars of New Deal governance. In a 1940 article entitled “Straw Polls and Public Administration,” Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace lamented that the executive branch determined so much of its public policy without having any idea of its impact on the public. Governmental officials, he explained, made gestures towards the public will: they met with interest groups and other popular organizations; they read letters from their constituencies and newspaper editorials on hot-button issues. But the information they received from these sources were often biased, impressionistic, and – worst of all – distanced from the voices of “unrepresented citizens.”¹³ As a result, the government risked losing touch with the

¹³ Henry A. Wallace and James L. McCamy, “Straw Polls and Public Administration,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (June 1, 1940): 221–223. Also see Hans E. Skott, “Attitude Research in the Dept of Agriculture.” In this pamphlet celebrating the work of the DPS, Skott warned that the failure to gauge American public opinion could produce grave results: an inability to “democratize” governmental administration, and “increase[d] . . . cost of program administration.”

public's actual reception of its policies, an ignorance which could lead to ineffective, wasteful, and poorly executed programs on the ground.

Wallace offered an example of the government's recent foray into food stamps. When members of his department first contemplated distributing federal food stamps rather than issuing aid through individual grocery stores across the US, they had no problem learning the perspectives of grocers and program officials, who gladly volunteered their feedback. But thanks to the newly established Division of Program Surveys, the Department of Agriculture was also able to gather the attitudes of everyday citizens at whom the program would be aimed. The survey revealed that consumers on relief would indeed buy food stamps if they were made available. With this boost of attitudinal data, Wallace gave the program the green light and the program was a success.

In an age of unprecedented bureaucratic complexity and experimentation, Wallace argued, "the understanding and opinion of citizens concerned with administrative policies is just as much an essential part of the administrative process as budgeting or personnel or organization." For that reason, the "systematic effort to make programs conform to the public will is close to the heart of efficiency in democratic administration."¹⁴ Farmers emerged in departmental literature as the equivalent of consumers who could make or break the success of a new product. "Just as business organizations find that market research is necessary to their effective operation, " one memo explained, "government offices also require the services of an agency which can systematically report the state and trend of public attitudes and information."

¹⁴ Wallace and McCamy, 223.

The need for such services was “at least as great for government researchers as it is for businessmen.”¹⁵

According to Wallace and other proponents of survey technology, mass surveys guaranteed more than just savings in money and time. They also assured a democratic two-way stream of communication between the government and its people. Wallace argued that “[W]hen continuous communication between government and the affected public does not exist, the people fail to enjoy the benefits of direct representation in the formation of policy within the executive branch of government.”¹⁶ Rensis Likert reinforced Wallace’s convictions in an article from the Department of Agriculture’s 1940 *Yearbook*. In “Democracy in Agriculture — Why and How?” he explained that the “newest servants of agriculture” were psychologists expert at “sampling the experiences and attitudes of people,” in order to help administrators “make local adjustments in programs more democratically.”¹⁷ Surveys provided an unprecedented outlet for the expression of the needs and difficulties of those affected by countless government programs. Reflecting decades later in an oral history, Likert explained that surveys for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Soil Conservation Program, and the Farm Security program operated at the “grassroots” to counter the “long administrative chain” that otherwise plagued governmental operations, offering the American people a voice amidst their increasingly bureaucratic government.¹⁸

¹⁵ “Attitude Surveying in the Dept of Agriculture.”

¹⁶ Wallace 223.

¹⁷ Rensis Likert, “Democracy in Agriculture- Why and How?” – Reprint from the *1940 Yearbook of Agriculture* (US Govt Printing Office, 1941), folder “Rensis Likert- Articles + Reprints – ‘Democracy in Agriculture- Why and How’ – 1940 Yearbook of Agriculture,” box 22, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 994.

¹⁸ “Truox Interview.”

Likert's work at the DPS signaled a methodological shift taking place within some sectors of American survey science. The interview method that Likert ended up championing in the Department of Agriculture (and for decades to follow) was the antithesis of that which had made him famous in his early graduate school career. Working with Gardner Murphy in the 1920s, he had developed the previously mentioned "Likert Scale," a simple 5-point measurement scale that allowed respondents to assign quantitative values to their attitudes when filling out attitudinal surveys. During his tenure at the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau, however, he started to glean the limitations of the quantitative method. His studies of morale among salesmen and managers increasingly involved interviews with both parties. Through free-flowing conversations, he found that he could gain a more comprehensive portrait of salesmen's morale and motivation. He also found that he encountered a greater degree of candor when approaching interviewees as partners in a conversation, rather than as subjects of a scientific experiment. It was often the information gleaned in follow-up questions – the "how's" and the "why's" – that shed the most light on interviewees' true opinions. By the time of Likert's hiring in 1939, he had determined that he didn't want to just survey people statistically – he wanted to "[approach] the farmers as people," allowing them to talk at length and help direct the course of the informal conversations.¹⁹

Though generations of social science scholars have identified Likert with the championing of "open-ended" interviews, Likert himself dismissed this terminology. He preferred the phrase "fixed question, free answer," which distanced his DPS surveyors from the more haphazard methods that had characterized the "scout interviewers" who preceded them in the BAE. Whereas the scouts had randomly approached farmers and struck up informal

¹⁹ Mahoney and Baker 102.

conversations to find out their experiences of governmental programs, Likert's methods were more systematic. His interviewers at the DPS, whose open-ended methods evolved steadily from 1939-42, approached their work with a clear set of guidelines in mind, and the questions asked in the surveys were often consistent from one interviewer to the next. The so-called "openness" of the technique applied to the way in which the interviewers formed their questions – their avoidance of yes/no inquiries in favor of those that provoked subjective, longer responses – and the responsive way in which they listened and replied to their respondents' answers.

In Likert's early days at DPS, a member of his staff named Waldemar Nielsen heard about the work that psychologist Carl Rogers was doing at Ohio State, and visited Rogers to observe his therapeutic training in action.²⁰ Rogers himself was then just gaining attention for his pioneering work in "client-centered therapy." Born near Chicago in 1902, he received a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University's Teachers College in 1931 and taught at the University of Rochester until 1940, when he became a professor of Clinical Psychology at Ohio State University. By the time his work came to Nielsen's attention, Rogers had not published any of his famous theoretical works, but he had started to articulate the therapeutic approach that he advocated for the rest of this life.

Client-centered therapy, also known as non-directive counseling, offered an alternative to the intrusive psychotherapeutic practices of the early 20th century. According to Rogers and his disciples, the therapist's role was to create a comfortable and non-judgmental environment in which his clients could grow. The therapist should think of himself as a sort of facilitator, guiding patients towards discoveries and revelations with minimal intrusion. His role was to encourage the client's own analysis and reflection by listening attentively and repeating back key

²⁰ "Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76."

phrases and themes. Rogers urged his students to communicate unconditional acceptance of their clients, which would in turn create the level of trust and vulnerability necessary for personal growth. Central goals of his approach were “empathic understanding” and active listening. Rogers refined his client-centered approach through the 1940s and ‘50s, publishing his theories in widely read treatises like *Client-Centered Therapy* (1951), *Psychotherapy and Personality Change* (1954), and – most famously -- *On Becoming a Person* (1961).²¹

Rogers had just recently arrived at Ohio State University when the DPS’s Waldemar Nielson visited him to observe his training technique in action, learning techniques like “putting a microphone in the lampshade to record the interview.”²² Returning to Likert in Washington, DC, Nielson proposed that the DPS hire a man named Charles “Charlie” Cannell, who had earned his doctorate working with Carl Rogers, to train the Division’s surveyors in “non-directive probes.”²³ Likert eagerly obliged and approved a program for training his staff in an adaptation of Rogers’ non-directive techniques, believing that the “‘non-directive’ approach, in which the interviewer is trained to develop techniques which release emotionalized attitudes . . . seemed particularly applicable to the survey task of getting attitudes, and reasons and factors underlying those attitudes.”²⁴ He enlisted another “Rogers protégé” named Victor Raimy and sent 42 trainers to Columbus for training, each group staying a week.²⁵ The trainers attended

²¹Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy, Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Carl R Rogers, *On Becoming a Person; a Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); Carl R Rogers, *Psychotherapy and Personality Change; Co-Ordinated Research Studies in the Client-Centered Approach* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1954).

²² “Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76.”

²³ “Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76.”

²⁴ “Psychology and the War: Notes” from *Psychological Bulletin* 39, no. 9 (November 1942): 794-5, folder “Bureau of Agricultural Economics: Division History and Related Materials,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

²⁵ Mahoney and Baker; “Psychology and the War.”

conference seminars and participated in supervised field experiences, which often involved listening to phonographic recordings of counseling sessions.

Cannell and Raimy emphasized the critical role of *feedback* in any clinical setting. Trainees would go into field to do practice interviews in the presence of recorders (the phonograph then considered a "highly effective new device"²⁶), then play tapes for the group and receive constructive criticisms from Cannell. For many of the participants, "this recording was regarded by all as one of the most genuinely educational experiences of the program."²⁷ Cannell and Raimy also trained their DPS charges in creating rapports with interviewees, structuring interviews, and "releasing attitudes" through non-directive interviews. Soon thereafter, Likert offered Cannell a position as head of the DPS interviewing staff, which he accepted – marking the beginning of a long collaboration between the two men.

Reflecting on this period of "Rogerian" training, Likert later described the non-directive approach as one in which "you state the general question and then listen to what the respondent said and encourage the respondent to elaborate it without encouraging any more content stimulation by using non-directive probes like 'that's interesting,' 'tell me more,' 'uuh' and a whole variety of things."²⁸ Institute of Social Research fellow Jean Converse has supplied a more reductive explanation of the method. According to Converse, the "open" technique of interviewing, deigned to be "as close as possible to a natural conversation," was characterized by five major tenets.²⁹ First, as explained above, the interviewer should suggest no possible answers to his own questions. Second, the interviewer should aim to produce a verbatim

²⁶ "Psychology and the War," 794.

²⁷ "Psychology and the War," 795.

²⁸ "Truox Interview."

²⁹ Jean M. Converse, "Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence: The Open/Closed Questioning Controversy of the 1940s," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (April 1, 1984): 267–282.

transcription of the interview, or as close to verbatim as he could possibly get. Third, the interviewer should probe for detail and clarification -- "the most artful feature of the technique"—by asking sensitive and knowledgeable follow-up questions to respondents' statements. Fourth, the interviewer should be well trained in the technique and generally well educated, holding professional degrees. Fifth, though the interview format opened space for lengthy subjective responses, the interview transcripts themselves should be coded and tabulated so as to be useful for social scientists gathering data. Likert later recalled that though the process of interviewing could be "pretty unstructured" and "impressionistic," the process of coding the data was rigorous and often "harrowing."³⁰ According to Converse, the application of these "non-directive" guidelines to surveying was "novel" because "it assumed a complex psychology operating in the interview setting and institutionalized more training to handle it than market researchers or pollsters had, whose training programs were typically minimal and conducted by mail."³¹

Non-directive interviewing supplied a methodology whose foundational principles matched the very democratic system it was designed to enhance. Likert could champion democracy within the DPS not just because of the communicative bridge surveys created between the federal government and the American public, but because the methods of those surveys adhered to a participative, democratic model in which the interviewer possessed little ultimate authority over his subject.³² A publication from the DPS argued that the open-ended

³⁰ "Truox Interview." See also the "Attitude Surveying in the Dept of Agriculture."

³¹ Converse 271.

³² That said, social scientists at the time also recognized the ways in which their survey methods could serve a "constructive" function for the researchers involved, who could build reality and personas out of the data at hand. As Paul Lazarsfeld explained, "The open interview collects a variety of impressions, experiences, and sidelines which the respondent offers when he is asked to discuss a given topic. The man who does the study then makes a kind of psychological construction. He creates a picture of some basic motivation of which all these details are, so

interview could celebrate the individuality of American citizens who wanted their voices heard: “The objective is to secure more than stereotyped opinions on arbitrarily-stated issues, not only to get a picture of overall attitudes, such as 'favorable' or 'unfavorable,' but also the reasons and underlying motives behind such attitudes, the reservations and qualifications, and the context in which the problems are viewed.”³³ Like the theories of human relations that were gaining momentum by the late 1930s, non-directive interviewing aimed to “humanize” and “emotionalize” a field previously characterized by mathematics and bureaucracy.

Of course, open-ended interviews required far more intensive labor than their quantitative alternatives. Whereas an administrator of closed-ended surveys could simply distribute forms or record subjects’ responses on a scale of one to five, non-directive surveyors needed to be trained in the “art” of interviewing, steeped in Rogerian theory and knowledgeable enough to ask appropriate follow-up questions. The interviews themselves could take hours, to say nothing of the time required for lengthy transcriptions and meticulous coding. After data was collected and sent to Washington, DC, it was regularly subjected to two rounds of analysis, quantitative and qualitative. Coders measured survey transcripts for statistics and demographics while also reading for more subjective insights into respondents’ psychology and motivations.³⁴ Interview studies of minimum length could be completed in two to four weeks, but most, involving 500 or more interviews, would regularly take six to twelve.³⁵

to speak, manifestations.” See Memo, US Department of Agriculture, BAE, DPS, “The Growth of Sample Surveys as a Science,” 10 October 1944, folder “Bureau of Agricultural Economics: Survey Research (general) [1-5],” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³³ Memo, “How the Division of Program Survey Works,” folder “Bureau of Agricultural Economics: Lists of Reports and Studies,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³⁴ “How the Division of Program Survey Works.”

³⁵ “How the Division of Program Survey Works.”

The DPS developed two strategies to counteract its labor-intensive interviewing process. First, it placed limits on the number of surveys that would receive the full open-ended treatment. According to a departmental memo, surveyors used their Rogerian techniques only "when the objectives of the survey bear on complex attitudinal problems," resorting at other times to the Likert-scale model or simple yes/no responses.³⁶ Second, Likert and his colleagues refined their methods of populations sampling, developing a technique in which interviews with a small number of people could generate accurate responses for the population as a whole. Before the early 1940s, the standard method of sampling was called "quota" sampling: Surveyors would go to an area, find a pre-determined number of people who fit their criteria, and interview them until they reached their quota. Likert recognized the potential inefficiency of this technique—that it required conducting a large number of interviews with people who had not been pre-sorted to reflect the attitudes of the population at large.

With funding from the US Census Bureau, Likert and his DPS colleagues generated an innovative model called the "Master Sample of Agriculture," which was based on probability sampling rather than quota sampling. Probability sampling entailed "dividing the whole population into mutually exclusive strata and then selecting units randomly," thus making the choice of subjects more scientific, and less vulnerable to whim of surveyor.³⁷ The DPS produced the first Master Sample in April 1943, breaking the US into 5,000 farm samples using a highway map of the US. The number of farm samples soon grew to 25,000, and reached 300,000 by the end of the war. This system proved so effective that its use continued for many years after the dissolution of the DPS within the Department of Agriculture. In a famous feud with George Gallup, Likert would later argue for the superiority of his method over quota sampling: Gallup, a

³⁶ "Attitude Surveying in the Dept of Agriculture," 5.

³⁷ See Mahoney and Baker.

devotee of the quota method, inaccurately (and infamously) predicted the winner of the 1948 presidential election, choosing Thomas Dewey, while Likert's probability sampling predicted Harry Truman as the clear winner.³⁸

The methodological clash between Likert and Gallup became a recurring theme in governmental surveying during World War II, when the government's embrace of social science reached an all-time high. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the DPS, which had operated primarily on behalf of the Department of Agriculture since its establishment in 1939, found itself suddenly desired by military officials hungry for data about American morale at home and abroad. Most notably, the Office of War Information (which later became known as the Office of Strategic Services and eventually morphed into the CIA) siphoned off surveyors from the Department of Agriculture and offered new funding for expanded personnel. At the same time, pollsters like George Gallup entered state agencies with rival techniques and vied for institutional dominance.

During this period of intense fervor for the social sciences within the US government, the democratic implications of Likert's techniques reached new heights. Likert had previously defended the democratic principles of mass surveying because surveys created a link between the rulers and the ruled; he also championed the democratic implications of the open-ended interview technique. In wartime, open-ended surveying itself became something more: what he called in one article a "New Weapon of War" as the US military fought fascism abroad.³⁹ The

³⁸ The fires of this controversy were fueled because Likert wrote an article *before* the election for *Scientific American* about the superiority of his method over quota sampling. However, the magazine did not publish the article until after the election, when Gallup had been proven wrong, which made the article seem like a slap in the face. This was one step in a long-lasting rivalry between the two men. See "Truox Interview," 113.

³⁹ Likert, "Research: New Weapon of War."

studies that the DPS conducted from 1941-1943 were designed to target the attitudes and behaviors that would help the US win, from boosting civilian morale to selling war bonds.

A 1944 article by Donald Marquis noted the rapid rise of social psychologists in National War Agencies, at a time when the discipline was gaining legitimacy within the academy and society at large.⁴⁰ Psychology in wartime was, he explained, nothing new. The US military in World War I had employed psychologists, but their function was limited to tests of intelligence and aptitude that determined whether or not soldiers were ready for battle. In the twenty years between the two world wars, the field of psychology had evolved dramatically. Rensis Likert was a perfect example of the new breed of social psychologist attuned to the more nebulous realms of attitude, morale, and motivation. The Office of War Information (previously known as the Office of Facts and Figures) and the Department of Agriculture were just two of the agencies employing large numbers of social psychologists during World War II. Others included the Office of Price Administration (OPA), Forest Services, the US Census, Morale Services, and the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (for analysis of foreign intelligence). During the early 1940s, the US government also turned to outside agencies for research assistance, including Gallup's American Institute of Public Opinion and the National Opinion Research Center.

Likert's DPS joined forces with the Office of War Information almost immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, when Washington officials embraced polls and surveys as tools for navigating the "bureaucratic forest" of wartime—in particular, to help them communicate information about the American people to government and military.⁴¹ Col. William Donovan, wartime head of the OSS committed to "global information-gathering duties," began to make arrangements with George Gallup and Elmo Roper to establish a National Polling Division. At

⁴⁰ Donald Marquis, "Social Psychologists in National War Agencies," *Psychological Bulletin* 41 (1944): 115-26.

⁴¹ Converse, "Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence."

the same time, Archibald MacLeish, then working for the War Department, was planning to use a surveying division that already existed in the Department of Agriculture. President Roosevelt endorsed MacLeish's plan, appointing him as the head of a new agency called the Office of Facts and Figures, which was later absorbed by the Office of War Information (OWI), a center of American wartime propaganda.⁴²

The DPS expanded dramatically after the US entered the war. With additional funding from the OWI, Likert was able to hire a cohort of highly respected social scientists: people like Angus Campbell, Charles Cannell (the Rogerian trainer), and Dorwin “Doc” Cartwright, whom Likert first met through Kurt Lewin after a meeting at Penn State.⁴³ Many of these researchers would go on to work with Likert at the Institute of Social Research in Michigan, after the war ended and government funds for social psychology dried up. Though the DPS technically remained a division of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Division moved freely between the BAE and the OWI and benefitted from a more-than-doubling of its pre-war budget.

The DPS also continued to pick up work and additional funds from outside agencies like the Treasury Department and the Office of Price Administration, who paid for studies on a case-by-case basis. In 1942 alone, the DPS produced studies on a wide-range of topics: "Pro-Japanese Attitude Developing Among Some Negroes"; "Anti-British Feeling in the US"; "Attitudes of Women Toward the War"; and "Impending Walkout of South Portland Shipyard Workers." Later studies ranged from the local (“Negroes and the War: A Study in Baltimore and Cincinnati”) to the broadly national (“The Grievance Pattern: Elements of Disunity in America”;

⁴² Converse, “Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence.”

⁴³ “Interview with Rensis Likert 10/19/76.”

“Readiness for Sacrifice”) and the industrial (“Reactions to the Rubber Situation.”)⁴⁴ Each consisting of hundreds of pages of data, these reports now provide a snapshot of the US government’s panic about morale and social unity during wartime—particularly its concerns about inter-racial relations, the economic restrictions of wartime, changing labor patterns, the nascent Civil Rights movement, and dramatically changing rural and urban landscapes. The Office of War Information placed tremendous faith in the ability of data to bridge the US’s widening rifts in morale and social relations and to keep the country united through war’s end.

Likert noted a fundamental continuity between his work for the Office of War Information and his previous activities in market research. His 1944 article, “Research: New Weapon of War” was published not in a social science journal or government publication, but in *Tide: The Newsmagazine of Advertising and Marketing*.⁴⁵ Here, he announced that “From the Army Services Forces to the Office of Civilian Requirements, the government is using opinion research and research techniques on an enormous scale” and “has suddenly become the greatest user of research in the country.” Recognizing that the size and scope of the war demanded new techniques of information-gathering, government officials consciously drew inspiration from the world of business, in which market research had become routine by the early 1940s. From that point on, Likert explained, research on behalf of the state had evolved into a “full-fledged weapon” to formulate and test domestic strategies, and to “help maintain army morale on the fighting fronts.”⁴⁶ He explained that the Survey Division had thus far tackled surveys on the Treasury's new 1040 A tax form, the role of smaller manufacturing plants in war production, war

⁴⁴ For these studies, see Box 9: Office of War Information Reports and Memoranda, Likert papers, Bentley Library,.

⁴⁵ Likert, “Research: New Weapon of War.”

⁴⁶ Likert, “Research: New Weapon of War.”

workers' reactions to absenteeism, radio listeners' reactions to the government's war message, the public's understanding of inflation, and women's attitudes toward price controls and rationing.⁴⁷

In discussing the connections between public opinion research and morale, Likert drew implicit connections to his work on human relations at the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau. One of the fundamental functions of wartime research, he explained, was "to find out what makes the average soldier tick as a means of keeping his morale as high as possible." He cited a primary example as the Army Service Forces which had, in the Fall of 1941, set up a research division in its morale branch to start surveying soldiers the day after Pearl Harbor; three years later, having been overhauled twice, this division persisted as the Morale Services Division. This Division had worked under the guidance of Samuel A. Stouffer, a sociologist from the University of Chicago, to draw up a composite portrait of the American soldier that could be useful in maintaining his spirits. Soldiers checked off answers on anonymous questionnaires about their experience in the army, the answers of which were tabulated by machine and then submitted to experts trained in locating the "source of gripes."⁴⁸ One survey measured soldiers' dissatisfaction with army food, while others measured the effectiveness of their physical training and the government's dissemination of information.

Surveys on the domestic front had proven equally useful, according to Likert. The War Production Board's Office of Civilian Requirements gauged civilian reactions to economic impositions, viewing surveys as their "link[s] with the consumer, complementing its industry tie-ups."⁴⁹ In another instance, the Dayton Chamber of Commerce paid the bill for a National Opinion Research Center poll of citizens' attitudes towards and education about the war. They

⁴⁷ Likert, "Research: New Weapon of War."

⁴⁸ Likert, "Research: New Weapon of War."

⁴⁹ Likert, "Research: New Weapon of War."

found that 87% of people did not know the size of the US army or its component parts, and that 80% were complacent about the progress of the war. Determining that ignorance and complacency went hand in hand, the Dayton Chamber of Commerce demanded more public education and information about the war.

Government research agencies themselves did not comprise a united front during the heyday of state-run research initiatives. Open-ended and closed-ended research advocates clashed so thoroughly that their battle would leave a gash in the survey research community for decades to come. We can trace this gulf back to early 1942 when Macleish and Col. Donovan proposed two different surveying divisions for wartime research. Though MacLeish earned FDR's support and hired Likert's DPS to work on behalf of the Office of War Information, Donovan had already made plans with Elmo Roper, George Gallup – the reigning kings of quantitative opinion polling-- and ML Wilson to establish a Polling Division. FDR conceded that the Polling Division could persist within another department. From that point on, the Department of Program Surveys and the Polling Division developed a fierce rivalry and competed for a limited amount of federal funds and contracts.⁵⁰

One of the most striking examples of tension between the two survey divisions had tragic implications. In 1942, the Office of War Information contracted both the Polling Division and

⁵⁰ For more detail on this rivalry, see Converse, "Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence." Jean Converse of the Institute for Social Research has attributed the tensions between the Gallup and Likert camps to a range of important factors. First, the DPS and the Polling Division fell prey to an entrenched division between the cultures of business and academic research. Pollsters like Roper and Gallup were openly commercially oriented researchers with established histories in market research. They argued that Likert and his fellow social scientists did not have enough experience on the ground doing mass polling, and that their "fixed question, free answer" system was too complex, unreliable, and inefficient. More academic surveyors like Likert, on the other hand – men who held doctorates in the social sciences and had held academic appointments, though they might have dabbled within the commercial realm -- questioned the crass profit motives of Gallup's brigade and thought the pollsters' methods "incomplete, artificial, and rigid, almost bound to distort people's attitudes." Converse 277. In the words of Likert: "They were extensive and we were intensive."⁵⁰ See Likert Oral History 1976. The tensions between these two camps, whose differences had not clashed so dramatically in previous years, became particularly pressing as they competed as separate agencies for limited government funding.

the Division of Program Surveys to conduct research on the attitudes of American citizens toward Japanese, German, and Italian “aliens.” The polls that were returned by Gallup reported strikingly negative results across the board, which contributed to FDR’s decision to establish Japanese internment camps. Likert’s results, however, came back with far more ambiguous results.⁵¹ In a later interview, he explained that the “fixed answers” format – which the government had an incentive to use because it produced more answers in a shorter period of time – tended to skew respondents’ answers in a particular direction by giving them little room to explain the complexities of their positions. For example, he explained, “If you asked people what should be done with German and Italian aliens on the east coast, they would say, ‘Lock them up!’ But if you asked them to elaborate on that, they would say the government ought to keep its eye on particularly suspicious characters, which is what the government was already doing.”⁵² Through the end of his days, Likert insisted that if the OWI had relied on *his* west-coast data rather than Gallup’s, the Japanese would never have been imprisoned in internment camps, because it “wasn’t warranted on that basis.”⁵³

According to Converse, the rivalry between Gallup and Likert camps came to a head in 1942, after less than a year of open hostilities and competition. Paul Lazarsfeld, a good friend of Gallup’s and one-time collaborator with Likert, was commissioned to broker a peace between the Division of Program Surveys and the Polling Division. In “The Controversy over Detailed

⁵¹ “Truox interview.”

⁵² “Truox interview,” 12.

⁵³ “Truox interview,” 13. It is also worth noting that, according to Converse, there were times when closed questions would have been more effective than open because the latter could be inefficient and vague, and sometimes SRC people clung to it out of organizational pride. By the 1960s and 1970s, things had changed. The SRC had embarked on some large studies -- i.e. the Survey of Consumers and the National Election Study -- in which 75-80% of interviews relied on the closed style. People like Cartwright and Campbell had encouraged a compromise between the methods. See Converse, “Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence.”

Interviews -- An Offer for Negotiation" (published in 1944, but based on reports written in 1942), Lazarsfeld determined "that in the great majority of cases, the two divisions were simply duplicating each other, rather than collaborating and capitalizing on their unique capabilities."⁵⁴

He proposed that the rival outfits divide their labor in all surveys from that point forward:

Likert's DPS would gather open-ended survey information on 300 cases at the beginning and end of the survey process (to serve as pretests and "aids in analysis"), but the majority of work would be conducted by the Polling Division in the time in between, conducting 3,500 polls using closed questions. Likert and his associates bristled at this proposal, arguing that it relegated their agency to "junior" status, and they resisted the plan's implementation.⁵⁵ The DPS's services were thus eliminated from the OWI in November 1942, at which point Likert et. al. returned to the USDA and continued doing survey work for a range of other wartime agencies. In 1946, the Polling Division itself was eliminated from the OWI after two years of struggling to maintain Congressional funding. From 1942 through 1946, funding for the DPS fluctuated and came from a variety of state agencies.⁵⁶

The end of Likert's career in Washington, DC involved two particularly substantial studies. One, a study of US War Bonds, was commissioned by the US Treasury Department to determine how the government could persuade Americans to buy war bonds with payroll savings, so as to stave off inflation.⁵⁷ The other was a study for the US Strategic Bombing

⁵⁴ Converse 273. See also Paul Lazarsfeld, "The Controversy over Detailed Interviews -- An Offer for Negotiation," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1944): 38-60.

⁵⁵ Converse 274.

⁵⁶ By the time Likert left the government, his Division had been receiving about 52% of its funding from agencies outside of the Department of Agriculture, ostensibly its institutional home. See Likert's 1976 Oral History.

⁵⁷ These studies were funded by US Treasury money funneled into the Department of Agriculture, and were entrusted to Dorwin Cartwright, who later became Director of the Research Center for Group Dynamics at Michigan.

Survey, for which Likert set up operations in Germany and Japan to measure the impact of mass bombing on those countries' economies and social systems. By the end of the decade, his staff had gathered thousands of pages of findings from in-depth interviews with hundreds of Japanese and German civilians who described the impact of the bombing in grizzly detail.

In 1949's "Human Relations at Work," Likert concluded that according to the results of the Strategic Bombing Survey, Germany's biggest problem was that the people at the top of their government did not take criticism from the people below, and that residents of both countries were not allowed to participate in policy making.⁵⁸ He cited a physicist named Merle Tuve, inventor of the proximity fuse, who had "recently stated that the biggest discovery to come out of the last war was not radar, the atomic bomb, jet propulsion, or the proximity fuse: the biggest discovery to come out of the war...is the discovery of the efficiency of the democratic principle."⁵⁹ Likert ended his tenure in the federal government reinforcing the same rhetoric that had drawn him to the work in the first place. Surveys—whether of struggling farmers, disillusioned ex-patriots, or African-American urban migrants—were a democratic tool for solidifying relationships between the American government, the military, and civilians at home and abroad.

⁵⁸ Rensis Likert, "Human Relations at Work," *Personnel Information Bulletin*, June 1949, folder "Rensis Likert-Articles + Reprints – 'Human Relations at Work' Personnel Information Bulletin, June 1949," box 22, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁵⁹ Likert, "Human Relations at Work," 26. Also see "'Air Power Called Decisive in Reich," *New York Times*, October 31, 1945, 8. This article reports of the Strategic Bombing Survey (established in November 1944 by President Roosevelt) that this was the first time in history that a military campaign "has been subjected to the careful scrutiny of objective civilian analysis." A group of "independent experts" has "reached the basic conclusion that Allied air power was decisive in the war in Western Europe" and found that "air power, although still in its 'adolescence,' had upset German production and civilian morale to the extent where the German people, had they been free to do so, would have voted themselves out of the war long before the final surrender." By the beginning of 1945, according to the report, Germany was "reaching a state of helplessness." The report offered criticisms of bombings, too, citing the lack of permanent damage and the lack of accuracy (only about 20% of precision bombs reached their targets). The report concluded that "though 'hindsight inevitably suggests that it might have been employed differently or better in some respects,'...allied air power nevertheless was decisive." It also struck a pacifistic note regarding the future: "The great lesson to be learned in the battered towns of England and the ruined cities of Germany is that the best way to win a war is to prevent it from occurring."

The DPS experienced a rapid decline after the conclusion of Strategic Bombing Study and its other large-scale, postwar endeavor on behalf of the Federal Reserve. It was officially dissolved in August 1946, replaced with a smaller organization and a far more circumscribed research agenda: studies of consumer attitudes about agricultural products.⁶⁰ On September 14, 1946, the *Washington Post* lamented that the DPS was the "latest casualty in the exodus of high-ranking public servants from the Government." "Inter-agency cooperation in the survey field has been curtailed to such an extent," the article explained, "that their work in government will no longer have the scope they feel it should have."⁶¹ The article offered two main reasons for the government's gradual withdrawal from social science research. First, the War Powers Act made it difficult for agencies other than the Department of Agriculture to employ the DPS, for fear of congressional disapproval. Second, funding had likely been curtailed due to "the suspicion with which Congress has viewed opinion research and its reluctance to grant money for anything smacking of social or cultural surveys."

By the end of the war, Jean Converse has explained, "certain members of Congress had made perfectly clear that they were displeased with government opinion research."⁶² Some of the more conservative members of Congress viewed surveys as an extension of the Department of Agriculture's controversial liberalism and objected to what they viewed as "racial meddling" in some of the DPS's social surveys in the South.⁶³ Many of the agencies that had once provided an abundance of funds for social-science during wartime found themselves disinterested by war's

⁶⁰ Jean M Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence, 1890-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 340.

⁶¹: "Government Research," *Washington Post*, September 14, 1946, folder "Bureau of Agricultural Economics: Division History and Related Materials," box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁶² Jean Converse, *Survey Research in the US*, 340.

⁶³ Jean Converse, *Survey Research in the US*, 340.

end.⁶⁴ Likert, committed more strongly than ever to the mission of survey research, decided to leave the government in order to build a social science empire of his own. On the same day that the DPS officially closed its doors, August 1, 1946, the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center was born.

Likert's wartime service had made an incredible impact on his development as a social scientist. A man who had spent much of his prior professional career conducting surveys of milk consumers and life insurance salesmen now found himself located in the American surveying elite. The Division of Program Surveys had solidified the role of surveys in the minds of the mass public (as Sarah Igo notes, we can view them as being responsible for the very *making* of that mass public⁶⁵) and popularized an open-ended methodology that many would have deemed radical just five years earlier. Work for the DPS had propelled Likert into realms of urban change, interracial relations, soldier morale, and industrial and agricultural production. It had sent him around the world, to Germany and Japan, in pursuit of other nations' wartime attitudes and morale. Perhaps most importantly, federal work connected Likert to the social science colleagues with whom he would work for the rest of his life: Charles Cannell, Dorwin Cartwright, Ronald Lippitt, Leslie Kish, and Angus Campbell, among others. When the erosion of the DPS sent Likert looking elsewhere for an institutional home, he did so as part of an idealistic cadre with lofty ideas about the future of surveys in American society.

In the summer of 1946, Likert started sketching plans for an institute of survey research. Instead of finding a pre-existing agency for which to conduct research – another Psychological

⁶⁴ "Truox Interview."

⁶⁵ Sarah Elizabeth Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Corporation or Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau – he imagined an organization that could independently administer surveys, develop survey methodology, and train a new generation of academics in the techniques he and his colleagues had developed.⁶⁶ At the time, he lamented, there was “no single institution teaching survey methodology” in the United States, and no academic base for the continued refinement of existing techniques.⁶⁷ Likert and his colleagues agreed that their endeavor should take place in a university rather than a business or government agency, which would leave them less “vulnerable to corruption.”⁶⁸ In a 1946 proposal for a new research center along these lines, Likert explained that “the rapid progress made by the social science during the war, both quantitatively and theoretically, suggest the need of encouraging and assisting social scientists in universities to expand the scope of their research.”⁶⁹

Likert and four researchers from the staff of the Department of Agriculture – Cannell, Campbell, George Katona, and Eleanor Macoby– decided to locate an academic base for their experiment that could offer “greater freedom in the conduct of research, greater effectiveness through association with a teaching faculty in the social sciences, and greater opportunities for contributions to the social sciences through teaching and publication of search results.”⁷⁰ Having spent years conducting research for projects imagined and ordered by government operatives, Likert and his colleagues dreamed of a setting in which they could dictate the scope and aims of their own survey work.

⁶⁶ See “Survey Center is New Campus Unit,” *The Michigan Alumnus*, 26 October 1946, folder “ISR Background,” box 13, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

⁶⁷ “Truox interview.”

⁶⁸ “Oral History Interview, 10/19/76.”

⁶⁹ “A Proposal for the Establishment of a Center to Provide Research Facilitie and Training in Sample Survey Techniques,” folder “ISR background,” box 13, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

⁷⁰ “ISR: Celebrating 50 Years of Social Science in the Public Interest,” published by the Bentley Historical Society, 18. Also see “Survey Center is New Campus Unit.”

Likert submitted his proposal for a new research center to multiple universities across the United States, earning serious interest from Cornell University and the University of Chicago. He and his colleagues were most enticed by the offer from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Michigan satisfied Likert's criteria on multiple counts: it was large; it had a substantial and well-respected social science department (in which Likert had received his early training) with a commitment to social reform⁷¹; its location made it easy to travel to and from New York City and Washington DC for the arrangement of contracts and grants; and it was an appealing place for the researchers to raise families.⁷² Perhaps most importantly, the University's board of regents proposed an unusual institutional relationship between the soon-to-be Survey Research Center (SRC) and the University as a whole: the SRC would be "entirely self-supporting through grants and contracts."⁷³ SRC staff could teach in other departments on one-year appointments

⁷¹ The history of Michigan Social Sciences is itself rich and storied. John Dewey taught at the University from 1884-1894 within the philosophy department, but made major contributions to psychological research. Henry Carter Adams taught political philosophy there in the 1880s and 1890s, incorporating the nascent field of sociology and encouraging the young, pioneering sociologist Charles Horton Cooley, also a student of Dewey's, to pursue the field. Cooley would later be cited as in inspiration for the principles of the Institute for Social research. According to a memorial statement quoted in a history of the SRC and ISR, Cooley "'developed a theory of society from sociopsychological principles, including ideas regarding the growth of the self, the process of communication, the mutual conditioning of individual and group behavior, the functioning of primary and secondary groups...'" The University of Michigan was also home to prominent early-20th century settlement-house work and played a role in the so-called "professionalization" of social work.

In the 1930s, Michigan established its own chapter of the Social Science Research Council and formed a Division of Social Sciences within its graduate school. That school's dean, Clarence Yoakum, was an enthusiastic supporter of the social sciences, eager for the production of studies that would address racial and economic problems of the US in the 1930s. In 1941, Michigan political scientist James Pollock unsuccessfully asked the university president to establish a separate school for social research that could address "a whole host of social problems" which "crowd in upon us and cry for attention and solution... War, tanks, cyclotrons, will not solve these problems... Our country badly needs the social scientist who has the ability to develop the highly specialized and complex methods necessary to an understanding of our great social questions." (ISR History, 14). In 1943, the Division of Social Sciences unsuccessfully lobbied for a research center whose work could address the "postwar adjustment period." (ISR History, 15). By 1946, the University of Michigan thus had a strong foundation of social science research and a commitment to its real-life applications. For more on Charles Cooley and the history of social psychology, see Jeffrey P Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁷² Converse, *Survey Research in the US*, 341; ISR History 18.

⁷³ Converse, *Survey Research in the US*, 341.

only⁷⁴, with no promise of tenure, and the “‘experimental’ arrangement could be terminated at any time.”⁷⁵ The University of Michigan would, in other words, provide an institutional affiliation and space on campus (which proved to be marginal and almost ramshackle for the first years of the SRC’s existence).

These ostensibly meager terms appealed to the founders of the SRC. Institutional independence meant that they would be accountable to no one, dependent on no higher-ups for funding or approval of their studies. The Center would function financially like a center of the physical sciences, whose scientists relied on grants for their research, rather than a social science department beset by departmental politics and the pressures of a university-endorsed, collectively established mission. Coming from a network of federal government agencies, Likert and his colleagues had much experience scrambling for funds and submitting proposals for their projects. This early financial independence would prove critical in the development of the SRC. It pushed the team of surveyors to be continually, unflinchingly entrepreneurial in their pursuit of funds and allowed for a wide diversity of projects, guaranteeing that the money they earned through research grants would be theirs alone.

Officially opening its doors in August 1946, the SRC experienced a trickle of its new staff to Ann Arbor until early 1947. Likert joined the Michigan staff on a quarter-basis in July 1946, moving from Washington DC and starting full-time work the following October.⁷⁶ Campbell, Cannell, Katona, and Leslie Kish were the first to move to Michigan; they were

⁷⁴ SRC researchers began with options to teach in psychology and sociology departments. After conducting research on finance for the Federal Reserve, the economics department grew interested as well. See 10/19/76 Likert Interview.

⁷⁵ Converse, *Survey Research in the US*, 341. Also see 10/19/76 Likert Interview.

⁷⁶ 10/19/76 Likert Interview.

followed in the next two years by Robert Kahn, Daniel Katz, John Lansing, James Morgan, and Stephen Withey.⁷⁷ Many of these staff members had worked with Likert in the Department of Agriculture. Several had also worked with social scientist Kurt Lewin at the University of Iowa, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or in governmental agencies.

Staffers' previous experience in realms of government, commerce, and non-profit organizations led to an unprecedentedly diverse set of research aims. Likert's early proposals for the Center focused on its commitments to refining and teaching survey methodology. But the SRC would prove to be a central source of social, political, and industrial data in the second half of the 20th century. Like the social science pioneers who had preceded them at Michigan (namely John Dewey, Charles Cooley, and members of the Settlement House movement), the SRC staff built their organization upon the assumption that there was an inextricable link between social data and social change. In a nation reeling from the monumental effects of World War II—grappling with rapid economic expansion, military casualties, international political upheaval, and unprecedented reshuffling of the American population – social surveys promised the possibility of creating order out of chaos.

The SRC staff arrived in Michigan with a hefty grant from the Federal Reserve Board, with whom many of the staff had worked during their days in government agencies, to conduct a study of economic behavior and consumer sentiment.⁷⁸ In the months that followed they contemplated survey projects for the Carnegie Corporation and the American Library Association on the use of libraries, an investigation of opinion polling work for the SSRC, and interviews for the Veterans Administration. They turned down two projects for corporate initiatives whose backers refused to make the results of their research public: the American

⁷⁷ ISR History, 19.

⁷⁸ ISR History, 21.

Pharmaceutical Corporation (in March 1947) and the Ford Motor Company (in May 1947). According to an internal history of the Center, “Proposals that were limited to a narrow commercial purpose and did not tie into a program of significant research were not supported.”⁷⁹ An early SRC progress report explained that the Center would conduct work on behalf of “businesses, foundations, governmental, and other agencies for conducting surveys on all kinds of economic, social, and business problems.” It qualified that “[i]n doing work for business organizations, the Center is limiting itself to problems of social importance and publishing the findings of each study.”⁸⁰ Though the SRC was to draw a large percentage of its funds from work on behalf of corporations—a development to be addressed in Chapter 7 – it never openly surrendered its commitment to the public nature of that research.

Less than two years after the establishment of the Survey Research Center, which had committed itself to a program of attitude surveying and probability sampling, the mission of social science research at the University of Michigan expanded dramatically. On February 12, 1947, as chronicled in the previous chapter, social science pioneer Kurt Lewin died suddenly, leaving in his wake the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From his ground-breaking work with Ronald Lippitt on autocracy at the University of Iowa, to the Connecticut experiment in interracial relations that inspired the development of the National Training Laboratories, Lewin had established himself in the interwar period as the figurehead of Group Dynamics. His method of “action research” had come to epitomize social research at its best: Lewin’s work incorporated ground-breaking research methodology for explicit cultural and social aims.

⁷⁹ ISR History, 20.

⁸⁰ SRC Progress Report quoted in ISR History, 20, footnote 22.

Lewin had crossed paths with Likert's posse of surveyors during World War II. While Likert et. al. were advocating for "democratic" communication within the Department of Agriculture and the Office of War Information, Lewin was working with the Office of Strategic Services and conducting research for the Office of Naval Research (ONR) on topics like psychological warfare and the public's food consumption.⁸¹ Lewin and Likert worked together during the War on a panel of social scientists that the ONR assembled to analyze its research proposals and policies. Lewin, Likert later recalled, was "an invaluable member" thanks to his ability to "identify the major problems on which research was needed."⁸²

In late 1944, when Likert was recruiting staff for the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, he wrote a letter to one Lieutenant Richard B. Fisher explaining that "the recruiting of personnel has been a tough job" because "All the really competent people tend to be in the middle of important projects." He explained that he was "anxious to tap the full experience of some very able people here in planning our research program," adding that "Kurt Lewin is a brilliant person on research in this general area and he knows Germany thoroughly." Likert went on to express hope that "we can keep [Lewin] in active touch with our work throughout our entire research program."⁸³ The same day, Likert wrote a letter to his Michigan colleague, sociologist Ted Newcomb, lamenting that he was having trouble recruiting Kurt Lewin's MIT friend and colleague Douglas McGregor for the project because of McGregor's own schedule conflicts.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Marrow, *Practical Theorist*, 154-5.

⁸² Likert quoted in Marrow, *Practical Theorist*, 154-5.

⁸³ Letter, Rensis Likert to Fisher, 6 December 1944, folder "War Dept—USSBS Misc.," box 13, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁸⁴ Letter, Likert to Newcomb, 6 December 1944, folder "War Dept—USSBS Misc.," box 13, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

This personal and institutional circuitry sheds important light on the union that would later take place at the University of Michigan between Lewin's brainchild, the Research Center for Group Dynamics, and Likert's Survey Research Center. On the one hand, Likert and Lewin had made names for themselves in two different realms of social science – Likert in the more quantitative and conservative realm of attitude surveying, and Lewin in the world of experiential, experimental group dynamics. But during this fertile period of growth in social science and human relations, the two camps established important lines of communication that would have implications for organizational research for decades to come.

When Kurt Lewin died suddenly in February of 1947, Dorwin Cartwright inherited a Research Center that, in spite of being just two years old, carried a clearly articulated mission, methodology, and array of projects. Cartwright was left with a heavy burden: deciding what to do next and who should be in charge. Daunted by the loss of the institute's intellectual and administrative patriarch, Cartwright nonetheless remained determined to continue Lewin's mission and fulfill the objectives of RCGD's hefty research grants.⁸⁵ In the immediate aftermath of Lewin's death, MIT's administration remained supportive of the continuation of Lewin's Center, encouraging the RCGD to "continue its program at full momentum under its own leadership for at least the next year and a half," and to slowly build relationships with "outside advisors" who could help guide it past the summer of 1948. But the President of MIT also made clear that he wanted to start putting less emphasis on the social sciences.⁸⁶ The three-man interim committee overseeing the RCGD would include Cartwright as executive director along

⁸⁵ For Cartwright's determination to continue with this mission, see his letters to the Field Foundation of May 17, 1947 and March 19, 1947, folder "ISR-RCGD Director's Files, Field Foundation, 1943-8," box 25, ISR Papers, Bentley Library.

⁸⁶ Letter, Cartwright and Lippitt to Maxwell Hahn, Field Foundation, 19 March 1947, file "ISR-RCGD Director's Files, Field Foundation, 1943-8," box 25, ISR Papers, Bentley Library; Regarding the president of MIT, see Likert's interview with the Academy of Management, 1979.

with Douglas McGregor (of MIT's Department of Economics and Social Science) and Ronald Lippitt (who had just recently helped to establish the National Training Laboratories for Group Development). These men would continue to oversee the RCGD's research for the American Jewish Congress, the Office of Naval Research, and the Field Foundation; they would also continue to teach classes and coordinate the graduate program for the fourteen RCGD graduate students at MIT.

Cartwright and his colleagues determined that they needed a new institutional setting in which to conduct their research, ideally one with "strong departments in the social sciences" and a more vibrant community of scholars in their interdisciplinary fields.⁸⁷ In late 1947, they embarked on a national tour of potential university sites. Cartwright was committed to moving RCGD and the core team of researchers as a whole, six full-time faculty members and their cadre of graduate students. They were met with interest from Cornell, the University of Minnesota, University of California in Berkeley, Washington University, Western Reserve, and Harvard Business School.⁸⁸ Their decision came down to the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan—both of which had vibrant, promising social science programs – but Minnesota was unable to accommodate the RCGD as a self-contained entity, proposing to break up its members between departments.⁸⁹

The University of Michigan emerged as the clear front-runner in the bid for the RCGD. In a report on the RCGD's first half of 1948, Cartwright announced that it was "the unanimous consensus of the staff that the University of Michigan can provide the best opportunity for the

⁸⁷ Memo, Robert Angell and Donald Marquis to Provostt Adams (University of Michigan), no date, folder "ISR-RCGD Directors' Correspondence 1947-8," box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

⁸⁸ See assorted correspondence, folder "Dorwin Philip Cartwright, Research Center for Group Dynamics, Correspondence 1945-1948," box 1, Cartwright papers, Bentley Library.

⁸⁹ "Transcript of Oral History interview with Doc Cartwright," folder "ISR Oral History Transcripts: Cartwright, Doc," box 1, ISR Oral Histories, Bentley Library, 2.

development of the Center” for two main reasons. First of all, the University of Michigan had offered attractive financial and institutional incentives: a yearly contribution of \$22,500; space and facilities for the transported center; and, as in the case of the SRC, institutional autonomy. Second and “perhaps most important,” the University of Michigan had displayed a strong commitment to the social sciences. It was home to one of the first doctoral programs in Social Psychology; it encouraged inter-disciplinary collaboration between anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists; and it had proven to be a supportive and viable home for Likert’s Survey Research Center.⁹⁰ “There can be no doubt,” Cartwright insisted, “that in coming years Ann Arbor will be the scene of some of the most important developments in social science.”⁹¹

The appeal of Michigan to Cartwright also stemmed from a deep familiarity with the personnel of the Survey Research Center. Cartwright, Likert, Campbell and others had all worked closely in the Department of Agriculture, the Office of War Information, and the US Strategic Bombing Survey during World War II, when they had established had strong foundations of admiration and cooperation. According to Cartwright, “We worked as a close team in those days...Angus [Campbell] and I had both had previous contacts as graduate students with Kurt Lewin...and Ren had gotten acquainted with Kurt, and so we all had that contact with that particular man who was kind of an inspirational person.”⁹² After the War, in fact, Likert had tried to persuade Cartwright to become part of his team at Michigan, but Cartwright had already committed to working with his former Lewin, his former professor, at

⁹⁰ It is worth noting that in this regard, according to Cartwright in his oral history, “Michigan wasn’t unique, but it was certainly in the foreground. “ Universities like Harvard and MIT also displayed strong commitments to inter-disciplinary work. Harvard housed a Department of Social Relations, and at MIT there were “multi-departmental requirements for our graduate students to get a PhD in what we called group psychology” – reflecting a determination to “ignore departmental boundaries.” See Oral History Interview with Doc Cartwright, 3.

⁹¹ “Report of the RCGD Jan 1, 1948- June 1, 1948,” file “ISR-RCGD, Director’s Files, Field Foundation, 1943-8,” box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

⁹² Cartwright Oral History, 8.

MIT. Cartwright remembered, “Ren kept asking me couldn’t I do this or that, and...couldn’t I postpone my [move] to Cambridge for a few weeks or a month or so...so I was involved in the survey methods and had participated in some of their designs.”⁹³

Cartwright later recalled the powerful impression Likert had made on him when they worked together for the government. Cartwright had been assigned to be the head of the Treasury Department’s study of war bonds before the end of the war (“I don’t know why I got assigned to it other than that I was available that day”⁹⁴), and had accumulated a massive amount of information by war’s end. After the official conclusion of the study, Cartwright mentioned to Likert that he had great amounts of left-over data about people’s spending and saving habits, and the ways in which they intended to deal with their war bonds. Likert suggested that the Federal Reserve Board was the “best place to get a sponsor,” so the two men headed to the Board’s offices to make their pitch. It worked, and the Federal Reserve funds ended up being critical for the start-up costs of the SRC in 1946. Cartwright later explained, “I had all that kind of background, and so the working relations with Ren and seeing how he would take these ideas and take off with them.”⁹⁵ Likert was “intrinsically a salesman” who “would have sold something no matter what his occupation was,” and his force of personality was such that probability sampling and intensive interviews “became something you sort of had to believe in if

⁹³ Cartwright Oral History, 8, 13. Note that there were even more personnel connections between RCGD and Michigan left over from wartime, according to Dorwin Cartwright. There were also links to Donald Marquis, as explained by Cartwright: “He had been in charge during the war of the use of psychological personnel in the war effort. So he had been thinking about the field and how they fitted...you know, the training fitted with the demands and all these things. ...And he and Ted Newcomb, who was a big thinker about doing new structures (he was going to have this new doctoral program and so on) and Ren, who had the same general spirit—they were constantly interacting about national or international things.”

⁹⁴ Cartwright Oral History, 10.

⁹⁵ Cartwright Oral History, 12.

you were working for Likert.”⁹⁶ By the time Cartwright and his team arrived in Michigan, in other words, they had already fallen sway to Likert’s messianic advocacy of survey research. Cartwright informed Michigan’s Provost Adams of the RCGD’s verdict on March 1, 1948.⁹⁷

Cartwright’s enthusiasms were mutual. An internal memo circulated among University of Michigan administrators in 1947 indicated that the acquisition of the RCGD would mark a serious advancement in their building of a world-class social science empire.⁹⁸ Professors Robert Angell and Donald Marquis explained to their colleagues that “the University has taken steps already which have established it as one of the leading institutions for research and training in social psych and human relations,” and that its “foundations of this prestige” had been built by the interdisciplinary work of departments like Social Psychology and the young Survey Research Center. “To bring the RCGD to Michigan,” they argued, “would represent a further strengthening of Michigan’s leadership in research and teaching in the field of human relations...particularly strengthening the work in techniques of democratic leadership.”

Angell and Marquis proposed that the administration could unite the SRC and the RCGD under the umbrella of a Human Relations Research Center, directed by Likert, with Campbell and Cartwright in charge of subgroups.⁹⁹ After meeting with SRC’s Executive Committee in November 1947 and then the University’s Division of the Social Sciences and Provost Adams, the heads of the RCGD received an offer to relocate to Michigan with terms very similar to that which Likert had received in 1946. Confident in their funding from the American Jewish

⁹⁶ Cartwright Oral History, 10.

⁹⁷ Letter, Dorwin Cartwright to Provost Adams, 1 March 1948, file “ISR-RCGD, Director’s Correspondence, 1947-8,” box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library. Cartwright wrote: “After a careful observation of the opportunities afforded by the major universities of the country we have come to the firm conviction that Michigan is best able to provide the sort of physical and intellectual environment for significant work of the sort we want to be able to do.”

⁹⁸ Memo, Robert Angell and Donald Marquis to Provost Adams, 2.

⁹⁹ Memo, Robert Angell and Donald Marquis to Provost Adams, 2.

Congress, the Office of Naval Research, and the Field Foundation (which had made a three-year commitment of \$15,000 a year), RCGD's directors made the move to Ann Arbor.¹⁰⁰ In July 1948, RCGD officially became part of the University of Michigan, with Cartwright as Director. He was soon joined by John French, Leon Festinger, Ronald Lippitt, and Alvin Zander.¹⁰¹

The RCGD and the SRC differed openly in their methods from the very beginning: Likert's team was committed to rigorous statistical analysis (in addition to its non-directive interview methods), while Cartwright's crew built on the more experimental, even playful, laboratory experiments of Lewin.¹⁰² Cartwright attributed the difference to the fact that Lewin was "more of a theorist"—"He was a European professor!"—who tended to start with big questions about the nature of culture and society, while Likert began with more concrete hypotheses and systematic procedures.¹⁰³ Cartwright and others have made clear, however, that though these two camps were "different in the details...the spirit was the same."¹⁰⁴ In spite of "certain differences in our emphasis," Cartwright explained, the visionaries behind the SRC and the RCGD, "were remarkably similar people":

¹⁰⁰ See ISR History, 22. Also see contents of file "ISR-RCGD Directors' files, Field Foundation, 1943-8," box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

¹⁰¹ Note that of the original MIT staff, only one social scientist, Dr. Radke, stayed behind, along with nine of the graduate students in the RCGD program. Four graduate students relocated to Michigan, and one transferred to the University of California (see Directors' Correspondence, 1947-8). Harold Kelley and Alvin Zander were the two social scientists who did not originate in MIT's RCGD, but were rather added to the staff upon its arrival in Michigan. See letter from Zander to Cartwright on June 27, 1948, upon joining staff of the RCGD: "Kurt told me a number of times: 'You and Doc should work together on some kind of socially useful science.' I am glad we are going to have a chance to do just that." Of the early Michigan RCGD staff, only Festinger left Ann Arbor after a short while. He went to the University Minnesota and then to Stanford. See Cartwright Oral History, 4.

¹⁰² Note that the dominant methodology of the Survey Research Center continued to change and evolve. See Converse, "Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence." Converse writes that by the 1960s and 1970s, methods of the SRC had changed dramatically. The SRC had embarked on some huge studies -- i.e. the Survey of Consumers and the National Election Study -- in which 75-80% of interviews relied on the "closed" style of interviewing. People like Cartwright and Campbell had encouraged a compromise between the methods.

¹⁰³ Cartwright Oral History, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Cartwright Oral History, 4.

You wouldn't think so looking at them or talking to them, I mean just their style or whatnot. Lewin was a clear German immigrant. When you talked to him he had a German accent, and Ren [Likert] was from the farm, the Midwest. . . but they were both convinced that the social sciences were going to save the world if you just did it right. Doing it right meant roughly the same things to them, but once you got it down to the details, that's where some of the differences in methods and so on would come up.¹⁰⁵

Inspired by their intellectual patriarchs, The RCGD and the SRC were united by a fundamental conviction that the social sciences would deliver political, economic, and social harmony and abundance in the postwar period.¹⁰⁶

In February 1949, a year and a half after the RCGD arrived in Ann Arbor, it was united with the SRC under the umbrella of the Institute for Social Research (ISR). Like the hypothetical Human Relations Research Center proposed by Angell and Marquis in 1948, the ISR would provide an organizational infrastructure for the two centers, allowing them to remain autonomous and self-contained while also providing administrative overhead and creating more opportunities for dialogue between the two centers (though they would not be located in the same building until 1966). Likert, previously the head of the Survey Research Center, became Director of the ISR; his former job went to Angus Campbell, while Cartwright remained Director of the Research Center for Group Dynamics.

By 1950, the collective enterprise was “off to a strong start,” bringing in enough external contracts to sustain itself financially.¹⁰⁷ In the first year of the ISR's existence, research contracts totaled \$244,000, and in the second, \$346,000. The pressure to be self-sustaining

¹⁰⁵ Cartwright Oral History, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Cartwright himself shared this conviction and relayed his optimism to his friend, fellow social scientist Robert Kahn, in March 1948: “Mrs. Snyder conveyed to me your congratulations on the arrival of my son. Thank you very much. I trust that by the time he becomes a man we social scientists will have made a significant start in the task of establishing the kind of world we should have.” Letter, Dorwin Cartwright to Robert Kahn, 5 March 1948, file “ISR-RCGD Directors' Files, Field Foundation, 1943-8, box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

¹⁰⁷ ISR History, 28.

“pushed researchers to constantly reassess areas of research and encouraged cross-disciplinary research in ways that the central financing of research might have not,” and they found great support in the University administration, whose Provost Adams supported their flexibility and autonomy. The ISR was admitted to the Division of the Social Sciences at Michigan in 1951, which made its presence in the community more official, and the university began paying the salaries of the Centers’ directors in the early 1950s: Likert in 1953, Campbell in 1954, and Cartwright in 1955.¹⁰⁸

In spite of their institutional and intellectual cooperation, the SRC and RCGD pursued largely separate projects in the early 1950s. The RCGD continued to focus on the concept of group membership, focusing particularly on how group membership could have an impact on a person’s “behavior, attitudes, feelings, and motivation.”¹⁰⁹ Early work of the RCGD included a Project for the Dodge Local of the United Automobile Workers, which aimed to provide “objective” evaluation of minority groups’ acceptance within the union. Alvin Zander, who had been working on a study of employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity at Michigan Bell Telephone Company, continued his work there. Another study examined women working in a large public utility company, focusing on the amount of emotional support available to them and the extent to which their “aspirations were being met.” Additional studies addressed interpersonal relations between staff members at a social welfare agency, communication in a housing project, social power in the interactions of children at Michigan’s Fresh Air Camp, and the attitudes of fraternity members toward minority groups.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ ISR History, 28.

¹⁰⁹ ISR History, 38.

¹¹⁰ ISR History, 38-9.

The SRC, which has remained the largest branch of research in the ISR throughout its history, launched a number of new divisions with different foci in the late 1940s and early 1950s. George Katona's Economic Behavior Program analyzed "consumer motives, attitudes, and expectations" in order to understand the psychological motivations behind economic behavior, in studies like "Four Families Discuss Their Financial Position" (June 1948).¹¹¹ The Political Behavior Program conducted research on American attitudes towards foreign relations and US foreign policy (e.g. "Five Americans Discuss Our Relations with the USSR" [1947] and "Citizen Participation in Problems of World Affairs" [1948]), some of which was later presented to the Department of State and the Council of Foreign Relations.¹¹² After successfully predicting the winner of the 1948 presidential election, SRC's Public Affairs Program launched a large study, led by Angus Campbell and Warren Miller, on the behavior of the national electorate during election periods, focusing on psychological factors such as "self-confidence and sense of obligation in the role of the citizen."¹¹³ This Program also initiated studies of American attitudes toward economic aid to Europe, a survey of American attitudes toward big business (sponsored by General Motors¹¹⁴), and attitudes toward atomic energy.

In the early 1950s, the SRC also made forays into the realm of psychological health. It launched a program funded by the National Institute of Mental Health that traced the public's

¹¹¹ See Likert archive Box 13, Folder ISR #14. From 1946-72, the Economic Behavior Program cooperated with the Federal Reserve Board on a large-scale Survey of Consumer Finances. The Survey of Consumer Attitudes, launched in the same period, sought a broader understanding of consumer attitudes toward the economy and business conditions. Also see ISR History, 29.

¹¹² Likert archive Box 13, Folder: ISR Projects #7A "Five Americans" and other studies in Box 13.

¹¹³ ISR History, 33.

¹¹⁴ See Rensis Likert, proposal for "The Public and Big Business—A General Study Plan" for General Motors, folder "73: Correspondence," box 15, Likert papers, Bentley Library. In the proposal, Likert expresses his research team's plan to "determine the place of 'big business' in the way people look at their world." This folder also contains correspondence with GM executive Felix Bruner about the study from January and March 1950; GM's agreement to pay \$50,000 for the study; and a report on the meeting with Alfred Sloan about the study from September 1950.

understanding of public health problems, followed in 1957 by broad surveys of the public's "adjustment problems" and "well-being."¹¹⁵ In addition to these surveys, the SRC continued to administer the type of local, social surveys that many of its researchers had conducted for the Department of Agriculture in the early 1940s—studies like "The Social Integration of Columbus, OH" (1947), which was part of a larger project called "The Moral Integration of Large American Cities."¹¹⁶

By the middle of the 1950s, the ISR had established itself as one of the country's foremost producers of social surveys and group-dynamics data. What remained to be determined was what the ISR would actually *do* with that data upon its gathering. Whose interests would the ISR be aligned with, and to what extent did its research serve to bolster the power of the organizations sponsoring it? Likert and Lewin had envisioned their respective institutions as action-oriented, pragmatic sites of lofty social change. But in the decades that followed the establishment of the ISR, as it became increasingly dedicated to organizational research, the umbrella organizational found itself straddling sometimes contradictory aims of private benefit and public good. Likert would eventually reconcile these aims through his work as a participative management theorist, which bridged the mission of social science with that of humanistic psychology. In the 1950s and 1960s, he would find himself increasingly aligned with humanistic management theorists like Douglas McGregor and, by extension, Abraham Maslow.

¹¹⁵ ISR History, 34.

¹¹⁶ See folder "Miscellaneous Printing ISR Reports," box 16, Likert papers, Bentley library. This box contains the following documents, among others: "The Social Integration of Columbus, OH" (1947); "Attitudes Toward US-Russian Relations" (1947); "Exploratory Interviews for the American Overseas Aid—UN Aid to Children Campaign" (March 1948); and "Interest, Information, and Attitudes in the Field of World Affairs: A Survey Conducted in the Albany, NY Metropolitan Area" (Nov 1949).

Chapter 6
 Humanizing Enterprise:
 Douglas McGregor's Theory Y in Theory and Practice

When Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* was published in 1960, it introduced McGregor's participative philosophy to a large audience of managers and executives.¹ It was, according to historian Thomas Frank, "one of the most popular business books of the era" and "enormously influential . . . spawning dozens of spinoffs and winning disciples across the corporate spectrum."² Published in 1960, the book urged managers to promote their subordinates' personal growth and self-actualization, linking Maslow's hierarchy of needs with a broader tradition of human relations. It quickly became recognized as a landmark management text—not because McGregor was necessarily the first management thinker to apply Maslow's ideas to industrial settings, but because "he was the first to 'name' it."³

McGregor died in 1964, but his Theory Y guided management theory for decades after his death. A 1974 *New York Times* article entitled "The Businessmen Who Read Business Books" cited "overwhelming evidence that successful businessmen (like successful politicians) don't read books"—but located ten volumes that mid-1970s businessmen *did* report reading in large numbers. McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* made it onto the list at number nine,

¹ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

² Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 22.

³ Profile of Douglas McGregor, *The Economist Online*, http://www.economist.com/business-finance/management/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12366698, accessed 12 April 2012.

three notches below William Whyte's *The Organization Man* and one below John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*.⁴

Reflecting on McGregor's mainstream success as a management theorist, it would be logical to assume that he had generated his seminal work from experiences in traditional corporate contexts. But the reality was quite the opposite. McGregor developed the principles of *The Human Side of Enterprise* while working within two progressive, non-profit mid-century institutions. As part of MIT's Industrial Relations Group, he collaborated with both Kurt Lewin, the father of "action research," and Joseph Scanlon, a staunch defender of labor unions. (He later remembered them as being two of the "three remarkable men" he had known in his lifetime.⁵) Lewin and Scanlon came from markedly different worlds, but they both offered McGregor analytical and practical models of leadership that profoundly influenced his humanistic management theory of the 1940s and 1950s. Lewin introduced McGregor to the young, vital field of group dynamics. Scanlon, who had come of age working in the steel industry, inspired McGregor to re-envision his approach to labor/management communication and cooperation. Through collaborations with these two men in their respective fields, McGregor refined his own conception of democracy in the workplace—and reconceived of industrial leadership as a participative endeavor. If Maslow had provided McGregor with a model of individual psychological growth, Lewin and Scanlon provided him with more systemic conceptions of social conflict and democratic relationships.

McGregor's postwar intellectual genesis was also shaped by his role as president of Antioch College, a liberal institution that privileged close cooperation between students and

⁴ Marilyn Bender, "The Businessmen Who Read Business Books," *New York Times*, May 19, 1974, 159.

⁵ "The Significance of Scanlon's Contribution" in Douglas McGregor, *Leadership and Motivation: Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1966), 126. The third man was General Motors research director Charles Kettering.

faculty, relationships between the academy and the outside world, and anti-hierarchical institutional governance. At Antioch, McGregor honed his ideas about leadership in a non-industrial context and witnessed the lived reality of previously abstract ideals. Antioch became a utopian model for the democratic change McGregor hoped to see in the US's major industrial organizations. If democratic governance was possible at a liberal arts college, he concluded, why couldn't it be possible in corporations? The school exposed him to the challenges of leadership and the necessity for constant communication between members of an organization.

This chapter explores McGregor's formulation of his famous management theory through the intersection of his influences at the RCGD and Antioch College. Theory Y, as he called it, emerged from McGregor's exposure to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Lewin's emphasis on group dynamics, Scanlon's approach to labor-management cooperation, and Antioch's progressive organizational structure. McGregor's famous management treatise, which became a landmark publication in the field of humanistic management, encapsulated a diverse array of intellectual forces advocating for democratic participation in the years following World War II. The application of Theory Y in American corporations, also a subject of this chapter, reveals the extent to which McGregor's ideas permeated corporate culture by the mid-1960s, but also the limits of his utopianism within corporate contexts.

Douglas McGregor first met Kurt Lewin in the mid-1940s, when Lewin was seeking an institutional base for his research, as has been chronicled in Chapter 4. Lewin had decided during World War II that he wanted to establish an institute that would "help democracy learn how to handle its group problems more efficiently and less prejudicially."⁶ McGregor played a key role in persuading MIT President Carl Compton to offer Lewin's group a home at the

⁶ Marrow, *The Practical Theorist*, Chapter 16.

university, and after Lewin arrived at MIT in 1945, the two men continued to work closely with one another at MIT and beyond. Lewin recruited McGregor to serve on the Advisory Council of the Commission on Community Interrelations, a division of the American Jewish Congress, along with people like Rensis Likert, Gordon Allport, and Margaret Mead, and introduced him to the other founders of the National Training Laboratories for Group Development. Thanks to Lewin, McGregor developed relationships with a faction of social scientists outside of the industrial realm who were passionately committed to understanding relationships between people in groups. Lewin's emphasis on just and equitable social relationships helped inspire McGregor's own take on human relations, and his sense that relationships at work could be made more fundamentally democratic through the right kind of experimentation. According to McGregor's friend and admirer Marvin Weisbord, from 1945 on, McGregor "built upon Lewin at every turn."⁷

In 1996, an MIT alum named Harold Leavitt published an article reflecting on the brief and glorious days at MIT when both Lewin and McGregor served on the faculty.⁸ He noted that, on the one hand, Lewin and McGregor's groups constituted two different social science factions. Lewin's RCGD staff addressed social conflict through the lens of social psychology, while McGregor's Industrial Relations group at the Management School focused more specifically on the issue of morale at the workplace. The graduate students of the two groups played against each other in MIT intramural football games, but their rivalry ended there. For according to Leavitt (who was in McGregor's group), the two factions recognized their shared outsider status:

⁷ Marvin Ross Weisbord, *Productive Workplaces: Organizing and Managing for Dignity, Meaning, and Community*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 106.

⁸ Harold Leavitt, "The Old Days, Hot Groups, and Managers' Lib," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41, no 2 (June 1996): 288-300.

The McGregor group wanted to show the hard-nosed business types down on the first floor that we deserved respect. We felt we were on the cutting edge, while they were Neanderthals who still thought one could run an organization with a whip. Lewin's Research Center, with its new, foreign (literally) social psychology, had its own bêtes noires. Members of that group felt they were resented and rejected by the American psychological establishment.⁹

Yet Lewin and McGregors' "teams" ultimately transcended their outsider status. "During its glory years," Leavitt wrote, "the McGregor team probably had more influence on the human side of business practice than any other school in the world," and "Lewin and company certainly changed the face of American social psychology."

Leavitt has traced an entire generation of "major American social psychologists and organizational social scientists" to their roots at MIT during the 1940s, citing researchers like Hal Kelley, Kurt Back, Herb Shepard, Mason Haire, Alex Bavelas, Leon Festinger, Jack French, Ronald Lippitt, and Dorwin Cartwright.¹⁰ The relationship between Lewin and McGregor signaled a larger integration taking place in American social science between social-action-oriented social scientists and human relations advisors in industry. The two men, simultaneously horrified by mid-century global events and idealistic about the human condition, agreed that social scientists could engineer a new brand of leadership built on principles of democratic participation and social reform.

Though little record of the lived relationship between McGregor and Lewin has survived, the two men's names became synonymous with liberal social science of the 1940s, and they shared many of the same admirers. McGregor ultimately joined the staff of the RCGD and became intimately involved with the National Training Laboratories. By the mid-1950s, he had emerged as a champion of T-groups and one of the chief architects of NTL's Management

⁹ Leavitt 289.

¹⁰ Leavitt 291.

Development Workshop (to be discussed at length in Chapter 7), which had been designed “[t]o increase the awareness of managerial persons of the larger contributions that individuals can make to the workplace situation” and—most notably—“to increase managers’ awareness of the human potential.”¹¹ McGregor’s famous tome, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, would ultimately invoke many of the themes with which Lewin had energetically grappled in the 1930s and ‘40s. In formulating his archetypes of Theory X and Theory Y—also known as the authoritarian boss and the democratic leader – McGregor would summon the spirit of Lewin, who had spent his career as a social scientist trying to decipher the nature of democratic rule. The ideal leader, both men agreed, was capable of great strength, but also of a fundamental respect for the abilities of his subordinates.

McGregor’s other great contribution to MIT’s postwar personnel came in the form of Joseph Scanlon, a steel-worker-cum-labor organizer whom McGregor recruited to MIT in 1946 – less than a year after Lewin’s arrival. While Lewin had helped reinforce McGregor’s commitment to the lofty realm of activist social science, Scanlon emphasized the more pragmatic realm of labor-management negotiations. Within a decade of being hired at MIT, *Time* magazine was calling Scanlon the “most sought-after labor-relations adviser in the US,” and his eponymous Scanlon Plan was a trademark of 60 plants across the country.¹² But when he and McGregor first encountered each other in the early 1940s, Scanlon was still formulating his

¹¹ Leland Powers Bradford, *National Training Laboratories: Its History, 1947-1970: Originally National Training Laboratory in Group Development and Now NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science* (Bethel, Me: Bradford, 1974), 278.

¹²“Management: The Scanlon Plan,” *Time Magazine* (September 26, 1955), accessed April 22, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,807657,00.html>.

trademark approach to labor/management negotiations—one that relied on a collective setting of productivity norms among management and workers, along with an egalitarian sharing of profits.

The two men were superficially very different: Scanlon was short, squat, gruff, with a background in manual labor; McGregor was tall, articulate, professorial, and marked by a distinctly gentle sensibility. Yet the two men shared zealous commitments to participation and the idea that managers occupied a central role in the creation of positive morale at work. After working together on an industrial case study and as colleagues at MIT, McGregor became a fierce advocate of the Scanlon Plan and devoted a chapter to its virtues in his 1960 *Human Side of Enterprise*. Scanlon helped direct McGregor's style of human relations away from Mayo-brand morale-building, which tended to emphasize positive styles of management and communication over the material sharing of resources. McGregor, under Scanlon's influence, concluded that caring communication meant little if not paired with both a genuine respect for workers' ideas and a willingness to share the wealth.

Joseph P. Scanlon, the son of Irish immigrants, was born in Ohio in 1899. He completed his service in the Navy in the early 1920s, was hired as a cost accountant at Empire Steel, and started prize-fighting for money on the side.¹³ When a boss at Empire told him that he had to choose between prizefighting and accounting—because the former conflicted with the appearance and behaviors of a white-collar worker—he switched jobs to become an open hearth tender. Remaining at Empire Steel through the 1930s, he found himself in a turbulent steel economy, due to competition between the AFL/CIO and the reorganization of the steel trade. In the middle of the decade (1936), CIO president John L. Lewis named Phillip Murray to be president of the United Mine Workers of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), and

¹³ The information in this paragraph comes from the *Time* article and Daniel Wren, "Joseph P. Scanlon: The Man and the Plan," *Journal of Management History* 15, no. 1 (2009): 20-37.

Murray appointed Clinton Golden, a labor organizer influenced by liberal labor reformers in the 1920s, to be Regional Director of the UMW for the Pittsburgh area.¹⁴ These two men proved pivotal for the transformation of Scanlon's own career.

Scanlon was elected president of Lodge 169 of the SWOC in 1937, just as Empire Steel hit particularly hard times. Production and employment had dropped off substantially, and Empire was in such trouble that all employees agreed to a 25% pay cut. Management announced to him that "if the plant could not do better, it would be shut down,"¹⁵ so in June of the following year, Scanlon traveled with two company executives to Pittsburgh to call upon Clinton Golden's expertise. With the cooperation of Golden and the executives in town, Scanlon established a Joint Research Committee, staffed by members of both management and union, which solicited workers' suggestions for increased productivity and decreased waste. In one instance, a workers' productivity committee recommended the purchase of a piece of new equipment that cost \$8,000 but saved the company \$150,000 in one year. According to one account, this productivity scheme "not only rescued the plant but put it on a more profitable basis," skirting bankruptcy and restoring wages, and effectively laid the foundations for what later became known as the Scanlon Plan—though unlike Scanlon's later experiments, the workers did not receive a share of the gains.¹⁶

Clinton Golden was impressed by Scanlon's efforts to enlist employee feedback for industrial reform, and wanted to find a way for Scanlon to develop participation programs at

¹⁴ According to Gabor, Golden had been a follower of Debs, then "fell under the influence" of Elton Mayo at Harvard in the 1920s, and endorsed the efforts of union-management collaboration being pioneered by the Machinist Union in the same decade. See Thomas R Brooks, *Clint: A Biography of a Labor Intellectual, Clinton S. Golden* (New York: Atheneum, 1978).

¹⁵ "Management: The Scanlon Plan."

¹⁶ "Management: The Scanlon Plan."

other troubled companies.¹⁷ During World War II, he recruited Scanlon to be the head of Industrial Engineering Department at the CIO's Pittsburgh headquarters, as part of the commission dedicated to investigating equal pay for equal work, incentive payment plans, and grievance cases. (His role there was limited by the National War Labor Board and the War Production Board, which enforced President Roosevelt's wage stabilization program and his 1943 executive order against wage increases and incentive pay¹⁸). Scanlon and Golden also both became members of a joint US Steel-USWA Commission, which tried to make gains for workers in spite of restrictive federal legislation.¹⁹ During this period, Scanlon encountered significant obstacles to the goals of management/worker cooperation they were trying to achieve, but Scanlon was able to experiment with techniques on an unprecedented scale. He gained access to a wide range of companies experiencing labor discord who had turned to the US Steel/USWA Commission for assistance, and used them as training grounds for his evolving principles of cooperative production. Between 1940 and 1946, he helped establish labor-management committees at more than 40 companies. According to Andrea Gabor, "union-management collaboration flourished at US Steel between the late 1930s and the end of World War II."²⁰

McGregor first gained exposure to Joseph Scanlon during World War II. McGregor spent two summers during World War II observing Scanlon's work in Pittsburgh, where he was attempting to mediate a "historic agreement" between the management of US Steel, struggling to increase production during World War II, and Philip Murray," who possessed a "deep suspicion

¹⁷ Gabor 172.

¹⁸ See also John P Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry*, Pittsburgh Series in Social and Labor History (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).

¹⁹ It is worth noting that both Golden and Scanlon represented the anti-Communist wing of the CIO during the critical period of that split. See Brooks, *Clint*.

²⁰ Gabor 172.

of management that penetrated his being” thanks to his experience as a 10-year-old worker in Scottish coal mines.²¹ McGregor noted Scanlon’s adherence to the participative principles he cherished. He then watched with great curiosity when, in 1945, Scanlon initiated the experiment that introduced the key tenets of his Scanlon Plan at the Adamson Company of East Palestine, Ohio.

The Adamson Company, a maker of welded tanks, experienced typical labor-management conflict during the war and brought in Scanlon to mediate. Under Scanlon’s guidance, the company appointed a union-management committee to determine a “normal” cost of labor per unit, and then established a system to split 50-50 the savings workers made by producing more efficiently than the normal rate. According to an account in *Time*, the new plan was “flooded with workers’ suggestions” for labor-saving measures: “Welders who had stood around waiting for materials began helping to unload. Workers formerly indifferent to substandard work turned out by slackers began raising Cain: it cut down their bonus.”²² By 1945, production efficiency had increased by 54%, and worker bonuses averaged 41% of monthly earnings. Adamson became the first poster child for what would later be called the Scanlon plan, which, in spite of wartime restrictions, had shown its promise.²³

During the era of Scanlon’s experimentations at the Adamson Company, McGregor started bringing him to MIT for seminars and lectures in the Industrial Relations department. McGregor later recalled:

In our visits to industrial centers we became acquainted with the union-management cooperation plans sponsored by the the United Steelworkers and

²¹ Gabor 173.

²² “Management: The Scanlon Plan.”

²³ Wren, “Joseph P. Scanlon: The Man and the Plan,” 25.

with Clinton Golden and Joseph Scanlon who had initiated and godfathered many of them. Once more we discovered with a welcome shock that our own theoretical conclusions dovetailed in many basic respects with the practical conclusions of these successful but hard-boiled union realists.²⁴

Soon, a window of opportunity opened at MIT. Clinton Golden resigned from the USW in July 1946, and Scanlon grew increasingly frustrated with his union work: Cooperative efforts within the steel industry fell apart after the war, as industry refused to lift wages of employees, and Murray withheld his support of labor/management cooperation.²⁵ Scanlon was left without his most powerful ally, facing a climate hostile to his participative efforts, and Douglas McGregor recognized an opportunity. In 1946, he offered Scanlon a position on MIT's Industrial Relations Faculty. Scanlon, who has been called "one of McGregor's most unlikely recruits," remained at MIT until his death in 1956. Among a faculty of social scientists and experts in human relations, Scanlon contributed a shop-floor perspective on how to increase productivity while increasing rank-and-file participation in management decisions.

During his tenure at MIT, Scanlon never stopped consulting with companies, and continued to refine his Scanlon plan. His first big coup took place at the Lapointe Tool Company of Hudson, Massachusetts—where he established the official 3-tiered system that characterized the Scanlon Plan. Finding the company's workers on the verge of a strike, Scanlon first calculated "normal" labor costs as he had at Adamson; then established a joint management-labor production committee to review employees' cost-sharing suggestions; and finally built a profit-sharing program for all employees.²⁶ Within twenty months of establishing the program,

²⁴ McGregor "Foreword," *Sociometry*, 3.

²⁵ Gabor cites Carl Frost, an MIT professor, arguing that if Murray had supported Scanlon more and pushed for more cooperation with management, Scanlon never would have left the USW. See also Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came*.

²⁶ See Wren, "Joseph P. Scanlon: The Man and the Plan,".

production had increased by 61% and, according to a National Planning Association report, “An outsider had difficulty distinguishing management from union.”²⁷

McGregor and Scanlon, buoyed by these results, collaborated on their first labor-relations case study in the late 1940s, as part of a National Planning Association series on “The Causes of Industrial Peace.”²⁸ Before Scanlon was recruited to MIT, during World War II, McGregor had served as a temporary labor relations manager at the Dewey and Almy Chemical Company. The “progressive firm” was founded in 1919 “on a bedrock of benevolent paternalism,” and employed 1500 people in two plants near MIT by 1948.²⁹ Its president accepted his employees’ vote for unionization in 1939 because he trusted the regional director of the AFL, but according to Weisbord, “the paternalism continued, as the president personally handled contracts and grievances.”³⁰ When he left for wartime service in Washington, he appointed Douglas McGregor, who had been consulting with the firm, as the manager of labor relations.³¹

²⁷ “Management: The Scanlon Plan.” The next test was to see if the Scanlon Plan could work at a successful company, rather than a flailing one. That company was the Parker Pen Company of Janesville, Wisconsin. Already a so-called progressive firm, the company boasted of good relationships with its union, successful incentive and retirement programs, and “a sleekly, modern, air-conditioned plant with such production aids as piped-in music for its workers.” But executives had grown concerned about their incentive pay system, noticing that some men in low-paying jobs were taking home more wages than highly skilled workers. Scanlon dismantled the incentive pay system—arguing that it “promoted individual effort at the expense of the group”—and installed a new productivity norm system, with a bonus pool for money saved from increased productivity. Twenty-five percent of the pool went into a reserve fund for deficit or break-even month and the rest was split, with 75% of savings going to workers, and 25% going to management. The first month alone was marked by a 13.8% wage increase, and over the course of the year, the company had implemented 240 worker suggestions.

²⁸ Douglas McGregor and National Planning Association, *The Dewey and Almy Chemical Company and the International Chemical Workers Union; a Case Study* (Washington, D.C: National planning Association, 1948).

²⁹ Weisbord, 119. Weisbord explains that the plant produced products like container sealant, shoe cement, football bladders, and organic chemicals, Also see *The Dewey and Almy Chemical Company*.

³⁰ Weisbord 120.

³¹ Weisbord 120.

McGregor decided to co-write a case study on his experience there with Joseph Scanlon.³² At that time, the two men also served as members of the Committee on the Casuses of Industrial Peace under Collective Bargaining, and were particularly interested in the relationship between Dewey and Almy and the International Chemical Workers Union. In their case study, Scanlon and McGregor argued that Dewey and Almy had “progressed from the policies of its paternalistic founders” and made strides in its relationship with the union by initiating collective bargaining. But the authors also argued that, to progress further, the company must “move into the third—cooperative—stage ...[and] recognize the possibilities of union participation on problems of production efficiency and cost reduction.”³³

The two authors urged the company to distribute decision-making power equally across corporate lines, including middle management. When the company had adopted a wartime strategy of no work stoppages, they noticed, middle management and supervisors who had been left out of the decision interpreted it as the company’s decision to “give the union whatever it wants,” and responded resentfully.³⁴ This observation reinforced Scanlon and McGregor’s conviction that middle managers, like blue-collar workers, needed to be involved in negotiating and carrying out labor contracts, lest they feel excluded from labor relations. At the two men’s behest, foremen and supervisors started participating in human relations training that had previously been issued exclusively to the company’s personnel department, and began attending weekly meetings to review management policy and union relations. Together with union representatives, they produced “a looseleaf labor policy manual based on joint discussions and

³² McGregor and National Planning Association, *The Dewey and Almy Chemical Company and the International Chemical Workers Union; a Case Study*.

³³ Wren quoting Scanlon and McGregor, 29.

³⁴ Weisbord 120.

union consultation on non-bargaining issues like job evaluations and promotions”—granting to the Dewey and Almy employees what Weisbord has called “enormous strides toward dignity, meaning, and community.”³⁵ According to a *New York Times* report on the experiment, the entire project “demonstrates the falsity of the belief that warfare and strife between union and management are inevitable.”³⁶

When *Time* Magazine published a laudatory article about Scanlon in 1955, it quoted the president of an Illinois company asserting, “As far I’m concerned, Joe has the answer to the future of American free-enterprise capitalism.”³⁷ McGregor’s praise for Joseph was no less hyperbolic. In a series of works written in the 1950s, McGregor celebrated Scanlon as a sage of management theory and the embodiment of his leadership ideal later known as Theory Y. Scanlon’s ideas, he explained, comprised an entire philosophy and “new way of life” consistent with all of the best modern social-science research on human organizations.³⁸ His emphasis on “broad centralization and genuine delegation, clear to the bottom of the organization,” reinforced McGregor’s own humanistic conclusions about human nature at work: the conviction that “by

³⁵ Weisbord 121.

³⁶ “Lauds Bargaining for Labor Peace,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1948, 32. It should be noted that verdicts on the success of this experiment vary. According to Weisbord, the attempt at Dewey and Almy “failed miserably”: Management remained “defensive and somewhat antagonistic”; worker suggestions were collected but ignored; and “committee meetings involved a great deal of petty bickering.” In the end, Weisbord has concluded, “Manager prejudice against worker competence, subtly reinforced by decades of Taylorism, was too strong to overcome even in Dewey and Almy’s rare climate.” (Weisbord 121) But the *NY Times* article clearly puts more emphasis on the success of the D&A experiment than on its failures. The workers at D&A, it reported, were made “childish and demanding” when under a paternalistic regime, but now that the union has taken more responsibility under the collective bargaining model, relations had improved. The *Times* article presented five reasons why union/management relations were better: 1) Top management expressed early acceptance of the union and a desire for healthy relations; 2) skill, competence, and responsibility were nurtured at all levels of the organization; 3) effective communication had been established between management and the union; 4) the degree of union autonomy had increased; 5) specific policies, practices, and procedures were clarified for employees.

³⁷ “Management: The Scanlon Plan.”

³⁸ McGregor, “The Scanlon Plan through a Psychologist’s Eyes,” republished in *Leadership and Motivation* and first published as Chapter 8 in Frederick Lesieur, ed., *The Scanlon Plan: A Frontier in Labor-Management Cooperation* (New York: The Technology Press and John Wiley and Sons, 1958).

and large, subordinates are capable of self-direction, self-discipline, and self-control, in contrast to a century of management literature targeting workers' unruly natures.³⁹ When McGregor wrote *The Human Side of Enterprise at the end of the 1950s*, he devoted an entire chapter to the Scanlon Plan as an example of “management by integration and self-control” and nothing less than a new “way of industrial life.”⁴⁰ If Taylorism had treated the worker as a “glorified machine tool,” the Scanlon Plan treated him as a man of skills, promise, and insight that could be unleashed under the right set of circumstances.⁴¹

McGregor celebrated the Scanlon Plan on the level of both the individual and the organization. Within the organization, its emphasis on collaboration and participation reinforced the democratic ideals of industrial citizenship that McGregor advocated throughout his career. Within the psyche of the individual, the Scanlon Plan promised nothing short of Maslowian revolution. “Underlying Joseph Scanlon’s efforts,” McGregor explained, “was a deep and fundamental belief in the worth of the human individual, in his capacity for growth and learning, in his ability to contribute significantly ‘with his head as well as his hands; to the success of the company that employs him.’”⁴² According to McGregor, the Scanlon Plan’s production committees and their accompanying expectations for management-employee relationships “provide ideal means for satisfying ego and self-actualization needs which are typically frustrated under the conditions of present-day industrial employment.”⁴³ Though Scanlon (who died in 1956, four years before the publication of McGregor’s most famous treatise) would likely

³⁹ See “The Significance of Scanlon’s Contribution.”

⁴⁰ Wren quoting McGregor’s *Human Side of Enterprise*, 30.

⁴¹ McGregor, “The Scanlon Plan Through a Psychologist’s Eyes,” 130.

⁴² McGregor, “The Scanlon Plan Through a Psychologist’s Eyes,” 125.

⁴³ McGregor, “The Scanlon Plan Through a Psychologist’s Eyes,” 135.

not have connected his vision to the hierarchy of needs, McGregor saw little distinction between the humanistic goal of self-actualization and Scanlon's ideal of labor-management democracy. The Scanlon Plan, he insisted, offered the blueprint for workplaces that could reconcile the needs of the organization with those of the individual, delivering high levels of profit, productivity, and self-actualization for all.

In 1948, the same year that McGregor published his monograph on Dewey and Almy with Joseph Scanlon, his career took an unexpected turn. Thanks to his renown in human relations circles, McGregor was asked to recommend candidates for the presidency of Antioch College, a small, experimental, liberal college in Yellow Springs, Ohio originally founded by Horace Mann. He expressed so much enthusiasm for Antioch's mission that he was offered the position himself and assumed the presidency of the school in September 1948.⁴⁴ Yet McGregor's six-year stint as college president did not mark the kind of professional departure that such a move might suggest. In fact, the school offered an ideal climate in which to ponder the structure of democratic organizations, the principles of human relationships, and the nature of individual growth in group settings. In an Antioch publication a year after his arrival, McGregor explained that he envisioned Antioch as a "learning laboratory" for "a genuine program of research, with ourselves as subjects." His aim during his presidency was to "discover why the things we try work, or why they fail to work." Most famously, he also announced his determination to "resolve the major paradox of our culture by making educational institutions a

⁴⁴ Weisbord 124.

democratic way of living, rather than a democratic way of talking.”⁴⁵ Antioch proved to be a fertile testing ground for McGregor’s most cherished principles of organizational life.

The Antioch College of the late 1940s and early 1950s represented a markedly different culture from that of MIT in the same period, and its liberalism matched the spirit of open-mindedness in McGregor’s own work. At Antioch, McGregor encountered a collegiate ethos that anticipated the student culture of the 1960s. One of his most famous mentees, Warren Bennis, published an autobiographical essay in which he recalled his transition from the US Army to Yellow Springs in 1947: “I took the train to Antioch...As I neared my destination, my seatmate couldn’t resist asking me why I wanted to go to a ‘Commie school,’ with its ‘nigger-lovers, pinkos, and people who believe in free love.”⁴⁶ The campus, he remembered was, “an ideal community” where “The campus heroes were intellectuals...People of color were celebrated, the Young Communist League and followers of Henry Wallace were taken seriously, and the talk was ferocious, utopian, and unending.”⁴⁷ If intellectualism was held in high regard, so was the conscious integration of theory and practice. Antioch students were required to spend half of their time studying and half of their time working in real-world jobs. According to Bennis, “Splicing classroom experience with real-world work” offered opportunities to explore that “exquisite tension between the idealistic tilting of windmills that went on on campus and the inevitable compromises of the workplace.”⁴⁸ McGregor not only entered the school at a height

⁴⁵ McGregor quoted in Weisbord, 124. According to Weisbord’s notes, the quote comes from Douglas McGregor, “A Year at Antioch” (Yellow Springs: Antioch College, June 1949).

⁴⁶ Warren G Bennis, *An Invented Life: Reflections on Leadership and Change* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1993), 10.

⁴⁷ Bennis 10-11.

⁴⁸ Bennis 13.

of its intellectual creativity, but propelled the school to new heights of experimentation during his tenure.

Bennis later recalled the six-year period in which his mentor “turned the school on its head,” upsetting the traditions of an already untraditional school. In McGregor’s first school-wide assembly address, “he announced, while our collective jaws dropped, that he valued his four years in analysis more than his four years as an undergraduate, that he hadn’t the faintest idea what the students or faculty wanted, and that maybe the campus should shut down for a week while we had some ‘goal discussions’ in small groups.”⁴⁹ Soon thereafter, McGregor initiated these mandatory “goal discussions” at which not only faculty and students, but also janitors and secretaries⁵⁰ “redefined our collective aspirations, focused our vision for our education, and constituted a superb example of how change is facilitated by involving those who will be most affected.”⁵¹

According to Marvin Weisbord, some faculty members were skeptical of what they labeled McGregor’s “Madison Avenue manipulations” and insisted that Antioch was already a “model democracy”—insomuch as it included student representatives on its admissions, discipline, and curriculum committees (a “great rarity” in the 1940s).⁵² But McGregor insisted that “representative democracy...was not enough”; that Antioch faculty and students needed to keep pushing the limits of its democratic practices.⁵³ By the end of McGregor’s 6-year term, the school’s goal discussion groups had reached consensus about new fields of study, revised

⁴⁹ Bennis 14.

⁵⁰ Weisbord 124.

⁵¹ Bennis 14.

⁵² Weisbord 124.

⁵³ Weisbord 124.

curriculum, new teaching methods, and a more potent work/study program. The skeptics had been won over.

During his second year at Antioch, McGregor delivered an address to the City Club of Cleveland that encapsulated his utopian vision of modern education, along with his worst fears about the future of American society. In contrast to widespread postwar optimism about secondary schooling (and the unprecedented access Americans had to college due to the GI Bill), McGregor cautioned his audience that “[a] college degree is not a passport to Utopia, nor is it a union card assuring a more abundant life.”⁵⁴ The American people’s “complacent attitude toward education,” he explained, had resulted in a sea of mediocre teachers and underachieving students. If American society was to truly benefit from its increased access to college education, schools and students would need to revise their collective mission.

Although “There are more college graduates than ever before in our history,” McGregor explained, and most Americans assume that college education produces wise and competent citizens, “we are failing to solve acute social problems. Divorce, delinquency, ulcers and neuroses are rife and the economic conflict is intense in every phase of life.” The problem was clear: American educators were insufficiently experimental and not attuned to larger social needs. The public needed to “encourage those few institutions which have broken with tradition and are boldly experimenting in higher education.” For McGregor, the consequences of conservative educational techniques were not just detrimental, but downright dangerous. “Unless we demand that educators undertake bold experimentation to improve their methods in order to equip youth to live effective lives,” he warned, “our sleep will be rudely disturbed by the

⁵⁴ The Rev. John Evans, “Calls Diploma No Passport to Abundant Life,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 18, 1949, 115.

turmoil of conflict, mental disintegration and ultimately devastating war.”⁵⁵ Within just a year and a half of arriving at Antioch, McGregor had grown strongly identified with its experimental, activist mission and convinced of educational institutions’ potential for large scale social change.

In April 1950, McGregor delivered a speech that even more explicitly linked educational reform with the defense of democracy and Cold War anxieties. Anticipating the arguments that he would eventually construct about the organization of industry, he charged that “Educational institutions are run on authoritarian lines and American youth will not learn to practice democracy until schools are run democratically.”⁵⁶ McGregor lamented, “We teach democracy by authoritarian methods... The classroom teacher can dictate what shall be taught and how, and can enforce his will through control of grading.”⁵⁷ Students might learn how to give “lip service” to democracy in school, but what they actually learn is “how to survive a virtual dictatorship.” And how might one combat some tendencies in modern education? McGregor held up Antioch as a prime example of an authentically democratic institution. He pointed to the fact that Antioch students served on the elective boards that ran the school, and celebrated the school’s famous work-study program that taught “responsible citizenship” through real-world employment.

By his second year at the school, McGregor had indeed encouraged some dramatic changes in the school’s operations. Students began to manage their own club budgets, orient freshmen, pick their own newspaper editors, and even “[run] the fire company.”⁵⁸ His home was open to students at all times, and their dormitories open to him; in student meetings, he was

⁵⁵ Evans, “Calls Diploma No Passport.”

⁵⁶ The Rev. John Evans, “No Democracy in Schools – Antioch Head,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 16, 1950, 115.

⁵⁷ Evans, “No Democracy in Schools.”

⁵⁸ Weisbord 125.

“likely to be found sitting on the floor as an alert listener and participant.”⁵⁹ By the third year of his presidency, he had proposed extending the school’s study-plus-work program to faculty in order to keep teachers connected to the outside world.⁶⁰ Soon thereafter, he publicly reasserted the school’s commitment to free speech and inquiry in the face of charges that Antioch was a bastion of Communist sympathies.⁶¹

In spite of his heralded successes and popularity at Antioch, McGregor “grew weary of administration” after six years on the job. According to Weisbord, “He especially disliked a role that put him at odds with other faculty” because “He wanted everyone to like him, impossible for an effective college president.”⁶² In an essay published in *Antioch Notes* during his last month of the presidency, McGregor expounded on his own difficult relationship with the nature of authority. Before arriving at Antioch, he explained, he had believed that “a leader could operate successfully as a kind of advisor to the organization”—that he could, in other words, “avoid

⁵⁹ Weisbord 125.

⁶⁰ Benjamin Fine, “Education in Review: Antioch Plans to Extend Its Study-Plus-Work Program to Members of the Faculty,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1951, 119.

⁶¹ See “Antioch Restates Policy: College Reaffirms Adherence to Free Inquiry and Speech,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1952, 26; “Antioch Head Denies Red Domination,” *Washington Post*, August 16, 1952, 3. Harvey Matusow, a former Communist turned investigator for the Ohio un-American Activities Commission, told the Commission that 500 Antioch students supported the Communist line—out of just 1073 students. McGregor famously responded that he would sue Matusow “in five minutes if he didn’t have immunity,” and called the charges “laughable.” He traced the Communist reputation back to 1940, when a group of Yellow Springs Citizens signed a petition to put the Communist Party on the ballot, and said: “I know many of those persons and they are no more Communist than you or I...They were motivated by an outburst off liberalism peculiar to those times.” He also reassured the committee that his predecessor, Pres Henderson, had “[gotten] wise” to a chapter of the Young Communist League and “bounced it off the campus.” (these comes from the article “Antioch Head Denies”). McGregor also addressed this issue in his farewell article, “On Leadership”—when he vehemently denied that any of Antioch’s 75 faculty members was a communist and asserted that “there is no educational institution in America more intimately woven with free-enterprise ideals” or with the principles of representative government, individuality, “Christian ethics,” or the Constitution of the United States.

⁶² Weisbord 127.

being a ‘boss.’”⁶³ He had hoped he could avoid making difficult decisions and mistakes. But he soon learned how wrong he was, for “a leader cannot avoid the exercise of authority any more than he can avoid responsibility for what happens in his organization.”⁶⁴ Good human relations, he concluded, derive from strength, not weakness. It was the responsibility of the leader to resolve difficult decisions, and it was inevitable that some people would disapprove.

McGregor’s other revelation about leadership pertained to the Communist charges that plagued the faculty and student body under his watch. From this experience, he had learned that “it is the business of colleges and universities to create a climate within which freedom of responsible inquiry and belief can flourish. These institutions must be tough enough to win the fight against whatever forces seek to destroy this freedom.”⁶⁵ In offering McGregor his first role as an organizational leader, Antioch had reinforced McGregor’s commitment to democratic leadership and participation. One colleague later recalled, “If there was anything he was trying to overcome or destroy...It was the institutional habit of talking about the virtues of democracy while running affairs autocratically.”⁶⁶ At the same time, McGregor’s tenure as college president made him keenly aware of leadership’s challenges, and the inherent difficulties in bridging democratic rhetoric with democratic action.

McGregor’s tenure at Antioch proved to be fertile ground for the cultivation of his humanistic management theories. During his college presidency (from 1948 through 1954), McGregor refined his positions on free enterprise, industrial psychology, and human relations,

⁶³ Reprint of “On Leadership,” *Antioch Notes* 31, no. 9 (May 1, 1954) in McGregor, *Leadership and Motivation; Essays*.

⁶⁴ McGregor, “On Leadership,” 67.

⁶⁵ McGregor, “On Leadership,” 70.

⁶⁶ Bennis, Introduction to *Leadership and Motivation*, xii-xiii.

articulating some the central tenets of the *Human Side of Enterprise* and forging the outlines of his famous Theory Y. He developed a vision of American institutions that integrated ideals of social democracy with the Maslowian goal of self-actualization. For McGregor, these two goals were not only harmonious, but mutually dependent. Rather than constituting a hiatus from the realm of human relations, McGregor's time at Antioch inspired him to articulate a new theory of participative, humanistic management.

The month he began his presidency of Antioch, McGregor announced the “world-shattering significance” of his MIT colleagues’ work in human relations, in a publication dedicated to their collective findings.⁶⁷ According to McGregor, the field of industrial psychology promised something much bigger than better productivity or interpersonal relations on the job. “[W]e are convinced,” he explained, “that a systematic understanding of organized human effort in industry will ultimately contribute not only to industrial peace but to the solution of some of the problems of international human relations which have brought the world today to the brink of disaster.” According to McGregor, the “industrial plant is a microcosm in which we may well be able to find answers to some of the fundamental problems of modern society.”⁶⁸ The context of the Cold War, he suggested, offered unprecedented opportunities for a theorist of organizations to become a savior of free enterprise.

The late 1940s and early 1950s saw a flurry of conferences and seminars on the future of America's industrial future. In mid-1949, McGregor was summoned to a conference for 600 regional leaders in the South on the causes of widespread labor unrest.⁶⁹ The Antioch president chided the leaders for their “lack of unity of purpose” and blamed the state of industrial unrest on

⁶⁷ McGregor, “Foreword,” September 1948.

⁶⁸ McGregor, “Foreword,” 4.

⁶⁹ John Popham, “Management Hit for Labor Unrest,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1949, 27.

industrial managers' lack of consensus regarding the best practices of human relations. When management fails to reach consensus on human relations policies, he explained, their subordinates begin to perceive their practices as arbitrary, inconsistent, and insincere. Managers needed not only to reach a "common conception of their responsibility for good human relations," but also recognize the central truths of modern, humanistic management practices: that "the deepest of all human longings is that of feeling needed, and that management should strive to help the worker to experience in his daily job the feeling of importance and dignity and common participation."⁷⁰ The antidote to industry's suffering, in other words, could be found in the wisdom of Abraham Maslow.

Two months after the conference for Southern industrial leaders, McGregor appeared at the American Psychological Association's annual meeting and offered an even more dire warning to American industrial leaders. "If another major depression occurs and America's free enterprise system fails," he threatened, "one of the main reasons will be industry's failure to solve 'acute' problems of human relations."⁷¹ Industrial managers had failed in the interwar period to earn workers' trust or even acknowledge labor's interests, inadvertently causing workers to slack off or disobey company rules. "If people genuinely expected the 'best break possible' from management," he asked, "would restriction of output be so prevalent?... Would bitter strikes occur so frequently?... And would arbitration so often be required?"⁷² McGregor rooted labor discontent in "a simple fact about human behavior":

That people work to satisfy such needs as food, shelter, power, prestige, social approval, knowledge, love, and achievement. And they work or restrict output,

⁷⁰ Popham 27.

⁷¹ Lucy Freeman, "Industry Failure in Relations Seen," *New York Times*, September 8, 1949, 32; "Employers Urged to Use Psychology," *Washington Post*, September 9, 1949, 11.

⁷² Freeman 32.

cooperate or fight, join unions or refuse to join them, obey rules or disobey them, invest money in the organization or withdraw it, and whatever else they do...because their perceptions are that by doing so they will best satisfy their needs.”⁷³

The future of free enterprise rested on the shoulders of middle managers who associated organizational efforts with the satisfaction of personal needs and offered workers meaningful work rather than improved vacation plans or recreational facilities.⁷⁴

McGregor linked these concerns to cold war anxieties at a 1951 Corning Glass Works conference on “the ‘puzzle’ of ‘how to make machine age Americans happier.’”⁷⁵ Gathering with representatives from a variety of American organizations – including Voice of America and the American Council of Learned Societies—on the occasion of Corning’s centennial celebration, McGregor and his co-panelists pondered the fundamental contradictions of modern American society. “What inner drive can this country give the worker,” one panelists asked “who does nothing but tighten a bolt 2000 times a day as an alternative to the devotion to a Communist fatherland that motivates a similar Soviet worker?” How could industrial leaders and managers return drive and personality to workers operating in the machine age? The panelists arrived at a fundamentally humanistic conclusion: “People cannot find happiness merely in activities that represent an escape from work,” and work must therefore be transformed from “an evil burden to be endured” to “a part of the good life.”⁷⁶ Their most pressing question – Can America wage a war against Communism when many of its citizens are locked into lives of brainless tasks?—highlighted the expanded agenda of human relations in the postwar period.

⁷³ Freeman 32.

⁷⁴ Freeman 32.

⁷⁵ Malvina Lindsay, “‘Thinking It Out’: Mobilizing Brains,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 1951, 14.

⁷⁶ Lindsay 14.

McGregor returned to his professorship at MIT in Fall of 1954, at which point he became a Professor of Industrial Management (1954-1962) and later the Sloan Fellows Professor. During the second half of the 1950s, he actively refined his theories of humanistic management and prepared them for publication in his *pièce de résistance* at the end of the decade. He also incorporated Abraham Maslow's ideas more explicitly than ever. In 1956, he wrote Maslow to inform him that he had "used your *Motivation and Personality* with a group of seventeen senior executives in a seminar here at MIT," and "their response was genuinely enthusiastic. We had a long discussion off the implications of your self-actualization concept and it was quite clear that the whole idea not only made sense but fired their imagination because of its implications in industry."⁷⁷ A year later he wrote to the psychologist:

In a talk which I have here at MIT last spring I drew heavily on your ideas about motivation...I hope you will approve in general of the way I have used your thinking to strengthen some of my own. The implications of your theory of motivation for management philosophy and policy in industry are indeed significant.⁷⁸

From the late 1950s through McGregor's death in 1964, no name was more heavily associated with his work than that of Abraham Maslow.

The talk to which McGregor referred in his 1957 letter anticipated the key themes of his bestselling book and also shared its title. He first delivered "The Human Side of Enterprise" at MIT's School of Industrial Management's 5th Anniversary Management Convocation on April 9, 1957.⁷⁹ In this lecture, he established the two categories of management that henceforth became

⁷⁷ Letter, Douglas McGregor to Abraham Maslow, 16 November 1956, folder "Correspondence—MI," box M395, Maslow papers, AHAP.

⁷⁸ Gabor 177.

⁷⁹ McGregor's talk *entitled The Human Side of Enterprise* was first published in *Adventures in Thought and Action*, Proceedings of the 5th Anniversary Management Convocation of the School of Industrial Management, (Cambridge, MA: MIT, , April 9, 1957); then reprinted in *The Management Review* 46, no. 11 (1957): 22-28; then reprinted again in *Leadership and Motivation*, a collection of McGregor's writings. My citations refer to this last publication. It is

synonymous with his name -- Theory X and Theory Y – and explicitly evoked humanistic psychology as his main inspiration. McGregor began his talk with familiarly lofty praise for the social sciences. “We are in a position in the social sciences today,” he announced, “like that of the physical sciences with respect to atomic energy in the thirties”:

We know that past conceptions of the nature of man are inadequate and in many ways incorrect. We are becoming quite certain that, under proper conditions, unimagined resources of creative human energy could become available within the organizational setting.⁸⁰

McGregor went on to outline the concept of the hierarchy of needs and its fundamental premise, that “man is a wanting animal” continually motivated by unsatisfied needs: first physiological, then safety, then social and egoistic—before the height, which McGregor renamed “self-realization.”

According to McGregor, American managers had systematically thwarted all but the basest of these human needs in their employees. Modern, technological society had reached a point of sophistication at which the safety and physiological needs of workers could be largely taken for granted. American workers were, for the most part, well fed and housed. But what of the less tangible needs? To what extent had American industry accommodated fundamental cravings for belongingness, growth, and self-respect? According to McGregor, decades of conventional management techniques had “tied men to limited jobs which do not utilize their

worth noting that McGregor also anticipated some of the themes of *The Human Side of Enterprise* in his 1954 talk presented to the Management Forum of E.I. du Pont de Nemours Co (also republished in *Leadership and Motivation*). There, he outlined three outmoded management techniques: Management by gadgets (in which technology is prioritized over human attitudes; management by force (in which people are treated as equipment or machines to be operated and coerced); and management by paternalism (epitomized by the attitude, “Be good to them and they will do what you want them to do”). McGregor explained to the DuPont managers that all three of these techniques failed to encourage people to truly cooperate and work together toward organizational objectives, because they failed to make people feel respected and needed at work. He urged managers to find ways to offer employees “genuine satisfaction” at work—not just material rewards or pats on the back. He assured them, “[A]ll human behavior is directed toward the satisfaction of needs. Life is a struggle for need satisfaction, extending from birth till death. In fact, when we cease trying to satisfy our needs, we *are* dead.”

⁸⁰ McGregor, “Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 4.

capabilities, have discouraged the acceptance of responsibility, have encouraged passivity, have eliminated meaning from work.”⁸¹ And no culprit proved more guilty than Frederick Winslow Taylor’s notion of scientific management, which McGregor rechristened as Theory X.

Theory X consisted of several sweeping assumptions about human nature and the innate impulses of workers, which McGregor enumerated in this early talk. The Theory X manager believed that he was largely responsible for “organizing the elements of productive enterprise” – its people, products, and capital – in the service of “economic ends.” Profit, not empathy or respect, drove his efforts. He believed that the average worker “is by nature indolent” and wants to work as little as possible. He also believed that the average man “lacks ambition, dislikes responsibility, prefers to be led,” and “is inherently self-centered, different to organizational needs.” The worker was, to the Theory X manager, “gullible, not very bright, the ready dupe of the charlatan and the demagogue.”⁸² Possessing such assumptions about the nature of his underlings, the Theory X manager assumed it was his job to wear down workers’ resistance – to direct, motivate, and ultimately “[modify] their behavior to fit the needs of the organization.”⁸³ The Theory X manager treated workers interchangeably with machines and assumed workers’ fundamental antagonism to the organization and the work ethic itself.

According to McGregor, the psychological consequences of Theory X management were profoundly damaging to both individuals and organizations. First of all, Theory X disregarded the social needs of workers. Whereas “[m]any studies have demonstrated that the tightly knit, cohesive work group may, under proper conditions, be far more effective than an equal number

⁸¹ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 16.

⁸² McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 6.

⁸³ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 5.

of separate individuals,” most managers preferred to treat their workers as isolated individuals. Fearing group resistance, management commonly went to “considerable lengths to control and direct human efforts in ways that are inimical to the natural ‘groupiness’ of human beings.”⁸⁴

But their efforts to isolate workers often proved counterproductive and damaging to the organization, producing “antagonistic, uncooperative” workers with low rates of productivity.⁸⁵

McGregor argued that Theory-X management was particularly detrimental to the satisfaction of “ego needs” in the workplace. “If the practices of scientific management were deliberately calculated to thwart these needs,” he suggested, “they could hardly accomplish this purpose better than they do.”⁸⁶ Particularly in mass production, managers ignored the presence of ego needs altogether. Workers accustomed to “being directed, manipulated, controlled in industrial organizations” often surrendered hope of finding satisfaction for ego and social needs on the job, turning “away from the job” for fulfillment and becoming more insistent on increased material benefits from their work.⁸⁷ Though McGregor never denied that appropriate wages factored into the fulfillment of ego needs at work, he looked askance at any industrial organization in which employees worked for money or leisure time alone. The stakes of such narrow-mindedness were high: “[T]he man whose needs for safety, association, independence, or status are thwarted is sick just as surely as he who has rickets. And his sickness will have behavioral consequences.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 10.

⁸⁵ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 10.

⁸⁶ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 11.

⁸⁷ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 16.

⁸⁸ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 12.

McGregor's grave diagnosis of American workers' mental health was met with his equally optimistic prescription, an ethos that he called Theory Y. According to McGregor, Theory Y did not pose any revolutionary threats to the functioning of American organizations, for it recognized that one of management's main responsibilities to any organization was the achievement of "economic ends."⁸⁹ What Theory Y did represent was a new set of assumptions about the American worker—namely, that he was not fundamentally passive, resistant, or antagonistic to organizational objectives. Rather, McGregor suggested, "The motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, the readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals are all present in people." He reframed the conception of modern management in growth-oriented terms, explaining that "[i]t is the responsibility of management to make it possible for people to recognize and develop these human characteristics for themselves."⁹⁰ Management was the act of encouraging workers' own habits of self-control, encouraging them to utilize their strengths, and giving them structured space for self-direction.⁹¹ McGregor adamantly insisted that Theory Y did not constitute "soft" management, because it suggested no absence of strong leaders; if anything, it demanded more of its managers than had Taylorist precedents.

McGregor proposed a set of management techniques through which managers could encourage their underlings' growth, and self-direction. First, he advocated "decentralization and delegation" in industrial organizations: giving workers "a degree of freedom" to "direct their

⁸⁹ McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise" (1957), 15.

⁹⁰ McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise" (1957), 15.

⁹¹ McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise" (1957), 15.

own activities” and assume responsibilities.⁹² Second, he cited the “job enlargement” efforts “pioneered” by IBM and Detroit Edison, in which workers at the bottom of an organization were given increased levels of responsibility and opportunity.⁹³ These techniques resembled what McGregor referred to as “Participation and Consultative Management,” in which people gain “some voice in the decisions that affect them” and are genuinely encouraged to express their creative problem-solving energies at work. Of this approach, McGregor stated, “I need only mention the Scanlon Plan as the outstanding embodiment of these ideas in practice,” and cautioned against superficial applications of the theory:

Participation becomes a farce when it is applied as a sales gimmick or a device for kidding people into thinking they are important. Only the management that has confidence in human capacities and is itself directed toward organizational objectives rather than toward the preservation of personal power can grasp the implications of this emerging theory.⁹⁴

With this word of warning, McGregor forged a distinction between the human-relations approaches of the past and the Theory Y innovations of the future. Though McGregor’s Theory Y soon thereafter became synonymous with exactly the sorts of “gimmicks” that McGregor denounced, his original articulation of the idea found him striving for some integration of psychological and material betterment.

McGregor ended his speech on “The Human Side of Enterprise” with a grand and optimistic pronouncement—one in the tradition of his own proselytizing relatives, and in the spirit of Maslow and Lewin’s lofty aspirations. He urged:

⁹² McGregor pointed to Sears, Roebuck and Co. as an example of such decentralization and delegation. Their “management by objectives” approach enlarged the number of people reporting to a single manager, thus limiting the manager’s possibilities for oversight and control.

⁹³ For more on Detroit Edison, see Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

⁹⁴ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 18.

The ingenuity and the perseverance of industrial management in the pursuit of economic ends have changed many scientific and technological dreams into commonplace realities. It is now becoming clear that the application of these same talents to the human side of enterprise will not only enhance substantially these materialistic achievements but will bring us one step closer to ‘the good society.’ Shall we get on with the job?⁹⁵

McGregor thus equated Theory Y management not just with a new system of industrial relations, but with the development of “the good society.” Tayloristic management, by implication, had inhibited the evolution of capitalist society at large.

McGregor soon repackaged many of these ideas in his 250-page managerial bible, *The Human Side of Enterprise*. Published in 1960 (a year before Rensis Likert’s *New Patterns of Management*) and drawing from five years of industrial research funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, this work introduced an unprecedented number of industrial managers and strategists to the ideas of Abraham Maslow, Kurt Lewin, and Joseph Scanlon.⁹⁶ McGregor began with the question of whether “successful managers are born or made.”⁹⁷ He surveyed the current field of organizational theory, examined the management development programs of a number of large companies, and denounced much of both as anachronistic bunk. His treatise called for a redefinition of management, from coercion to coaching, and a redefinition of work, from means to end.

In his tome, McGregor advocated a fundamental reframing of authority and control in industrial organizations. “We live today in a world which only faintly resembles that of a half century ago,” McGregor observed, yet contemporary organizational theory remained firmly

⁹⁵ McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957), 20.

⁹⁶ McGregor detailed the funding in his preface to *The Human Side of Enterprise*. In 1954, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation issued this grant to both McGregor and his colleague Alex Bavelas, who left MIT to work for the Bell Laboratories in 1956. McGregor then continued his work with Theodore M. Alfred, another MIT colleague.

⁹⁷ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, v.

rooted in early-20th-century assumptions: namely “that authority is the central, indispensable means of managerial control,” and that “the very structure of the organization is a hierarchy of authoritative relationships.”⁹⁸ He contrasted this parochialism to a broad range of other anti-authoritarian evolutions:

In domestic politics authoritarianism is suspect; in child rearing we have made some wild swings, but exclusive reliance on authority is generally recognized today to create more problems than it solves; in religious organizations authority carries less force than it once did; husbands in our culture can no longer rely on authority to control the behavior of wives.⁹⁹

Why, then, did leaders of the industrial realm cling to conceptions of authority that had been discarded in these other arenas of political, personal, and religious life? And how might industrial managers trade their attachment to “authority” for broader, more flexible conceptions of “influence?” According to McGregor, the manager of the 1960s needed to strive for greater flexibility in his own self-conception, approaching his position by turns as boss, member of peer group, teacher, leader, consultant, and observer.¹⁰⁰

McGregor offered broader historical context for the necessity of Theory Y. In the past two or three decades, he explained, the “human side of enterprise” had become a major concern

⁹⁸ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 17-18. McGregor elaborated on the origins of the authoritative dynamic: “The conventional principles were derived primarily from the study of models (the military and the Catholic church) which differ in important respects from modern industrial organizations. It is a plausible idea that there should be universal principles of organization, and that they could be derived from the study of such old and successful institutions. However, if there are universal principles common to all forms of organization, it is now apparent that they are not the ones derived by classical theorists from the Church and the military. As an example, unity of command (the principle that each member of an organization must have one boss) may be essential on the battlefield, but not in universal principle...” (16) He also criticized “classical organization theory” for its “ethnocentrism”: “It ignores the significance of the political, social, and economic milieu in shaping organizations and influencing managerial practice. We live today in a world which only faintly resembles that of a half century ago....” (17)

⁹⁹ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 31.

¹⁰⁰ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 28.

of management thanks to a changing industrial landscape.¹⁰¹ The 1930s had marked a particularly volatile time in which the public grew antagonistic towards industry; mass production industries had been unionized; the New Deal offered pro-labor legislation; and the American public recoiled from authoritarianism abroad. The early Human Relations movement had emerged as a proposed antidote to these ideological and tactical challenges, endorsing the “simple removal of control,” also known as “soft management,” and forsaking almost all managerial authority in order employee satisfaction and harmony. According to McGregor, these early expressions of that movement were inadequate, for “[w]e recognize today that ‘industrial democracy’ cannot consist in permitting everyone to decide everything, that industrial health does not flow automatically from the elimination of dissatisfaction, disagreement, or even open conflict.”¹⁰² Instead of striving for peace through permissive policies and the surrender of authority, managers needed to conceive of authority in new ways.

McGregor ultimately celebrated organizational climates characterized by participation and what he called “integration”: “the creation of conditions such that the members of the organization can achieve their own goals *best* by directing their efforts toward the success of the enterprise.”¹⁰³ McGregor reiterated the potential for such outcomes in his celebrations of the Scanlon Plan (which received its own chapter-long endorsement), participative management, self-appraisal, and group work – all approaches in which workers helped determine their organizational goals and took part in other branches of decision-making. He emphasized that participation—“one of the most misunderstood terms that have emerged from the field of human

¹⁰¹ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 45.

¹⁰² McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 46.

¹⁰³ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 50.

relations”—was not a “magic formula” that would produce results for any manager, regardless of skill.¹⁰⁴ Participation did not constitute an abdication of authority to the whim of subordinates; nor should it be viewed as a “manipulative device for [managers] getting people to do what they want.”¹⁰⁵ Participation best entailed, rather, a system in which all members of an organization shared responsibility for setting goals and determining “targets”; in which members collectively determined the structure and benefits of work; in which problem-solving became a collective endeavor with collective rewards.

In *The Human Side of Enterprise*, McGregor not only reiterated the principles of Theory X and Theory Y he had been refining for decades, but also offered pragmatic advice. While the first half of his book championed the potential for workers’ self-actualization and outlined the Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the second half of the book offered readers a practical approach to the cultivation of good managers. Good managers were not born, he suggested, but neither were they simply “made”; rather, good managers had to be attentively and trained. Lewin’s field of group dynamics, McGregor suggested, offered the century’s most fertile ground for the transformation of managerial training and teamwork. The guiding principles of the field could help forge a new generation of managers who communicated openly, sought constructive criticism, and thrived in groups without sacrificing their own individuality.

McGregor explained that best management education offered managers chances to absorb principles *experientially*, to benefit themselves from Theory-Y treatment from superiors, and to practice executing its principles with one another. According to McGregor, management did not simply refer to two castes—management and worker—but also applied to the relationship between president and lower-level executives, or to the relationship between staff and line.

¹⁰⁴ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 124.

¹⁰⁵ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 125.

Managers themselves need to be treated with respect, led rather than coaxed. Decades of management development programs had erred in approaching the task as one of “manufacturing” good managers:

People have been assigned the *engineering* task of *designing* a program and *building* the necessary *machinery*, toward the end of *producing* the needed *supply* of managerial talent... We have managerial inventories, replacement charts with elaborate codes and colors, formal machinery for recruiting and selecting potential managerial talent, special indoctrination programs for the new recruits, appraisal programs, job rotation, and a welter of training activities. The production of managerial talent is itself a big business.¹⁰⁶

According to McGregor, managers needed to start playing active parts in their own development, in the same way that lower-level workers should have voices in the setting of production goals. Management training programs also needed to start recognizing that “each individual is unique in terms of his capacities, his interests and goals, his talents.” He encouraged readers to ponder “[a]n alternative approach to management development ... somewhat analogous to that of agriculture... concerned with ‘growing’ talent rather than manufacturing it.” If the proper conditions were provided, each individual could reach his inherent potential.¹⁰⁷

McGregor also celebrated the cultivation of the “Managerial Team.” Managers did not function best as isolated individuals, he insisted, but as part of groups. He staunchly defended this ideal against a recent rash of criticisms of America’s reliance on group-think and the “social ethos,” particularly William Whyte’s *The Organization Man*.¹⁰⁸ Whyte had argued in his manifesto that groups inherently enforce conformity and squelch individualism among their members. McGregor firmly retaliated that “[t]hese views deny the realities of organizational

¹⁰⁶ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 191.

¹⁰⁷ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 192.

¹⁰⁸ William Hollingsworth Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).

life,” for most organizational problems *need* to be solved in groups, and an organization built on individual effort alone was doomed to fail.¹⁰⁹ The pressing goal, he urged, was not the elimination of groups in organizations, but rather the issue of how to best “create the condition for individual growth and integrity in the group situation.”¹¹⁰

Upon its publication, *The Human Side of Enterprise* was greeted with almost unanimously positive reviews. Reviewers celebrated its revelation that “rigid control from the top...is no longer necessary” in American organizations and decried the assembly-line mentality of Theory X.¹¹¹ Reverend Paul Marx of the *American Catholic Sociological Review* defended McGregor’s progressiveness, insisting that “if Theory Y seems socialistic, anarchistic, or even inconsistent with human nature to many of today’s managers or with formal textbook principles of classical organizational theory, the reason is that it flies in the face of ingrained habits of thought and action that no longer can be squared with the social science findings of the last 30 years.”¹¹² A reviewer from the *American Journal of Psychology* characterized McGregor’s work as a “devastating critique” of traditional management practices and praised it for transcending the conventional dullness of its genre. “I could find a few points to criticize,” he explained, “but any such comments would be out of place because the overall gestalt of the book is so good. I hope that teachers of industrial psychology and personnel administration will immediately start

¹⁰⁹ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 229.

¹¹⁰ McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, 230.

¹¹¹ Frank A. Heller, review of *The Human Side of Enterprise* by Douglas McGregor, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 14, no. 3 (Apr., 1961): 494-495.

¹¹² Rev. Paul B. Marx, review of *The Human Side of Enterprise*, *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 22, no. 1 (Spring, 1961): 74-76.

requiring it of their students.”¹¹³ Their consensus was clear: Most American management techniques were a relic of outdated social principles, and it was time for a serious revolution in organizational theory.

Yet even the book’s glowing reviewers acknowledged aspects of its argument that would earn McGregor posthumous critiques in decades to come. Namely, they questioned the empirical predictability of McGregor’s proposed techniques and wondered if his portrait of human nature was not simply a bit too rosy. Frank Heller wrote that the “disconcerting fact about Theory Y is that the propellant which alone can make these weapons effective is a genuine love of people and belief in basic human potential and in the natural mechanism of growth toward goodness rather than evil.” He continued: “This is strong and yet intangible stuff. It is strong because it is solidly rooted in the great philosophies and religions of the world; it is intangible because one cannot easily assemble the ingredients.”¹¹⁴ Rev. Marx questioned the book’s unabashed faith in the compatibility of people and organizational needs. “Who will deny,” he asked, “that there is at least some inherent human tendency to avoid work?” McGregor’s idealism had the reviewer questioning whether the prospects for Theory Y were as grand in scope as McGregor loftily promised.

Howard Baumgartel, a champion of the Group Dynamics movement, viewed the book as being vulnerable to some of the criticisms that had plagued the field of human dynamics for decades – namely, that the field’s proponents tended to neglect “social and economic factors...and the ‘real’ conflict between labor and management.” He wondered, “If a manager

¹¹³ Ross Stagner, review of *The Human Side of Enterprise*, *The American Journal of Psychology* 74, no. 2 (June 1961): 317-319.

¹¹⁴ Heller 495. Note that Heller still insisted that he was “not on the side of the disbelievers” and praised Theory Y for containing “some solid weapons” like target-setting, delegation of responsibility, and the Scanlon Plan.

sees the purpose of the organization as being the enhancement of the wealth and power of the owner-manager group, might he not find Theory X to be the most appropriate approach?”¹¹⁵

Though Baumgartel was right to identify McGregor’s inattention to any inherent conflict between labor and management, his point about owner-management incentives overlooked one of the most complicated aspects of McGregor’s work. If, as one reviewer suggested, the “main theme” of *The Human Side of Enterprise* was “how to win people by influence rather than control,”¹¹⁶ the book could be read as a *defense* of traditional owner-management incentives in the workplace. What McGregor advocated was not, after all, an abdication of the profit motive or corporate prowess, but rather a reorganization of the psychological relationships of the workplace. Central to his work—and all humanistic management theory of the period—was that faith in human nature could boost profit and productivity in the industrial setting, benefitting employees at every level of the organization. This equation was tested in management training programs across the world (see chapter 7) and in a range of American corporations beginning in the decade before the publication of McGregor’s tome.

The publication of *The Human Side of Enterprise* left a distinct imprint on the rhetoric and vernacular of management in the 1960s. Across the United States, managers learned to incorporate the language of Theory Y and distance themselves from the blatantly authoritative style of Theory X.¹¹⁷ Yet as many critics of the time pointed out—whether sympathetic to

¹¹⁵ Baumgartel 457.

¹¹⁶ Heller 495.

¹¹⁷ For more on the widespread adaptation of Theory Y ideas, see Harold M. F. Rush, *Behavioral Science: Concepts and Management Application*, Studies in Personnel Policy no. 216 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1969). The report named Douglas McGregor one of the top five most influential behavioral scientists in the country.

McGregor's mission or critical of his loftiness – Theory Y did not always transcend spirit-of-the-times lip service. In some companies, Theory Y resulted in therapeutic parlance rather than tangible results, finding its way into corporate mission statements of management philosophy or occasional management development programs as opposed to reformed corporate practice.

Yet by the time of his death in 1964, McGregor had tested the practical applications of Theory Y through consulting relationships with a number of major corporations. His clients included Standard Oil of NJ (1952-63), the Champion Paper and Fiber Company (1958-60), the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania (1961-4), and Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd. of Great Britain (1964).¹¹⁸ Two of the corporate experiments for which he is best remembered were Procter & Gamble, where he guided a fundamental reorganization of manual labor and industrial hierarchy, and Union Carbide (a chemical and polymers company), where he helped engineer a largescale corporate restructuring through a pioneering Organizational Development program. These two experiments demonstrated both the real-life potential of participative management and the limitations of translating an idealistic theory into a material context.

Procter and Gamble was the “predominant company in American marketing” in 1962.¹¹⁹ Famous for its innovations in packaged soap, laundry detergent, and disposable diapers, P&G had doubled its sales every year since the company's establishment in 1837. It had also become known for its experiments in human relations – the philosophy that sought, in the words of the company's historians, “to align and bind together the interests of the company and its employees” because “meeting employee needs is good for business.”¹²⁰ Previous experiments in

¹¹⁸ This list of consulting relationships comes from *Leadership and Motivation*.

¹¹⁹ Art Kleiner, *The Age of Heretics: Heroes, Outlaws, and the Forerunners of Corporate Change* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996), 66.

¹²⁰ Davis Dyer, *Rising Tide: Lessons from 165 Years of Brand Building at Procter & Gamble* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), 159.

human relations included the development of a profit-sharing program in 1887; employee stock purchase in 1892; and a guarantee of steady employment in the 1920s.¹²¹

By the early 1960s, however, many of Procter & Gamble's twenty plants were reeling from labor strife and the formidable strength of independent unions. While the demand for the company's products steadily increased, corporate executives worried that a number of plants were failing to produce even close to capacity. Douglas McGregor was recruited as a consultant in the early 1960s upon the opening of a plant in Augusta, Georgia. The application of his ideas at that plant, from its architecture to its pay scales, reveals the mixed legacy and intent of Theory Y in practice. Alternatively known as "self-management" and "team-based management," Procter & Gamble's incorporation of Theory Y through its "technician system" aimed simultaneously to shatter the most authoritarian legacies of Taylor's scientific management and to undermine the strength of unions at Procter & Gamble plants across the country.

Management historian Art Kleiner has rooted Procter & Gamble's Theory Y innovations in an organic process of self-discovery and lofty idealism among top executives. In the early 1960s, Kleiner observes, scientific management reigned supreme at the company: "Workers were rigorously measured, sometimes in hundredths of a minute, against the optimum time that the rule books said it should take to climb a ladder, walk a tank, or read a gauge."¹²² This "tangle of rules" was so time-consuming and frustrating for managers to enforce that "a quiet group of rebels began to gather in the upper echelons of the manufacturing division." Led by David Swanson, manufacturing manager of the paper division, the group was "determined to find a way out from under Procter & Gamble's rigid constraints." According to Kleiner, the

¹²¹ Dyer 159.

¹²² Kleiner 67.

“rebels” knew their mission would entail “fighting the P&G corporate hierarchy, whose members were deeply committed to scientific management.”¹²³ A new humanistic, bottom-up philosophy was born from the impatient utopianism of youthful corporate reformers on the inside, who recognized in Douglas McGregor a kindred spirit.

There is something mythic and appealing about Kleiner’s tale of corporate cowboys and their recognition that, to coin a phrase, “the times they were a-changin’.” Yet other sources suggest a messier origin of Procter & Gamble’s corporate reform in the 1960s. According to company historians Dyer, Dalzell, and Olegario, the post-war period was a “time of trouble” for Procter & Gamble because of labor-management strife. Immediately following World War II, P&G was plagued by labor disputes concerning “job rights and jurisdictions, performance evaluation, discipline, time bonus incentive, overtime distribution, and contracting-out of work.”¹²⁴ The company found that unions became increasingly “vigorous in policing the contracts inside the plants” and, according to Dyer et. al. were “not interested in changing the status quo.”¹²⁵

P&G confronted the reality of this labor stalemate when it opened a Tide plant in Sacramento in 1953 to keep up with a rapid growth in demand for the detergent. Having designed the plant with the “latest and best technology” and cherry-picked the best of their staff from plants across the company, upper-echelon managers were shocked to see the plant’s “disappointing results in cost, volume, and productivity” – which they attributed to the fact that employers from older plants had arrived with customary “contractual restrictions and adversarial

¹²³ Kleiner 67.

¹²⁴ Dyer 159.

¹²⁵ Dyer 159.

attitudes” and were not actually interested in achieving high rates of efficiency or productivity. Already on the verge of opening additional plants in laundry, food, and paper divisions, corporate executives concluded that they “needed to find a better way.”¹²⁶

Business writer Robert Waterman presents an even more negative portrait of labor relations at Procter & Gamble after WWII, citing one unnamed Midwestern plant that “seemed to produce more charges of unfair labor practices, grievances, and arbitration proceedings than products.” At this plant, David Swanson later testified, “the state of industrial relations there was measured by the number of fist-fights on the plant floor each week.”¹²⁷ Swanson remembered one of many strikes at the plant when managers were flown in to run the production lines but were stopped at the local airport by employees “with pick-up trucks and shotguns.” The same day, the warehouse was firebombed; “It was war.”¹²⁸ A 1961 film made in one P&G plant captured one worker describing his relationship with his job: “We have to just be here and go home... We don’t have to really put out. We don’t add any ideas or anything extra. It’s a big company and I can get away with not doing much.”¹²⁹ Another worker complained about the typical fresh-faced manager, hired right out of college, who possessed little to know knowledge of plant operations and yet interpreted experienced workers’ suggestions as accusations.¹³⁰ By the early 1960s, worker-management relations had reached an impasse.

David Swanson, who joined the company in 1953, led P&G’s so-called bottom-up revolution. In Swanson, multiple historical forces converged. He had emerged from the Korean

¹²⁶ Dyer 160.

¹²⁷ Swanson quoted in Robert H. Waterman, *What America Does Right: Lessons from Today’s Most Admired Corporate Role Models* (Plume, 1995), 37.

¹²⁸ Waterman 37.

¹²⁹ Waterman 36, quoting a Procter & Gamble film.

¹³⁰ Waterman 37.

War disillusioned with military command; he had studied at MIT with Douglas McGregor (after earning an undergraduate degree from Yale); and he witnessed the labor strife of the 1950s firsthand. Swanson himself has credited the Korean War and the military more generally with his first epiphany about self-management: He left the armed forces in 1956 determined to “leave behind the barked orders, the arbitrary constraints imposed by superior officers, and the rigid structure of military life.”¹³¹ He was one of a larger group of men who joined Procter & Gamble after military service, and he later described a common disillusionment in the transition: “We were really surprised at the similarities between the structures and behaviors in the military service and what we found in industry.”¹³² Swanson was particularly disappointed to see the extent to which policy manuals and rule books constrained workers. In his new role as Manager of the Paper Division, Swanson was determined to address both the squelched psyches of corporate “soldiers” and the limited growth of corporate profits.

By the time Swanson hired Douglas McGregor to consult in the building of a new Tide plant in Augusta, Georgia in 1961, Procter & Gamble had begun to investigate the increasingly popular field of behavioral science. In the late 1950s, Philip Willard, a manager in the company’s corporate engineering division, formed a small group devoted to organizational development. This group, responsible for the design of new plants, began researching new industrial relations strategies coming out of the University of Michigan, Harvard Business School, and UCLA. Plans to open the new plant in Augusta in 1963 afforded “an opportunity to put the new thinking to the test.”¹³³ Swanson was by then a member of the Augusta design team. While pursuing his Masters degree in chemical engineering at MIT a few years earlier, he had

¹³¹ Waterman 36.

¹³² Waterman 36, quoting an interview with Swanson from 2001.

¹³³ Dyer 160-163.

enrolled in one of McGregor's courses in the Sloan School of Management and studied McGregor's Theory Y. Concluding that Procter & Gamble plants exercised the dreaded Theory X management style across the board, he recommended that the company bring on Douglas McGregor as a consultant. According to Art Kleiner, McGregor's visits to Augusta "represented the first time anyone in manufacturing at P&G had been allowed to 'examine our navals,' as one manager put it."¹³⁴ What followed was a ground-breaking experiment in plant organization.

Under McGregor's leadership, Swanson designed the Augusta plant to operate along what the organizational development group christened the "technician system," which adhered to the fundamental philosophy of Theory Y espoused in *The Human Side of Enterprise*. Swanson and his colleagues noted that P&G, with its emphasis on highly regimented, deskilled, and monitored wage work, epitomized the "command-and-control" ethos of Theory X, and they pledged to abandon "some of P&G's most cherished practices."¹³⁵ In designing the Augusta plant, they eliminated production quotas, job classifications, and the incentive pay scheme. In contrast to the fundamental principles of scientific management, "There would be no more operators who ran the lines, mechanics who fixed them, electricians who handled the wiring, or machinists who tooled new parts."¹³⁶ In their place would be "technicians": the name given to almost all employees who were not managers. Procter & Gamble's technicians would work on salary and receive training in a number of different skills—from operating equipment, to repairing it, to developing longterm company goals. As the technicians gained increasing levels of expertise, they would guide the development of the plant and, ideally, propel their plant

¹³⁴ Kleiner 67.

¹³⁵ Waterman 37; Kleiner 67.

¹³⁶ Kleiner 68.

toward higher rates of productivity and efficiency. The idea was to “‘build the technicians’ knowledge of the business right up to that of the managers.’”¹³⁷

Swanson and McGregor instituted a number of key reforms as they developed the physical and managerial structure of the Augusta plant, which was nonunionized. Swanson made sure that the building contained several conference rooms so that management and technicians “could meet in places other than the cafeteria and the parking lot” to exchange ideas and otherwise communicate; such meeting places would build regular, two-way communication into the fabric of the operation.¹³⁸ (Swanson later characterized this ideal as an “open system,” then a relatively new idea, in which “communications would flow up, down, and sideways in a very easy, uninhibited way.”¹³⁹) They scheduled regular meetings for technicians in these conference rooms, both with and without the presence of managers, and made sure that all company employees would be kept abreast of company news—not just the rosy, vague economic reports of the past, but real economic data that helped technicians understand which problems that needed fixing. Swanson scheduled shifts for work groups of about twelve people to form some sense of team identity, and made sure that there was always a thirty-minute overlap at the change of shifts so that technicians from different shifts could share information with one another.

These work groups would, in turn, be “largely self-managed” and in charge of a vastly expanded range of activities. They would play a part in scheduling production, hiring peers, evaluating managers, and strategizing necessary technological developments. Within each work group, each technician would perform a variety of tasks; even managers were required to work

¹³⁷ Waterman 38.

¹³⁸ Dyer 38.

¹³⁹ Waterman 39.

“online” for some percentage of their careers, so that they would never forget the reality of the production system. Finally, Swanson’s team introduced a new pay scale that would be based on skill acquisition rather than seniority. A technician would move up the salary scale by learning to repair equipment if previously he had only operated it, or by training for discussions of corporate strategy. The goal, according to Swanson, was to “take away the rule book and substitute principle for mandate,” which would in turn encourage “people to reach for responsibility.”¹⁴⁰

The Augusta plant turned out to be a remarkable success not just philosophically but financially, making it a real-world validation of McGregor’s Theory Y. By the mid-1960s, just a couple of years after the plant’s opening in 1963, Augusta was performing 30% better than any other P&G plant in terms of productivity, and its absentee rates declined below industry averages.¹⁴¹ At the same time, demand for Procter & Gamble products soared to new heights. Having opened one plant roughly once a decade for the first 125 years of its existence, the company built ten plants new plants from 1963 to 1975, primarily to manufacture the laundry products like Tide detergent, Downy fabric softener, and Biz bleach. The August plant had set such a successful precedent that in 1967 corporate headquarters mandated that every new P&G plant be operated under the technician system.¹⁴² That said, organizational development personnel found it far more difficult to impose the technician system on old “Theory X” and unionized plants where existing managers feared the loss of power, workers feared the pressure to learn new skills, and unions feared that they would become unnecessary.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰Waterman 40; Dyer 162. For more details regarding the implantation of Theory Y at the Augusta Plant, see Dyer 160-3 and Waterman 38-46.

¹⁴¹ Waterman 41.

¹⁴² Kleiner 68.

¹⁴³ Waterman 42. When Procter & Gamble opened a new laundry plant in Lima, Ohio in 1968, they continued to build on the technician system, which continues to operate along those lines today. In a 2001 report, business writer

In assessing P&G's management experiments, we must be careful not to overstate their adherence to McGregor's core principles, in spite of the extent to which participation and "bottom-up" communication infused their management structures. In a move that would have devastated McGregor's colleague and role model Joseph Scanlon, the development of the technician system went hand in hand with the deunionization at Procter & Gamble. Instead of learning to communicate with the unions – to establish candid "two-way communication" with them, as the proponents of "open systems" would say—the P&G organizational development group devised a way to strip unions of their authority within the organization. Swanson acknowledged this aim openly—stating that one of the seven main innovations of the Augusta plant was to "establish and maintain a work environment in which employees would conclude that it was in their own best interest to operate without a union." One of his other central goals was to "Encourage change and high productivity in the absence of monetary incentive."¹⁴⁴

It is difficult to deduce the extent to which workers derived material as opposed to psychological benefits from the technician system. On the one hand, technicians began earning salaried wages in 1963, with greater opportunity for financial mobility, and according to

Robert Waterman reported that the Lima plant "puts all of the plant's 350 people in a position of leadership" and noted giddily that after observing "every meeting" as a reporter, "I had to ask who the managers were!" (Waterman 47). The Lima plant was developed by Charles Krone, who came from an organizational development background and was a proponent of "open systems" corporate philosophy, as outlined above, and Robert Seitz. Like the Augusta plant, Lima was a nonunion facility that operated with "relatively autonomous work teams as the fundamental unit of organization," and roles within each team would be based on mastery of skill (Dyer et al 164). The teams would choose their own members, decide who would do which work, which kinds of training to employ, and which projects to take on. Building on the legacy of the Augusta plant, they would also have the opportunity to choose their own managers, change leadership roles as necessary, and handle "their own disciplinary matters, a responsibility they took very seriously and with standards stricter than those in traditional plants." (Dyer 165) As much as possible, in other words, the Lima plant delegated "day-to-day decisions" to the technicians. After beginning production in 1968, Lima quickly became the most efficient and productive plant in the Procter and Gamble system.

¹⁴⁴ Dyer 162.

Waterman, the benefit packages of managers and technicians were “almost identical.”¹⁴⁵ Yet workers also lost the benefits of overtime pay and union-based job protection. Without full access to company records, it is unclear whether P&G’s effort to “[change] the psychology of work” benefitted individual workers to the same extent that it boosted production capabilities. What is certain is that Procter & Gamble successfully incorporated and benefitted from participative reconceptions of managerial authority. By transforming management from an act of control into an act of “facilitation” and “coaching,” and by transforming a line operator from a “worker” into a “technician,” Procter & Gamble shifted labor discourse from power to participation.

The motivations for incorporating Douglas McGregor’s principles could vary dramatically from one company to another. In the case of Procter & Gamble, executives and managers embraced Theory Y in the face of labor strife, specifically aiming to quell tension between workers and their managers. The development of Theory Y practices at the Union Carbide Corporation in the 1950s and ‘60s reveals a different set of incentives for enlisting McGregor. Whereas Procter & Gamble operated less than 20 plants in 1962, Union Carbide ran 300. A massive conglomerate, Union Carbide contained five major divisions – chemicals, plastics, carbons, metals, and consumer products – that rarely communicated with one another. With the rapid expansion of the chemical and plastics industries after World War II, communication across plants or divisions proved increasingly complex. At the same time, the corporation experienced years of relative profit stagnation in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and its President, Birny Mason, Jr., was willing to experiment to revive its economic viability.

¹⁴⁵ Waterman 41. Waterman also notes that technicians and managers wore the same uniforms and occupied equivalent parking spaces.

Whereas Procter & Gamble's Swanson sought techniques through which to commit formerly unionized workers to the company mission, Mason sought ways to centralize and unify a large conglomerate vying for dominance in the postwar economy. With the help of industrial relations guru John Paul Jones and Douglas McGregor, Union Carbide built one of the nation's first departments dedicated exclusively to organizational development. From 1959 to 1965, these men focused their efforts less on building morale than on engineering clear communication throughout the higher echelons of management.

Union Carbide's organizational development efforts can best be understood in the context of the corporation's longer history, from its formation as a multi-pronged conglomerate to the explosion of the chemicals and plastics markets in the postwar period. Union Carbide & Carbon Corporation (renamed simply Union Carbide Corporation in 1957) was created from the union of five smaller companies in 1917, when they were joined by the Chicago utility heir Cornelius Kingsley Garrison Billings.¹⁴⁶ By the late 1930s, the corporation had become a major conglomerate: "a huge business in many businesses, selling a wide and disparate line of products" and "notoriously hard to run from on high" because division managers conceived of themselves as competitors for corporate profits¹⁴⁷ By the end of the 1940s, Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation's top executives had surrendered trying to run its fifteen subsidiaries closely; they conceived of themselves as "a mere holding company." The operating companies had their own presidents and policies, and sometimes their own boards of directors. William

¹⁴⁶ Gilbert Burck, "Union Carbide's Patient Schemers," *Fortune*, December 1965, 147-149; 251-254; 147. These companies included Linde Air Products Co. (producer of oxyacetylene welding); National Carbon Co., Inc. (producer of electrodes for furnaces and street lamps); Prest-O-Lite Co., Inc (maker of acetylene for portable lamps); Electro Metallurgical Co. (maker of ferroalloys for electric furnaces) and Union Carbide Company (producer of calcium carbide for electric furnaces, originally formed in 1898). The companies were "technically related" pioneers in the synthetic chemicals industry, but, according to *Fortune* Magazine, "their product diversity did not make for central control."

¹⁴⁷ Burck 148.

Burck of *Fortune* Magazine wrote that “jealousy, and duplication, not to say multiplication of effort, were the order of the day” among operating presidents whose only contact with corporate staff tended to involve legal or financial guidance.¹⁴⁸

That said, Union Carbide’s loose structure functioned passably well in flush economic times, which persisted for the company through World War II. It wasn’t until after the war that warning signs emerged, thanks to a tremendous spike in competition and an increasingly saturated market. In the wartime drive to increase production, the US government had encouraged and sponsored the expansion of the chemical industry, which boomed for a time. But at war’s end, “a lot of newcomers stayed in chemicals” and began to cut prices “aggressively.”¹⁴⁹ At the same time, the American consumer and industrial market for chemicals and plastics took off exponentially. By the mid-1950s, Americans were consuming three billion pounds of plastic and spending roughly \$2 billion dollars on plastic products each year.¹⁵⁰ In an article from June 1956, the *New York Times* reported that the “Mere Infant of Ten Years Ago” had become a massively profitable industry characterized by constant, rapid innovations and attendant competition.¹⁵¹

From 1955-1963, Union Carbide had little choice but to expand its operations dramatically in order to keep up with demand.¹⁵² In 1960, the *Times* reported that Union Carbide

¹⁴⁸ Burck 148.

¹⁴⁹ Burck 148.

¹⁵⁰“Industries Widen Field of Plastics”, *New York Times*, January 3, 1955, 76; Alfred Zipser, “The Mere Infant of Ten Years Ago Becomes a 2-Billion Dollar Giant”, *New York Times*, June 10, 1956, 145.

¹⁵¹ Zipser, “Mere Infant.” The article reported that Polyethylene, in particular, emerged as a major material in plastic bottles, cars, and electrical appliances, while other plastics found their way into furniture, disposable diapers, and food containers.

¹⁵² “Union Carbide Decides on Big Expansion Plan,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1958, 31; “Union Carbide Net Declines, Periling 90c Dividend Rate,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1958, 47. The company spent an unprecedented

(which operated 300 plants in 1955) had spent \$471 million on building new facilities in the previous three years, and planned to spend \$175 million per year in 1960 and 1961—largely for the production of chemicals, plastics, and industrial gases.¹⁵³ Yet the same article explained that the company’s first quarter sales and earnings reflected a “general ‘leveling out’ in the economy” because of “upward pressures for costs” and “downward pressures for prices.”¹⁵⁴ Union Carbide suffered from competition with fellow “mammoths” like Dow Chemical Company, E.L. Du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc., and Allied Chemical.¹⁵⁵ The corporation found it difficult to boost profits or gain returns on massive investments in new plant and product development. According to most sources, profits and stock prices stagnated or declined through the early 1960s even as consumer demand for plastics and chemicals soared.¹⁵⁶

Douglas McGregor first met John Paul Jones, the industrial relations manager of Union Carbide, in 1959, and was hired as a consultant to the corporation from 1963-1964 – one of his

\$150 million on expansion in 1958 in spite of business decline; 53% of that expenditure went into developing new plants in chemicals and plastics. (That year, their chemical business remained steady but the corporation suffered an estimated 16% decline in sales because of major declines in the metal industry).

¹⁵³ “Peak Sales in Quarter Disclosed at Carbide Meeting,” *New York Times*, April 22, 1960, 41.

¹⁵⁴ “Peak Sales in Quarter Disclosed at Carbide Meeting,” 41.

¹⁵⁵ Zipser, “Mere Infant.” By the mid-1960s, these companies had entered fierce competition not only to sell raw materials to industrial companies, but to manufacture commodities for direct sale to the consumer (in the case of Union Carbide, this effort was best exemplified by the development of Everready batteries, Prestone antifreeze, and Bakelite kitchenware; DuPont and Dow began manufacturing paint and oven cleaners, respectively).

¹⁵⁶ While the *Fortune* article corroborates my sense that 1959-1963 was a difficult time for Union Carbide, the newspaper articles about Union Carbide at this time offer varied impressions. There were plenty of reports of trouble, but in 1963 the *New York Times* announced that the company had reported “record sales for 1962 and its second best earning year.” See “Union Carbide Corp. Reports Its Second Best Earnings Year,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1963. Another *Times* article from May 1959 explained that the chemical industry was doing very well in general, and that chemical stocks had set a new historic high, with Union Carbide gaining 1 1/3 of a point. See Richard Rutter, “Stocks Set Highs as Bull Rushes In,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1959.

last stints before his death in 1965.¹⁵⁷ Together, along with the support of Birny Mason Jr. (executive vice president from 1959 to 1963, when he became chief executive officer), the men designed what one author has called a “pioneer” Organizational Development (OD) program.¹⁵⁸ McGregor and Jones organized a small internal consulting group, steeped in contemporary behavioral science knowledge, to assist Union Carbide’s managers in communicating across divisions. Their consulting jargon promoted ideas like “leveling,” “team management,” and “collaborative problem solving.”¹⁵⁹ In practice, they established a number of committees that operated across corporate divisions, holding regular meetings in which they discussed emerging problems and strategized possible solutions. These committees, in turn, reported their discussions to a top-level group made up of the president and his three executive vice presidents.

Union Carbide’s ultimate goal was to establish participative management through collaborative committees, with constant communication between these committees and their superiors. McGregor and Jones convinced the company’s executives that groups reached better decisions than isolated individuals and that candid communication from the bottom up produced superior results than orders from a superior. While the experiment reads now as a relatively tame expression of McGregor’s key principles – lacking the more humanistic rhetoric of self-actualization that often accompanied Theory Y’s applications—Union Carbide’s internal organizational development caused a stir in its own time. Reflecting back on the experiment a decade later, *Management Today* cited the experiment as one of “the most *avant-garde*

¹⁵⁷ According to the list of consultations in McGregor’s *Leadership and Motivation*, his final corporate consulting stint was with Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., Great Britain, in 1964. For more information on the relationship between McGregor and Jones see Burck; Gabor; McGregor, *The Professional Manager*; and Weisbord, *Productive Workplaces*.

¹⁵⁸ Weisbord 112.

¹⁵⁹ See Burck and Weisbord 110.

approaches in behavioral science applications.”¹⁶⁰ By the time of McGregor’s death in 1965, Union Carbide had transformed from an unwieldy, economically stagnant conglomerate into a more profitable and functional corporation.

It is worth noting that Union Carbide was not new to the field of human relations before the 1960s. In an October 1955 article entitled “Corporations Too Are Only Human”, the *New York Times*’ Richard Rutter announced that “Union Carbide’s interest in people gives it a distinct identity,” for “few large companies are more employee-conscious than Union Carbide.”¹⁶¹ He chronicled a range of activities that labor historian Elisabeth Fones-Wolf has termed the “selling of free enterprise.”¹⁶² Before establishing a plant in a new community, Union Carbide sent out scouts to research its needs and investigate the potential impact of a company plant on its surroundings. Having diagnosed certain areas as lacking in cultural and social activities, for instance, Union Carbide had sponsored community theater groups, brought symphonies to play concerts, initiated lecture series, and built playgrounds. They also donated money and supplies to local schools. Inside the company, Union Carbide offered softball, golf, and bowling leagues; the Carbide Gun Club and its annual turkey shoot; a 66-acre corporate picnic ground and park available for free use to all employees; and an annual “Family Day.” Fifty-four company publications were published throughout the Union Carbide complex, including a weekly newsletter and a monthly magazine. Newcomers to the corporation were told, “[T]ake part in plant activities...and you’ll soon have a feeling of belonging at Union

¹⁶⁰ John Thackray, “US Managers Think Again,” *Management Today*, October 1976, 82-84.

¹⁶¹ Richard Rutter, “Corporations Too Are Only Human,” *New York Times*, Oct 2, 1955, F1.

¹⁶² Elisabeth A Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Carbide.”¹⁶³ But by the late 1950s, these human-relations strategies had failed to forge economic prowess out of belongingness.

Union Carbide’s foray into more experimental human-relations methods stemmed from the vision of corporate vice president Birny Mason, Jr., who operated with increasing organizational authority throughout the early 1960s. Mason’s vice presidency coincided with the period in which, according to *Fortune Magazine*, Union Carbide was “languishing under a cloud.” (“Investors who were clamoring to pay \$150 a share for its stock in 1959,” this article reported, “were scrambling to rid themselves of it at \$85 a share in 1962.”¹⁶⁴) Mason became a vocal proponent of corporate centralization, insisting that the company profits would not rise until its fifteen operating companies started acting like part of a larger whole, and he recognized a moment of opportunity in the corporation’s economic struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁶⁵ It was Mason who, in 1959, asked John Paul Jones (whom he knew from the corporate industrial relations staff) to “look into what was being done in the field of management motivation and to set up a small staff group to help Union Carbide’s managers.”¹⁶⁶

According to Douglas McGregor, his first encounter with Union Carbide came in 1959. Early that year, John Paul Jones, then a member of the corporate personnel staff, attended a seminar sponsored by the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior in Ann Arbor, Michigan, devoted to organization theory and behavioral science research.¹⁶⁷ Jones heard papers by

¹⁶³ Rutter, “Corporations Too Are Only Human.”

¹⁶⁴ Burck 147.

¹⁶⁵ Burck 148-9.

¹⁶⁶ Burck 149.

¹⁶⁷ This information comes from McGregor, *The Professional Manager*, 106-111. Note that the Ann Arbor conference’s papers were later published in a book called *Modern Organization Theory*, edited by Mason Haire (New York: John Wiley, 1959). The businessmen in attendance were both “attracted and satisfied” by the

thinkers like Chris Argyris, Rensis Likert, and Dorwin Cartwright, and returned to Union Carbide with the spirit of experimentation in tow.¹⁶⁸ Soon thereafter, having communicated his enthusiasm about the conference's ideas to Mason, he was put in charge of a small unit called "Organization Development," which served as an internal consultancy service for management training and development and reported to the corporate vice president of industrial relations.¹⁶⁹ Though one article about the history of Organizational Development traces McGregor's beginnings at Union Carbide to 1957, McGregor himself wrote that he and Jones, both the sons of ministers, met in 1959 after this conference.¹⁷⁰ McGregor offered crucial help in developing the OD program at Union Carbide in the early 1960s and became an official in-house consultant in 1963,

In McGregor's final book, *The Professional Manager* (published posthumously in 1967), he held up his work at Union Carbide as a prime example of "Team Building," offering the work of its Organizational Development group as a successful case study. McGregor and Jones began their major OD plan in 1963. Eighteen months later, when McGregor assessed Union Carbide's

contributions of the social scientists, so they had their own symposium—with papers contributed by other businessmen. These papers were later collected in a book called *Organization Theory in Industrial Practice: A Symposium of the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior*, also edited by Mason Haire (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962). For background information, see Dean Harper's review of the latter in the *Sociological Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1963): 278-9.

¹⁶⁸ For a full list of speakers and papers, see ed. Mason Haire, *Modern Organization Theory* (NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1959). Haire's volume represented a cross-section of the institutions and protagonists in this dissertation, and also suggested institutional ties between the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior and the Institute of Social Research (for which Likert and Cartwright both worked, and which was also located in Ann Arbor). Chris Argyris, had helped development Management Development Workshops with Douglas McGregor for the National Training Laboratories in the mid-1950s.

¹⁶⁹ McGregor, *The Professional Manager*, 106. Note that John Paul Jones remained the general manager of Organizational Development from 1959-1966, when he left to become the vice president of Federated Stores.

¹⁷⁰ The 1957 reference comes from Wendell French and Cecil Bell, "A Definition and History of Organizational Development," *Academy of Management Proceedings* (1971): 146-153. McGregor's account is in *The Professional Manager*. For more biographical information about John Paul Jones and his religious lineage, see his 1971 obituary.

ongoing experiments, he called the team “remarkably effective” in terms of commitment and enthusiasm, and compared the OD group’s effect to “a process of ‘infection’ with what I, as a behavioral scientist, conceive to be a benign disease.”¹⁷¹ The Organizational Development group consisted of six subordinates in addition to Jones and McGregor – a tiny number in the sea of Union Carbide’s thousands of employees. In the spirit of self-reflective behavioral science, one of the first tasks of the group was what McGregor called a “self-development project”: to develop as a team through the rigorous discussion of the group’s own mission, goals, principles, and what their larger role in the company should be. The group’s members determined that their role could be effective only if they were seen as part of larger, “genuine process of *group* planning” and if Union Carbide’s managers saw them as an optional resource for feedback rather than an imposed roadblock or source of judgment from above.¹⁷²

The simple mission of the OD group at Union Carbide, which was sometimes obscured by the jargon of its communications (their stated aim, for instance, to “develop a composite sociotechnical system”¹⁷³), was to help managers manage better through participation and communication, and to spread knowledge from contemporary behavioral science.¹⁷⁴ The consultants’ services would be available to all company managers upon request (the OD consultant “will not seek to interject such services where they are not wanted”) and the requesting manager could decide to withdraw from the program at any time if he did not find it

¹⁷¹ McGregor, *Professional Manager*, 110.

¹⁷² McGregor, *Professional Manager*, 107.

¹⁷³ McGregor, *Professional Manager*, 106.

¹⁷⁴ Part of the Organizational Development group’s original work was to read relevant literature from behavioral science and bring in authors for discussion.

helpful.¹⁷⁵ Ideally, the manager would offer the consultant from the OD group a “free and complete internal exchange of data” about his own division, and would trustingly communicate the problems he encountered in his job; only through mutual trust and open communications could progress occur. “The sharing of every conversation and problem is not an objective of Organizational Development,” the team insisted, but effective consulting required as candid communication as possible.¹⁷⁶ Having explained the central problems he faced, the manager could turn to the OD consultant for feedback about his operations.

The Organizational Develop group hoped to model group problem-solving and decision-making to the people around them. McGregor later reported with relief:

[T]he relationships of this group with line management throughout the company are remarkably constructive. There is virtually none of the suspicion and antagonism on the part of the ‘field’ that is so commonly found toward headquarters staff. On the contrary, the requests for help are growing at a rate that raises questions about the team’s appropriate size and the possibility of developing individual consultants like themselves within divisions.”¹⁷⁷

The program’s ambassadors encouraged managers to think not in terms of which higher-ups they reported to, how they could mobilize their teams to accomplish goals, and how they might communicate with people outside their own divisions to get their jobs done. Ultimately, they hoped, the larger organization’s corporate policies and hierarchy would evolve into a participative management structure.¹⁷⁸

Jones himself emphasized the role of what he called “leveling” within the Organizational development group, defined as “‘doing away with the phoniness of what passes for

¹⁷⁵ McGregor, *Professional Manager*, 107.

¹⁷⁶ McGregor, *Professional Manager*, 108.

¹⁷⁷ McGregor, *Professional Manager*, 110.

¹⁷⁸ It is worth noting, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, that the group was much less concerned with the communication between managers and their underlings.

communication between people.” If a group could “level” with each other and really begin to discuss things honestly, he suggested, they could make progress. He cited one example in which a group of four divisional managers went on a retreat to Kanawha Valley, West Virginia, to discuss the problems they faced. “At first they took up trivial cases, such as improving telephone service,” he explained, but “gradually they got to the things that counted—breaking through division barriers and doing away with redundant jobs and duplicate facilities.”¹⁷⁹ While Jones and others conceded that “the Organizational Development’s group programs offer no panacea” because “Everybody can’t be in on everything,” and some executives remained “indifferent or skeptical,” *Fortune*’s William Burck reported that “Practically everybody of consequence in the company is tolerably familiar with Jones’ ideas, and in a company sweating to develop unity of purpose by group decision making, that is all to the good.”¹⁸⁰

The establishment of the Organizational Development group at Union Carbide put a number of other important changes into motion. Mason was promoted to the presidency of the corporation in 1963, convinced that Union Carbide could not thrive unless it developed a more centralized operating structure. There were many in the organization who resisted the idea of centralization, arguing that the corporation was “too inherently a conglomerate to be managed centrally,” or that divisions needed more independence rather than less. Mason spent the first three years of his presidency gathering information to support his case. He also formed a group of six executives whose sole purpose it was to formulate a plan for reorganization. Having discussed the plan by committee, at length, they shared their ideas with divisional managers and solicited feedback. The plan Mason developed with his colleagues reflected Theory Y principles in both content and practice. According to Burck, “By letting both staff and operating people

¹⁷⁹ Burck 149.

¹⁸⁰ Burck 149.

discuss the reorganization for years, he subtly achieved a broad if not wholly unanimous acceptance of his aims.”¹⁸¹

The end result of Mason’s efforts was a master plan called “The Scheme,” which he put into effect on September 9, 1964. The Scheme achieved unprecedented corporate integration by arranging Union Carbide’s fifteen divisions into four cross-divisional groups and assigning each division’s president to a shared operating committee that would discuss how to run the affairs of this newly enlarged group. Mason also established a “President’s office” staffed by himself and three executive vice presidents (all in equally lavish, 1000 square-foot corner offices¹⁸²) with whom the smaller operating groups could communicate. *Fortune* later reported:

The corporation has adopted the principle, to a degree practically unique in US businesses, that management decisions can usually be made better by working groups with diverse views and experience than by individuals. The President’s Office is the top working group of a company that is being run on every important level—corporate, divisional, departmental, plant—by similar working groups.¹⁸³

Mason did not just increase communication between executives, but encouraged managers to participate in making decisions that affected the corporation as a whole.¹⁸⁴ Unlike Procter and Gamble, which struggled to identify lower level workers with its larger corporate mission, the Union Carbide endeavor targeted disconnected, overly self-reliant managers who had forgotten to act—or refused to act—as part of team.

By December 1965, “The Scheme” had achieved a reasonable amount of success according to internal assessors. The operating committees had gained increased responsibility and were communicating regularly with higher-ups. They had also reached unprecedented

¹⁸¹ Burck 251.

¹⁸² Burck 147.

¹⁸³ Burck 147.

¹⁸⁴ Burck 251.

solidarity regarding the pricing of products, and decided collectively to reduce the total number of divisions. One executive reported that the men in the President's office knew more about what was going on throughout the company than ever, thanks to minutes of all operating committee meetings and the expectation of constant communication. He explained, "There is comprehension of our over-all problems that never existed before."¹⁸⁵

Central to many admirers' celebrations of Union Carbide's success was the idea that more people were working "in the corporate interest," negotiating individualism and diversity to arrive at what was best for the common good.¹⁸⁶ Burck quoted a number of executives who expressed reservations but ultimately lauded the organizational development progress, explain that "I hated the idea...but now I believe it." or conceding, "Life is not easier...But decisions are better."¹⁸⁷ President Mason himself communicated some level of ambivalence, conceding that "the problem of running a huge conglomerate, from the Soviet economy on down, is never solved because there is no perfect solution short of developing a new race of men with the accurate memory and analytical capacity of computers and the intuitive judgment of the greatest of managers." But he saw promise in the larger acceptance of centralization at Union Carbide, and in the company's culture of pro-active problem-solving.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which Union Carbide's team management philosophy truly revolutionized corporate operations and results. Burck reported enthusiastically that the company's 1964 sales had increased by 13 percent after "years of lethargy," and that the "1965 earnings have been running about 25 per cent higher" – which would seem to suggest a

¹⁸⁵ Kenneth Jannan quoted in Burck, 54.

¹⁸⁶ Burck 252.

¹⁸⁷ Burck 253. The first quote comes from the Carbon Divisions president. The second comes from William Humes, vice president of "Group 3."

correlation between a great economic turnaround and the biggest reorganization program in the company's history. But we would do wrong to conclude that the single variable of Theory Y teamwork shaped the company's destiny, for this progress coincided with "the biggest capital-goods boom in history" and the military's high demand for chemical products during the Vietnam War (as most infamously was the case for Dow Chemical).¹⁸⁸

Union Carbide's experimentation with Theory Y management offers more confirmation of McGregor's philosophical impact on corporate America than of the economic benefits it delivered; it also reveals the extent to which Theory Y could be applied in service of conventional corporate aims. Union Carbide's Mason and Jones did not see participative management as a vehicle for individuals' self-actualization, but rather as a technique for generating managers' "uncoerced unity of purpose."¹⁸⁹ At this corporation, McGregor's ideas promised to unite a dysfunctional conglomerate, not liberate the psyches of discontented managers or their subordinates. At the same time that Union Carbide was experimenting with corporate reorganization, however, McGregor's theories had found far more therapeutic applications within the realm of management training and development. No one organization better represented those applications than the National Training Laboratories for Group Development.

¹⁸⁸ Burck 147.

¹⁸⁹ Burck 147.

Chapter 7
“Behind the Executive Mask”:
NTL and the Rise of Postwar Corporate Sensitivity Training

For decades following Kurt Lewin’s death in 1947, his friend and biographer Alfred Marrow continued to celebrate his humanistic legacy. Marrow, the pajama-factory impresario, had championed experimental management methods since the earliest days of role-playing and leadership training at the Harwood Corporation. By the mid-1960s, he emerged as one of the most enthusiastic proselytizers of the “T-group,” the technique that Lewin developed with a small group of colleagues in Connecticut in the months before his death. The T-group, short for “training group,” was originally named the “basic skills training group,” and was commonly referred to as “sensitivity training” in the decades that followed. Unlike contemporary sensitivity training for a multicultural workplace, the training of the 1950s and 1960s was dedicated to sensitivity as an end in and of itself. The goals were the cultivation of an empathic sensibility, more sensitive methods of communication with others, and higher levels of self-awareness.¹ Marrow spent decades working with the National Training Laboratories, the nation’s foremost disseminator of sensitivity training, and emerged with a fierce conviction that T-groups could cure the woes of contemporary capitalism.

¹ Today’s training, which many employees experience via computer, often targets issues associated with diversity; it is intended as an antidote to sexism, racism, xenophobia, and homophobia. For more on the contemporary manifestations of sensitivity training and diversity education, see Jennifer A Delton, *Racial Integration in Corporate America, 1940-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Sensitivity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Norton, 2001).

Marrow was not alone in his enthusiasms. Between 1955 and 1975, thousands of American managers and executives —sometimes along with their wives and secretaries²-- participated in work-sponsored sensitivity training groups offered by more than 100 organizations in the US and Canada. In the decades following Lewin's death, the structure of the T-group remained remarkably consistent: The T-group united a small group of participants, ideally in a remote location far from the corporate fray, for as long as three weeks in an intimate workshop environment with a leader who encouraged disclosure of feelings and open critique of others. Its success depended on the non-directive approach of the group leader and the method of feedback: as members of the group analyzed themselves and the experience of the group itself, other members responded with assessments of the speaker's behavioral and verbal tendencies.³ Participants were encouraged to candidly assess their groupmates and solicit honest feedback in turn. Proponents of T-groups believed that people who were aware of themselves as individuals would function better in groups and in organizations; that if managers, supervisors, and executives could learn how to communicate, to listen to others' needs, to function in an environment of anti-authoritarian openness, they could usher in a new era of organizational harmony and increased productivity. The ideal T-group participant emerged with a strong sense of self-awareness, able to manage through relationships rather than crude incentives, and through emotions as opposed to rationality.

² For work with wives, see materials in folder "Young President Wives Seminar: Highland Park, Michigan, January 18-22, 1959," box 237, National Training Laboratories papers, AHAP. For work with secretaries, see folder "Secretaries' First Annual Conference, September 24-30, 1967," box 262, NTL papers, AHAP.

³ See Leland Powers Bradford, *National Training Laboratories: Its History, 1947-1970: Originally National Training Laboratory in Group Development and Now NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science* (Bethel, Me: Bradford, 1974); Bradford, *T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method; Innovation in Re-Education* (New York: Wiley, 1964).; Alfred Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask: Greater Managerial Competence Through Deeper Self-Understanding* (New York: American Management Association, 1965); Marrow, *The T-group Experience: An Encounter Among People for Greater Self-Fulfillment* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, 1975); Irving R. Weschler and Jerome Reisel, *Inside a Sensitivity Training Group* (LA: UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations, 1959).

Alfred Marrow published his most widely read celebration of corporate T-groups, *Behind the Executive Mask: Greater Managerial Competence through Deeper Self-Understanding*, in 1964.⁴ The treatise rested on a standard premise of mid-20th-century human relations theory: that the corporate world was in the midst of “tremendous change,” and that the greatest challenge confronting the “profit-conscious executive” was the handling of people.⁵ Marrow framed his endorsement in strikingly existential language. He explained in his introduction:

To some extent we are all strangers. We are strangers in ourselves to the extent that we do not really understand our inner motives and feelings. We are strangers to each other because the image we project to the world outside is different from the way we see ourselves. We don't really know what we are like until we take off the masks we wear.... This is perhaps the greatest discovery a man makes in sensitivity training: in learning through feedback his impact on other people, he begins to understand himself.⁶

In the treatise that followed, Marrow chronicled the experiences of real participants in a weeks-long sensitivity training session sponsored by the National Training Laboratories as they tried and failed to remove their “masks.”

Marrow's pseudonymed protagonists, all participating in a T-group to improve their performance at work, described their experiences in therapeutic and even spiritual terms. One man “found it a real thrill” to “admit your faults to yourself” and “to be aware of them,” elaborating that “the only way to do that is to study yourself, to know what your potential is and understand how to reach it.”⁷ Another announced proudly towards the end of his training, “I know I will have to wrestle with false fronts to find the true self buried deep within my psyche. But I feel confident I now have the courage and competence to know myself without distortion

⁴ Alfred Jay Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask; Greater Managerial Competence Through Deeper Self-Understanding* (New York: American Management Association, 1964).

⁵ Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask*, 25.

⁶ Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask*, 53.

⁷ Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask*, 92.

or partiality.”⁸ Marrow explained in his treatise that the excavation of authentic selves depended on a level of candor and intimacy that few of his managers had been able to achieve on their own.

The T-group that emerged in Marrow’s account was not simply a site of therapeutic connection, but one in which participants combated each other’s claims to authenticity. In one encounter, two men clashed over interpretations of openness:

‘Ralph, you baffle me. What’s this about the ‘compassion’ you say you feel? You haven’t really warmed up to anybody yet. If you have these warm feelings, why do they have to be kept so deeply inside of you? When the talk gets around to matters of emotion or feeling, you clam up or shift the conversation to a more general topic. You do! I’ve noticed it. Why do you hide your inner man, Ralph? Why not reveal him? What are you afraid of?’⁹

In another instance, a man named Ed sunk his verbal teeth into a fellow group member named Henry:

‘I sometimes wonder what you feel behind that poker face. No one here knows who you really are... You repress all your emotions. We came here to help one another. How can anyone help *you*? We can’t even get to know you. Looking at you this very moment, I don’t know how you feel about what I’m saying.’¹⁰

Through such dialogues, Marrow revealed a world in which candor and authenticity constituted forms of corporate currency. In many ways, his book marked the success of humanistic management principles in American business. Yet it also revealed the gulf that had developed between Lewin’s lofty social and scientific ideals and the principles of his successors.

This chapter explores the history of NTL and the evolution of corporate sensitivity training from Lewin’s death in 1947 through its triumph in the mid-1960s. As NTL rapidly

⁸ Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask*, 133.

⁹ Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask*, 84.

¹⁰ Marrow, *Behind the Executive Mask*, 109.

expanded in this period, it spawned a group of kindred institutions across the country that incorporated developments in humanistic psychology as espoused by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. By the end of the 1960s, hundreds of corporations, including Exxon, American Airlines and IBM, had experimented with T-groups. The technique had spread around the world—to human relations consultants in Australia and South America, for instance—becoming a staple of business school curricula, educational training programs, and even government agencies in the US and abroad. According to a 1969 report from the National Industrial Conference Board, sensitivity training had emerged as “perhaps the most influential and widespread application of behavioral science research in education and in industry.”¹¹

The story of NTL reveals the way in which Lewin’s “action research” gradually transformed into a style of corporate rhetoric and communication. For in the 1950s and 1960s, as sensitivity training became a profitable service in the corporate landscape, organizations like the National Training Laboratories – organized originally on principles of democratic, anti-prejudicial action—struggled to stay true to their original aims. They found themselves straddling sometimes irreconcilable goals of financial and humanistic progress, individual and social growth, therapeutic and activist ambition. The T-group, which had been designed as a “training” tool by social scientists committed to group dynamics research and democratic action, transformed throughout the 1950s and 1960s into a symbol of personal authenticity and therapeutic expression. At the same time, leaders of the National Training Laboratories committed themselves increasingly to private, corporate organizations rather than the sites of community dynamics Lewin had originally envisioned. Community relations receded from the

¹¹ Harold M. F. Rush, *Behavioral Science; Concepts and Management Application*, Studies in Personnel Policy no. 216 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1969).

foreground as NTL found itself an international leader of management consulting, a field plagued by its own fierce debates about the benefits of self-actualization as organizational salve.

As chronicled in the previous chapter, the National Training Laboratories for Group Development (NTL) opened its doors in 1947 in Bethel, Maine as a training site for managers, educators, ministers, and government officials.¹² NTL's founders – Leland Bradford, Ronald Lippitt, and Kenneth Benne -- developed the T-group in service of a broad agenda. Emerging from backgrounds spanning adult education and government administration, they dedicated themselves to the larger mission of “organizational effectiveness” in the postwar era.¹³ The US economy and society were going through rapid processes of intense change, and these men believed that possibilities for smooth transitions rested in the hands of the country's leaders. They designed their workshops to help people from diverse occupational backgrounds lead better by learning to communicate openly within small groups.

When NTL opened its doors the in the summer of 1947 under the leadership of Benne, Bradford, and Lippitt, the Basic Skills Training Group (the term “T-group” wouldn't emerge until 1949) was to be the primary focus of training and research. Ideally, the T-group provided “maximum possible opportunity for the individuals to expose their behavior, give and receive feedback, experiment with new behavior, and develop everlasting awareness and acceptance of

¹² At the time of its opening, the institute's complete name was the National Training Laboratories for Group Development. For more on the history of NTL, see; Back, *Beyond Words*; Leland Bradford, *National Training Laboratories: Its History: 1947-1970*; Leland P. Bradford, Jack R. Gibb, Kenneth D. Benne, eds., *T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method: Innovation in Re-education* (New York: Wiley, 1964); Howard, *Please Touch*; and Michael E. McGill, “The Evolution of Organizational Development: 1947-1960,” *Public Administration Review* 34, no. 2 (March-April 1974): 98-105.

¹³ See Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 1.

self and others.”¹⁴ The “crucial discovery,” according to Kurt Back, “was that these procedures could bring about intense emotional experiences among most participants” and produce a range of “subjective experiences” that previous group dynamics studies had failed to access.¹⁵ It is worth noting that the founders of NTL saw themselves not as therapists, but as educators and researchers posed to train a new generation of leaders with the necessary skills for postwar rebuilding.¹⁶ To the extent that they drew ideas from group psychotherapy work, they intended to do so in the service of social change and—in the words of Kenneth Benne—“democratic morality.”¹⁷

After witnessing the success of the first Basic Skills Training Group, Benne, Bradford, Lippitt, and Lewin agreed that the Basic Skills Training method deserved an institutional platform and developed the proposal for what was originally christened the National Training Laboratories for Group Development (before being shortened to the National Training Laboratories, and—in 1965—lengthened again to the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Sciences). After stumbling upon a remote location—the Gould Academy, a preparatory school in Bethel, Maine, which agreed to rent out its facilities for summer sessions—Bradford secured funding from the National Education Association, along with an endowment from the US Office

¹⁴ Chris Argyris, “T-groups for Organizational Effectiveness,” *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1964): 63.

¹⁵ Back 13.

¹⁶ Bradford 21. Debate over the T-group’s categorization as education, as opposed to therapy, would run throughout the 1960s, as the lines grew increasingly blurry and participants entered the process with expectations for the former. See Dee G. Appley and Alvin G. Winder, *T-Groups and Therapy Groups in a Changing Society* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973) for a thorough taxonomy of the intended differences between T-groups and therapy. Also see Chris Argyris, “T-groups for Organizational Effectiveness,” 67; Daniel Johnson, Paul Rothaus, and Philip Hanson, “A Human Relations Training Program for Hospital Personnel,” *Journal of Health and Human Behavior* 7, no. 3 (Autumn 1966): 222; Frank Paine, “Management Perspective: Sensitivity Training: The Current State of the Question,” *The Academy of Management Journal* (September 1965).

¹⁷ Bradford 43.

of Naval Research.¹⁸ He and his co-founders then recruited staff from centers for the study of behavioral science at MIT and Harvard – men whose interests ranged from rational, scientific research to more experimental methods of social change.¹⁹ They developed a daily training schedule centered on the Basic Skills Training Group and held their first three-week training session in the summer of 1947. This first session was, according to Bradford, a “tremendous success” filled with the “spirit of adventure and enthusiasm,” with discussion groups going late into the night and transforming into raucous bouts of drinking and singing.²⁰ One of the qualities that made Bethel particularly successful, Bradford would explain on many occasions, was the town’s ability to serve as a “cultural island.” Far from corporate or urban fray, it offered participants opportunities to sever themselves from their everyday lives and patterns. It was an ideal site for the “unfreezing” and “refreezing” of group dynamics that Kurt Lewin had advocated in his behavioral science theories.²¹

In its early years, NTL proudly wore the banner of “group dynamics” and celebrated its mission as one fundamentally connected to the operation of groups within democratic society. An early memo entitled “Prospective for the National Training Laboratory for Group Development” (1949) framed the organization’s work in grave terms:

The problems of modern society are primarily problems of human relations at all levels in our complex social organization. We are threatened by world wars, national dictatorships, minority group tensions, labor-management frictions,

¹⁸ Bradford 46.

¹⁹ Bradford 39; Back 52. The staff eventually consisted of Lippitt, Benne, Bradford, Robert Polson, Paul Sheats, Alvin Zander, R. Freed Bales, Kurt Back, Morton Deutsch, Henry Reicken, and Stanley Schacter.

²⁰ Bradford 48.

²¹ For more on unfreezing and refreezing see Kurt Lewin, “Frontiers in Group Dynamics Concept, Method and Reality in Social Science; Social Equilibria and Social Change,” *Human Relations* 1, no. 1 (June 1, 1947): 5–41.

schisms within institutions, inefficiency in the functioning of small groups, and the disorganization of personality... Changing conditions demand new adjustments of individuals, of groups, of institutions, and of the larger social structure.²²

By extension, the memo continued, the “basic objective of NTL” would be to “provide an opportunity for the analysis and practice of democratically and scientifically based methodology for the solution of problems in human relations.”²³

Both early NTL documentation and external press emphasized the “planning of change” in service of “democratic ethics.”²⁴ By placing participants in small groups, and by allowing them to work in close collaboration with social scientists – those pivotal actors on the postwar stage—NTL staff would grant T-group members previously non-existent opportunities for experimentation and awareness in group relations. At the same time, even NTL’s earliest literature suggested a precarious balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group. In a pronouncement of the “democratic norms” espoused by the organization, one memo explained paradoxically that “the planning of change must be anti-individualistic yet provide for the establishment of appropriate areas of privacy and for the development of persons

²² “Prospective for the National Training Laboratory in Group Development,” 1949, folder “Various Papers,” box M1052, Leland Bradford papers, AHAP, 1.

²³ “Prospective for the National Training Laboratory,” 2.

²⁴ Early coverage from the *New York Times* depicted the organization as one primarily concerned with the “development of methods and personal understandings required for democratic leadership in personal training programs for management and labor, staff and committee meetings, conferences and general education programs.” The article credited the “philosophy behind the laboratory” to Kurt Lewin and the field of group dynamics he helped innovate, which suggested that groups develop behaviors of their own that were separate from the behavior of individuals, and that by studying these group behaviors in “here-and-now” contexts, researchers and participants could improve the functioning of groups, thereby improving the functioning of all society. Lucy Freeman, “Laboratory Looks at Group Behavior,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1950. Also see Lucy Freeman, “Group Clinic Turns to Self-Criticism,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1950; and Memo entitled “Democratic Ethics And Human Engineering,” folder “Various Papers,” box M1052, Bradford papers, AHAP.

as creative units of influence in our society.”²⁵ This tension between individualistic and group goals would plague NTL tirelessly in decades to come, with many critics arguing that the two goals were mutually exclusive, while many advocates argued that they were symbiotic.

The period of NTL’s founding through the mid-fifties (what Kurt Back refers to as the “heroic period”) was one of both experimentation and stabilization.²⁶ By 1954 (the year that the NTLGD was shorted to the NTL), its staff had grown to 200 and NTL had attracted a sizeable grant from the Carnegie Foundation.²⁷ Meanwhile, NTL’s work began to spread around the country and the world. In the early 1950s, one of the original staff members, Paul Sheats, left NTL for UCLA and started the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development, where he continued to use the T-group (in a more slightly more humanistic incarnation). NTL’s methods also spread to the Midwest Workshop in Community Relations at the University of Chicago (1952) and to expanding regional labs in Boston, the San Juan Islands, and Colorado.²⁸

Through the early 1950s, NTL’s clientele included representatives from realms of education, government, industry, ministry, and medicine. In keeping with its broad ideological aims, early NTL Human Relations Laboratories tended to contain a diverse array of participants (whom the organization labeled “delegates”). A 1950 summer laboratory roster included Captain Lot Ensey of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode island; Margaret Adams, a professional advisor to the Girl Scouts of America; Charles Laing, a second vice president of the

²⁵ “Democratic Ethics and Human Engineering,” folder “ Various Papers,” box M1052, Bradford papers, AHAP, 14.

²⁶ Back 54.

²⁷ The Carnegie Foundation gave a \$9000 grant in 1949 and then a three-year, \$100,000 grant in 1950. See Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 86; 58; 66.

²⁸ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 78; 85.

Prudential Life Insurance Company; and Ruth Morgan, a faculty member of the School of Social Welfare of the University of California. The 113 delegates at their session also included representatives from labor organizations, churches, health departments, social service, federal welfare agencies, the Air Corps, and educational associations.²⁹ By the mid-1950s, 1000 people of diverse backgrounds were participating in summer human relations training laboratories held in Bethel or sponsored by NTL and held across the country, representing organizations like the Graduate Nurses Administration, the Baldwin (Long Island) Public School System, and the National Social Welfare Assembly Committee on Youth Services.³⁰

In the first several years of its existence, NTL remained committed to the idea of “heterogeneous” labs: groups containing people from a variety of organizations who met for the first time within the structure of the T-group. Through heterogeneous groups, the original strategists argued, participants would develop group dynamics anew. They would not bring any pre-existing tensions or biases to the table, and they would not hesitate to communicate with the degree of candor that T-groups necessitated.³¹ In the mid-1950s, this approach became an object of debate. A pivotal advisory committee proposed in November 1954 that NTL establish two-week homogeneous labs for members of the same organization who were in search of better group dynamics. The committee also proposed that NTL establish itself as an “extension service” that could be hired out to organizations on a consultancy basis and run in-house training programs.³² Though NTL continued to use heterogeneous formations in its summer human

²⁹ Lucy Freeman, “Laboratory Looks at Group Behavior.”

³⁰ *Human Relations News* 1, no. 2 (October 1954): 1.; *Human Relations News* 1, no. 3 (November-December 1954). Note that all issues of *Human Relations Training News* are located at NTL Institute’s current organizational headquarters in Arlington, VA.

³¹ Bradford, , *National Training Laboratories*, 97.

³² Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 94.

relations laboratories, its foray into homogeneous organizational labs prompted a period of major growth within the organization.

Early organizational clients included the National Red Cross, whose internal Management Development Program worked with NTL throughout the 1950s; the American Cancer Society; and the National Security Agency, which developed a one-week Executive Development Program in consultation with NTL in 1955.³³ The introduction of homogeneous (sometimes called “family”) laboratories opened up a new set of possibilities for NTL: Rather than working with diverse delegates toward abstract aims of democratic participation and awareness of group dynamics, NTL could help corporations, non-profits, and government agencies work toward the solution of distinct, organization-based problems. T-groups could function as a salve within organizations struggling with any number of human relations concerns, targeting particular group dynamics dilemmas and curing bureaucratic woes.

With its shift toward organizational labs, NTL evolved into a leader of human relations and management training domestically and abroad. At the same time, the shift inspired a range of questions about the core identity of the organization. Was NTL’s mission to improve interpersonal relationships and communication within America’s struggling communities, or was it to improve group dynamics at independent organizations? Could it do both? And could democratic aims be maintained when working with private firms?

Two of NTL’s first major forays into the field of industrial human relations did not take place in the United States, but in Europe—where funds from the US Marshall Plan, the European Productivity Agency, and the umbrella Organization for European Economic Co-operation sponsored exchanges between NTL social scientists and researchers and industrialists abroad. In

³³ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 4 (January-February 1955) and *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 8 (February-March 1956).

1953, NTL trainer Gordon Lippitt first traveled to Western Europe to introduce training laboratories as part of the Organization for European Economic Development.³⁴ Then, in February 1954, NTL leaders Leland Bradford, Richard Beckhard, Robert Hood, and Elbert Burr participated in a more elaborate exchange with the Austrian Productivity Center (APC) as part of a larger “Training of Trainers” program.³⁵

The report from Bradford’s team articulated a familiarly lofty purpose:

The past eight years have seen an impressive mobilization of American machinery and technical resources to aid the European economy to recover itself from war’s disaster. An examination of the European economy clearly demonstrates, however, as experience and research in America have already proven, that machines and technical resources are not alone the key to increased industrial productivity. It is more and more evident, both in the United States and in Europe, that individual human beings must work in close and satisfying relationship [sic] with each other if the most productive use is to be made of these technical resources.³⁶

The project’s training team had been recruited by the Productivity and Technical Assistance Office in Paris, with finances provided by the Productivity and Technical Assistance Section of the United States Operations Mission to Austria. The trip marked what its team called the “first effort toward expanding training in human relations in industry in Europe,” and a novel introduction of the principle that “in training in human relations... people learn by doing.”³⁷

³⁴ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 87-88. In 1955, NTL also began introducing lab methods in New Delhi, and “over the years NTL staffers would work in helping India build institutes employing these techniques.” See Bradford 94.

³⁵“Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre of the Industrial Training Workshop Project TA 31-208,” 1954, folder “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre of the Industrial Training Workshop Project TA 31-208,” box M1052, Bradford papers, AHAP. The report was prepared by team members Bradford, Hood, Beckhard, Burr in Linz, Austria, February 1-26, 1954. A note on this personnel: Bradford was at this time one of heads of NTL; Beckhard was the director of “Conference Counselors,” with experience translating laboratory training “into practical programs for industry”; Hood was president of Ansul Chemical in Marinette, Wisconsin; and Burr was General Supervisor of Educational Methods for International Harvester, Inc.

³⁶ Introduction to “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre of the Industrial Training Workshop Project TA 31-208,” 1.

³⁷ “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre,” 1.

Their mission was to expose about 100 trainers and employees from Austrian industry (“top, middle, and line supervision”³⁸), government, education, and labor to the experiential laboratory practices of NTL and contemporary theories of group dynamics, in the hopes that Austrian trainers would replicate and spread these methods and that the nation’s universities would begin collaborating with Austrian industry to produce further human relations research.

Bradford and his colleagues’ strategy in Austria was multi-pronged. They offered two-week workshops to top management and administrators, in which they led participants in a “conference-style,” small-group approach to problem solving—known to their American counterparts as “T-groups.” They supplemented this experience with lectures, demonstrations, and films. The team also offered shorter, one-week workshops to middle managers and union officials, and then another for foremen and shop stewards. Throughout the program, Austrian assistants worked with the Americans to plan and evaluate the small groups and lead discussions about the experience. A typical day involved over four hours of small group work. In “Experience” groups, the Austrians evaluated the human relations or leadership dilemmas facing their group in the “here and now.” They role-played and addressed the problems inhibiting their communication with one another. In “Discussion groups,” participants reflected on their days’ work and had the opportunity to question their trainers.³⁹

The Austrian participants initially noted rising levels of frustration on their daily evaluations, expressing concern with the lack of overt leadership within their groups, and with the lack of practical advice about exporting training methods to their respective organizations.⁴⁰

³⁸ “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre,” I-1.

³⁹ “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre,” I-3.

⁴⁰ “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre,” IV-1. Note that the Report makes clear that American participants often articulated these very same concerns, particularly expressing anxiety about the “non-directive” role of T-group

But their trainers deemed the experiment a success. They noted that “the men moved quickly from a passive group of ‘students’ to an active group of participants” who “share[d] responsibility” for both presenting material and thinking of ways to apply it to their own organizational situations. After initially expressing the pessimistic attitude of “It can’t be done in Austria,” Bradford and his team reported, the participants “changed to a point of view such as this: ‘How can I convince my boss even if he is on the negative side?’”⁴¹ Another member of the program, NTL Associate and Austria native “Doc” Lindner, reported in the organization’s newsletter, “‘Before we started it seemed like a big risk for our staff, but it turned out to be a full success. Our delegates reacted exactly the same way Americans do, and so the universal value of this training for better mutual understanding was proven again.’”⁴² The US trainers recommended not only that the Austrian Productivity Council continue its human relations regime in Austria (with clearer communication and support from the US government, they specified), but that similar productivity programs be conducted across Europe.⁴³

In the summer of 1954, The APC and the Foreign Operations Administration reciprocated by sending a team of Austrian trainers to the US to participate in three months of a “Training-of-Trainers” project. The Austrians’ visit included stops at the country’s most prominent centers of Human Relations research, including the University of Michigan, the Boston University Human Relations Workshop, the University of Chicago, and the NTL

leaders, before deeming their own experiences successful. Discomfort with insufficiently structured or pragmatic aims in e group work appears repeatedly in decades of T-group testimonies.

⁴¹ “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre,” IV-2.

⁴² *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 5 (March-April 1955).

⁴³ “Report for the Austrian Productivity Centre,” IV-4.

Laboratory in Bethel, Maine.⁴⁴ “Doc” Lindner returned to Austria repeatedly in the years following, helping to lead workshops for the Austrian Productivity Center in Vienna, Graz, Innsbruck,, and Dorulira—ultimately leading twenty workshops by the beginning of 1957—and went on to conduct leadership training with the Institute of Social Research at the University of Vienna, before branching out to conduct seminars for the German Productivity Center.⁴⁵ All incarnations of the training workshops involved the format of the T-group, and NTL held up their Austrian collaboration as a prime example of the technique’s fundamental transportability.

The year after NTL sent trainers to work with the Austrian Productivity Center, Leland Bradford began a more expansive collaboration with the European Productivity Agency, which fueled NTL’s relationships with industrial trainers in many European nations. After the Marshall Plan officially stopped doling out American funds for European development in 1952, its “cult of productivity” continued under the auspices of the European Productivity Agency, a subgroup of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation largely financed by the United States. In the years that followed, over 3000 specialists and hundreds of farmers visited American farms, factories, and training centers to glean information and techniques that might improve their rates of productivity.⁴⁶ NTL was one of many organizations enlisted in the effort, and its relationship

⁴⁴ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 1 (September 1954), 1.

⁴⁵ See *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 2 (January-February-March 1957) and *HRTN* 2, no. 4 (June-July-August 1957).

⁴⁶ This information was accessed on February 24, 2012, http://www.oecd.org/document/48/0,3746,en_2649_201185_1876912_1_1_1_1,00.html. For more on the history of the European Productivity Agency in this era, see Bent Boel and ebrary, Inc, *The European Productivity Agency and Transatlantic Relations, 1953-1961*, Studies in 20th & 21st Century European History v. 4 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press/University of Copenhagen, 2003). For broader context regarding the export of American business practices abroad, see Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

with the European Productivity Agency flourished in the second half of the 1950s, with the T-group emerging as a major social science “export” of the era.

In April 1955, Roger Grégoire announced the mission of the European Productivity Agency, of which he was deputy director, in an address delivered at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy.⁴⁷ “The work we are undertaking,” he explained to an audience of social scientists, “is one of applied science.” Grégoire celebrated the practicality of the social sciences—insisting that “some of the most flourishing schools of sociology have developed in proportion to the results it has been possible to derive from their work”—but also cautioned against the misuse of contemporary social theories. He acknowledged that “our trade-union friends are afraid the science of human relations may lead to it being used as a kind of anaesthetic.” While “[t]his is a fear that must be removed,” he conceded that the fear itself was not ungrounded. Politicians, industrial leaders, and assorted professional groups had tried “to use this science for their own ends,” transforming idealistic theories into “a series of utilitarian formulas.”⁴⁸ The task before the social scientists commissioned by the European Productivity Agency was to propagate social science theory and methods abroad in the service of economic cooperation and transatlantic progress—not on behalf of crass profit motives or the manipulation of workers.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “Human Relations in Industry, EPA Project No. 312, Part ‘A’—Florence Discussions,” folder “Human Relations in Industry,” box M1062, Bradford papers, AHAP.

⁴⁸ “Human Relations in Industry, EPA Project No. 312, Part ‘A’—Florence Discussions,” 3.

⁴⁹ For commentary on the flaws of the European Productivity Agency’s Vision, see Harold Leavitt, “On the Export of American Management Education,” *The Journal of Business* 30, no. 3 (July 1957): 153-61. Here Leavitt suggests that while the US has made steps toward transferring management techniques to Europe through programs like the European Productivity Agency and the Ford Foundation, some fundamental flaws remain in the transfer—namely that American trainers tend to overlook critical differences between American and European contexts, and possess fundamentally different conceptions of “good society” and “good business.” While Americans prioritize productivity in human relations training, Leavitt suggests, Europeans tend to associate human relations with social welfare, for they are more invested in social matters of family and class. They believe the businessman has a “social duty” to be good to employees and try to make them happy,” whereas American businessmen tend to advocate good

The esteemed social scientist Rensis Likert (of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research) echoed these sentiments in a talk entitled, "The Contributions of Human Relations Research to Improved Productivity," delivered in Florence to the same audience of scientists.⁵⁰ Here, he critiqued the prevailing philosophy of management in the US and abroad, which he characterized as the assumption that "when an organisation buys an employee's time it has the power and authority to control his behavior."⁵¹ Traditional management theory suggested that to achieve maximum productivity, work should be broken into simple, de-skilled tasks; employees should be closely monitored by supervisors and disciplined for insufficient productivity; and supervisors should avoid wasting time by talking to underlings about personal problems, or by training them for promotions. The best human relations practices, Likert argued, operated on exactly the opposite set of principles. They advocated group work rather than close hierarchical supervision, advancement and challenge rather than deskilled specialization, and the introduction of "human" qualities to the supervisor/employee relationship. Citing studies of thousands of workers, Likert celebrated the potential of cutting-edge human relations research to dramatically increase productivity worldwide.

As a foremost advocate of participation and group collaboration and democratic decision making, NTL exemplified Likert's celebrated mid-century human relations advances. In

February 1955, NTL Director Leland Bradford left for three months of consultation with the

human relations in terms of financial incentives. Leavitt suggests that Europeans are also fundamentally less open to democratic dialogue between superiors and underlings because their power structures tend to be more autocratic. "My thesis," he writes, "the evidence for which is entirely impressionistic, is that American management education in America is consistent with the values and attitudes of Americans—businessmen, educators, and the public at large—but that the same education in Europe conflicts with a large part of many European cultures and is even a somewhat revolutionary force." (Leavitt 153)

⁵⁰ "Human Relations in Industry, EPA Project No. 312, Part 'A'—Florence Discussions," 4.

⁵¹ Rensis Likert, "The Contributions of Human Relations Research to Improved Productivity," folder "Human Relations in Industry," box M1062, Bradford papers, AHAP, 6.

European Productivity Agency, for which he was headquartered in Paris and charged to work with representatives of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.⁵² In the summer of that year, the EPA sent twenty-eight Europeans from seven countries to the US for a ten-week training program under the supervision of the National Training Laboratories (with Lee Bradford, Gordon Lippitt, Bob Luke and Aieleen Waldie as project supervisors). Their stay involved a visit to the Rutgers Labor-Management School, a discussion of human relations methods at the University of Boston's Human Relations Center, a visit to the offices of the American Management Association, a tour of factories in Detroit, participation in a joint program sponsored by NTL and Michigan's Institute for Social Research, and finally, participation in one of NTL's T groups in Bethel, Maine.⁵³

In December 1955, NTL recruited a team of four social scientists to spend a year in Europe working with the EPA to develop industrial training programs in human relations, with an emphasis on "the development of action research," under the auspices of the International Cooperation Administration.⁵⁴ The group began by holding its first workshop for 227 French trainees in Paris, and went on to conduct conferences and workshops in Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, England, Holland, and Italy.⁵⁵ The NTL training team returned from after two months of work, immediately planning to return to Europe to conduct follow-up programs, and reporting "particularly successful" training activities in England and Holland.⁵⁶

⁵² *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 4 (January-February 1955), 1.

⁵³ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 6 (May-June 1955).

⁵⁴ *Human Relations Training News*, 1, no. 8 (September-October-November 1955).

⁵⁵ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 9 (April-May 1956). Note that the team involved in this project consisted of Lou Duenweg, Hal Leavitt, Don Nylen, Finn Taieth, and Herb Thelen.

⁵⁶ *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 1 (November-December 1956).

Throughout the 1950s, outside of work with the European Productivity Agency, NTL continued to export T-groups and other brands of human relations training to a number of other nations. Group dynamics work proved popular in India, where a member of the Ford Foundation (which sponsored many of NTL's activities abroad), celebrated NTL's "human relations insights" as "one of the most exportable commodities which the United States has developed."⁵⁷ NTL affiliates also introduced the organization's techniques in Venezuela⁵⁸, Iran⁵⁹, Puerto Rico, Japan,⁶⁰ Germany, and Thailand, where NTL associate Fred Peterson became an advisor on executive development and training to the government in Bangkok.⁶¹ The National Training Laboratories had announced itself as an international leader in management training in the period directly before its establishment as a management development leader in the US.

In 1954, during the meeting at which the National Training Laboratories board members decided to move their emphasis from "heterogeneous" labs to "homogenous" groupings, the chairman of the Advisory Committee and the president of the Ansul Chemical Company, Robert Hood (who had been part of the Austrian Productivity team), "urged us to develop an industrial

⁵⁷ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 2(October 1954).

⁵⁸ Fred Peterson of NTL took a permanent position with the Industrial Relations Department of the Creole Petroleum Corporation in Caracas, Venezuela. See *Human Relations Training News* (September-November 1955).

⁵⁹ NTL associates Eleanor and Arnold Lessard spent a year in Iran in 1957 to consult with the Iranian Oil Refining Company in Abadan. See *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 2 (January-February-March 1957).

⁶⁰ See *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 5 (November-December 1957): "Jyuji Misumi writes that 'interest in 'Human Relations' has been growing in Japanese Industries' and that Kyushy University now has an Institute for Group Dynamics" – which will have two divisions, one emphasizing "basic research" and the other emphasizing "Action research"; they expect to set up a National Training Center as well.

⁶¹ See *Human Relations Training News* 3, no. 1 (January-February 1959) for the announcement of his position, and a full article entitled "Human Relations Training in Thailand" in *Human Relations Training News* 4, no. 1 (April 1960). This article details Peterson's work with governors, education officers, agricultural officers, and health officials in service of establishing "free communication among personnel of different grades."

lab for middle management.”⁶² NTL’s newly formed Industrial Committee met in mid-1955 to begin planning an “Industrial Laboratory” for managers and executives; the members of the committee included Elbert Burr of Mondanto Chemical Co.; Robert Hood of Ansul Chemical Co.; Edward Malott of the American Management Association; Robert Samptons of A.T, Cearney and Co.; Alexander Winn of the Aluminum Company of Canada; and Richard Beckhard of Conference Counselors.⁶³ Their meeting ushered in a new phase of National Training Lab’s evolution and became responsible for the first period in which the institute became financially self-sustaining. With the emergence of the Management Work Conference in Developing Human Resources in 1956 and the Key Executive Conference on Executive Behavior in 1957 (a division that represented NTL’s concessions to corporate hierarchy), NTL established itself as one of the key forces of a new school of Human Relations that had emerged in the postwar period. Over the coming decades, NTL would—to the disappointment of some of its original founders—become synonymous with the idea of managerial sensitivity training and corporate effectiveness.

Two prominent postwar theorists of human relations affiliated with NTL in the early 1950s were employed as consultants for its first Management Work Conference in 1956. Chris Argyris and Douglas McGregor were two of the field’s best known advocates of participative management and self-actualization in the workplace. These two major organizational theorists not only served on the original committee that developed the plan for the first Management Work Conference (originally called the “Laboratory for Industrialists”), but continued to act as staff members on Management Work Conferences at NTL for years to come. Their influence

⁶² Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 97.

⁶³ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 6 (May-June 1955).

was evident in the rhetoric and aims surrounding the original Management Work Conference, which reflected the dominant themes of mid-century humanistic management theory.

Douglas McGregor, who has been discussed at length in Chapters 3 and 6, promoted what he called “Theory Y”: the principle that most workers crave challenge, participation, and creativity in the workplace, and that managers should design their practices in accordance with these principles. Yale professor Chris Argyris built a similar argument about the relationship between individuals, their superiors, and the organization at large in an oft-cited 1957 book entitled *Personality and Organization*.⁶⁴ Too often, he explained, human relations experts assumed that the best way to fuse an individual with the organization in which he worked was to pressure the individual to conform completely to the organization’s demands.⁶⁵ In so doing, they lost sight of the employee as an *individual* with his own needs and emotions—as person going through a continual “personalizing process” with self-expression at its core.⁶⁶

In *Personality and Organization*, Argyris invoked theories of child development to drive his point home. Consider the child’s path to maturity, he suggested, and the process of personality development. We are born into this world in a state of complete passivity, unaware of our surroundings; as we grow older, we become increasingly independent, active, and aware. We feel in charge of our environment.⁶⁷ Organizations had made a grave mistake in neglecting this basic fact of personality development. Too often, they addressed workers as children and

⁶⁴ Chris Argyris, “The Fusion of an Individual with the Organization,” *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 3 (June 1954): 267-272; Argyris, “Organizational Leadership and Participative Management,” *The Journal of Business* 28, no. 1 (January 1955): 1-7; Argyris, *Personality and Organization: The Conflict Between System and the Individual* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957); Argyris, “Some Unresolved Problems of Executive Development Programs,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 30, no. 1 (September 1956): 20-30; Argyris, “T-groups for Organizational Effectiveness,” *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1964): 60-74.

⁶⁵ Argyris, “The Fusion of an Individual and an Organization,” 267.

⁶⁶ Argyris, “The Fusion of an Individual and an Organization,” 267.

⁶⁷ Argyris, *Personality and Organization*, 50.

subscribed to several dominant assumptions about workers' character: that they are lazy, apathetic, uninterested, money-crazy, and wasteful; that they *need* to be dependent on their superiors, because nothing would get accomplished otherwise.⁶⁸ Argyris countered these dominant assumptions with Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization, which had recently been published in his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*.⁶⁹

For Argyris, the ultimate solution to the problem of insufficiently actualized employees lay in the theory of participative management.⁷⁰ Argyris asked, "How truly participative (i.e. spontaneous and free) can subordinates be if they are dependent on their leader? How much democracy can we have if the power lies in the one who leads and not in the ones who are led?"⁷¹ He argued that modern employers needed to decrease workers' passivity and dependence by giving them more control over their environments, more chances to participate in decision-making, more opportunities for mobility, and more chances to express "pent-up feelings ranging from outright aggression and hostility to passive internalization of tensions" that restricted productivity in the workplace.⁷²

NTL's Management Work Conference in Developing Human Resources was designed to promote anti-authoritarian qualities in managers. An October 1955 proposal for the workshop laid out two of its basic purposes: "To increase the awareness of managerial persons of the larger

⁶⁸ Argyris, *Personality and Organization*, 123.

⁶⁹ See Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1954. The term "self-actualization" actually originated with the German neurologist Kurt Goldstein, but Maslow brought it to the attention of culture at large. For more on Maslow's theories and practices, see Chapters 3 and 9 of this dissertation.

⁷⁰ Participative management was related to Peter Drucker's theory of "management by objectives," which he detailed in *The Practice of Management* (New York: Harper, 1954). According to this theory, managers and their subordinates would jointly define working goals and divide responsibilities.

⁷¹ Argyris, "Organizational Leadership and Participative Management," 2.

⁷² Argyris, *Personality and Organization*, 230.

contributions that individuals can make to the workplace situation” and—most notably—“to increase managers’ awareness of the human potential.”⁷³ These principles could have been taken directly from the management principles advocated by Argyris, McGregor, and their humanistic human relations comrades. The proposal also specified a focus on the group work that had become NTL’s trademark. Over the course of one-to-two weeks of workshops, participants in the management lab would attend daily three-hour T-groups containing approximately fifteen participants. In these groups, participants “would have the opportunity to learn through sharing their own knowledges and insights” and would learn to “diagnose the interpersonal relations of their discussion experience as a means of becoming more sensitive and diagnostic about human factors.”⁷⁴ The rest of each day’s itinerary would include presentations of current theories in industrial human relations; managerial skill practice sessions; case study discussions; and “Off-the-Record Groups” in which small clusters of six to eight people would casually gather to discuss their experiences in the labs and compare insights.⁷⁵ The proposal concluded by suggesting a range of staff members from institutions including MIT (where McGregor was serving as a professor); Yale University (where Chris Argyris was based); University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research and Research Center for Group Dynamics⁷⁶; and the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.

⁷³ “Industrial Lab—The Proposal for the Management Work Conference,” folder “NTL Program Committee Meeting, Oct 6-9, 1955,” box M1047, Bradford papers, AHAP; also republished in Bradford, *National Training Laboratories, Its History: 1947-1970*, 278.

⁷⁴ “Industrial Lab—The Proposal for the Management Work Conference.”

⁷⁵ “Industrial Lab—The Proposal for the Management Work Conference.”

⁷⁶ Note that NTL maintained close ties with the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research throughout first two decades of its existence. Ronald Lippitt, one of the original founders of NTL, was a fulltime staff member of the RCGD, which had moved from MIT to the University of Michigan after Lewin’s death, with institutional and personnel ties remaining strong. (In the early 1960s, there was a brief consideration of moving NTL’s headquarters to the University of Michigan as well. See Leland Brandford, “Summary of Notes,” folder “Correspondence of 1962,” Box M1047, Bradford papers, AHAP.) In the 1960s, NTL and the ISR collaborated on a joint project

NTL's first Management Work Conference was held for two weeks in February 1956 at Columbia University's Arden House, a conference center on a mountaintop west of the Hudson. Twenty-five delegates came to participate in the workshops and were greeted by an overabundance of staff—"as we had much anxiety about this first attempt in the industrial field we wanted to make sure of its success."⁷⁷ These participants represented companies like the Dow Chemical Company, Eli Lilly & Company, The Maytag Company, Prudential Insurance Company of America, Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, Detroit Edison, US Steel Corporation, and J. Walter Thompson Company, and SC Johnson and Sons.⁷⁸ Kenneth Benne and Herb Shepard oversaw the Conference's T-groups, which were—as outlined in the original proposal—integrated with more structured, organizationally-oriented exercises. In one role-playing exercise, group members were placed in charge of a hypothetical company named Arden Metal Products and instructed to figure out how to split up vacation time for their workers.⁷⁹ While T-groups were the centerpiece of training in the conference, participants also emerged with a solid grounding in the humanistic human relations principles of their day.

Participants learned in their introduction to the Management Work Conference that "[t]he basic purpose of management development is to bring about personal leadership growth rather

working with a large industrial firm, for which the ISR's Survey Research Center would be responsible for collecting survey research data, and NTL staff would be responsible for the "feeding back" of the research results to the company, and for discussing a plan of change. See *Human Relations Training News and Notes* 4, no. 1 (April 1960).

⁷⁷ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 105. According to *Human Relations Training News* of September-October-November 1955, the Conference was designed to accommodate 54 managers, suggesting that the first offering of the laboratory was undersubscribed. The original staff included Richard Beckhard, Ken Benne, Ed Burr, Rensis Likert, Ed Mallott, Herb Shepard, Alvin Zander, Lee Radford, and Gordon Lippitt.

⁷⁸ This list of companies was featured in the brochure for the Second Management Work Conference: "A Workshop for Developing Leadership Skills for More Effective Management Action," folder, "Brochures," box "Bradford Depot #2," Bradford papers, AHAP.

⁷⁹ "Summary of Project Design," folder "Miscellaneous 1956," Box M1047, Bradford papers, AHAP.

than the mere acquisition of some techniques or manipulative gimmicks,” and that “[s]uch growth and development of the individual executive, manager, or staff leader calls for greater self-understanding, insight, increased awareness of the causes of the group’s behavior, more sensitivity to the feelings and purposes of others and increased skill in working effectively with others in team situations.”⁸⁰ Kenneth Benne, one of NTL’s three original founders, delivered orientation remarks about the meaning of the conference, in which he contrasted what was about to ensue at Arden House to the past half a century’s management orthodoxy. Taylor’s scientific management, with its privileging of rationalization and economic self-interest above all else, had failed to fully address the problems of modern industry, which were fundamentally social in nature. Nor had the “‘sweetness and light’ or ‘Dale Carnegie’” approach to human relations delivered satisfactory solutions for the successful management of people, with its brushing over of major communication dilemmas with mere niceties.⁸¹

The experience of participants at the Arden House, Benne promised, would counter the unsuccessful management techniques of the past with immersion in deep and experiential methods that would push them to reexamine their behavior and beliefs and emerge with the kind of self-knowledge that *real* human relation skills depended on. Participants in the first Management Work Conference also heard remarks from Rensis Likert, by then one of the era’s leading advocates of participative management, who offered an overview of contemporary motivational research in multiple sessions over the course of the conference.

⁸⁰ “Report on the First Management Work Conference,” folder “First Management Work Conference in Developing Human Resources,” 1956, box M1056, Bradford papers, AHAP, 1.

⁸¹ Kenneth Benne, “Orientation: ‘What Does This Conference Mean?’ Digest of Remarks by Kenneth Benne,” folder “First Management Work Conference in Developing Human Resources,” 1956, box M1056, Bradford papers, AHAP.

Each day, after hearing an hour-long talk on the theme of organizational research, conference participants would retreat to their small T-groups for three hours of small-group discussion, upon which they would reflect for an hour at the end of each evening. The groups included NTL staff trainers functioning in the “non-directive” style of psychologist Carl Rogers, who would minimally intervene and absolutely refrain from pointing the group’s discussion in any particular direction. Early reports of the participants’ experiences of this non-directive leadership style revealed their ambivalence. One group craved more leadership and interventions from its leader, while the members of another group “resent any and all of his interventions as somehow threatening the autonomy and freedom of the group.”⁸² Another report suggested that the “‘power gap’ vacuum caused by the trainer retreating from the leadership role caused a feeling of insecurity and frustration” among group members, but when leadership was offered, “it was almost immediately discarded.”

In two groups, participants selected leaders from their own ranks to direct their activities: one was nominated by others, and another was self-appointed.⁸³ In another group, the trainer noted the development of “Fight-flight” tendencies:

At times a group acts as if it were in the presence of an enemy, either internal or external...Fight may take the form of interpersonal or inter-factional struggles, or may be directed into competition with other groups in the environment. Flight may take the form of various kinds of efforts to get away from some part of the group’s reality which it is frightening to face...[which] may take the form of making lists on the blackboard, talking at length about problems that are not too important, acting as if troublesome members are not present, etc.⁸⁴

⁸² “T-Group Assembly, Thursday, February 16, 1956,” folder “First Management Work Conference in Developing Human Resources,” 1956, box M1056, Bradford papers, AHAP.

⁸³ “T-Group Assembly, Tuesday, February 14, 1956.”

⁸⁴ “T-Group Assembly, Tuesday, February 14, 1956.”

Others noted patterns included treating the presence of an authority figure in the group as one of “awful and magical power,” which could inspire either submitting to the authority figure or rebelling against it. In other groups, members broke off into spontaneous “small subgroups” in which they would “[share] ‘secrets’ apart from the rest of group,” or displayed their “subgroup” membership through more subtly “‘affectionate’” displays.⁸⁵ After an early meeting of one T-group, members expressed overall dissatisfaction—with the lack of purpose in their groups, and with the incomprehensible interpretations provided by trainers—and pledged to discuss these issues at a larger assembly of all the conference’s T-groups.

In spite of initial ambivalence among participants, the first Management Development Workshop was deemed a success by its staff. NTL’s in-house newsletter celebrated it as “another step forward in pointing out the importance of human relations training in all fields,” and promised that the dates had already been set for a follow-up conference in the beginning of the next year.⁸⁶ External feedback also proved encouraging: *Business Week* had sent a writer and photographer to do a story on the industrial labs which proved “very helpful” to NTL, and input from the first management lab produced “a greater sense of movement and success” among staff in Bethel.⁸⁷ Because the Conference attracted participants from profit-making companies, the non-profit NTL charged fees greater than its usual and was able to break even on the pilot workshop.⁸⁸ By the time that the second Management Work Conference arrived in February 1957, the positive word of mouth helped attract almost three times as many participants, and the

⁸⁵ “T-Group Assembly, Tuesday, February 14, 1956.”

⁸⁶ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 9 (April-May 1956).

⁸⁷ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 99; 105.

⁸⁸ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 105.

staff expanded to officially include Chris Argyris and Douglas McGregor (who had participated in the early planning process).⁸⁹

In late 1956, some of the staff of the Management Workshop met and to discuss their concerns that “such a lab was not enough for change in a hierarchical organization” because it addressed managers, not the higher-ups who would be responsible for largescale organizational reform.⁹⁰ NTL’s Industrial Committee therefore produced a prototype for the Key Executive Conference on Executive Behavior, which would target vice-presidents and presidents of companies with a 10-day lab focused on T-groups and instructional sessions on executive behavior.⁹¹ The first Key Executive Conference, originally known as the “Conference on Executive Behavior and Organizational Effectiveness,” was held in Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, from September 4 - 14, 1957.⁹² Approximately 30 executives attended (a number limited by the organizers’ attempt to keep the conference intimate), representing a range of companies and positions, from the presidents of small and mid-sized companies to the vice presidents and managers of larger companies.⁹³ (In 1958, the roster of participants included the Director of Marketing and Director of Personnel from International Business Machines; the Vice President of the United Parcel Service; the chief engineer of the Boeing Airplane Company; the Vice President of Northwestern Bell Telephone Company; the President of Appleton Woolen Mills; the president of the National Citizens Council for Better Schools; and the Executive

⁸⁹ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 110.

⁹⁰ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 110.

⁹¹ *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 2 (January-February-March 1957) explains that the success of the second Management Work Conference was also an influence on the decision to expand into the executive realm of NTL’s services.

⁹² Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 110.

⁹³ *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 4 (June-July-August 1957).

Associate of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, among others.⁹⁴) The schedule for the Key Executive Conference, though shorter than that of the Management Work Conference, featured a nearly identical daily regimen: Each day began with presentations on leadership theory, followed by lengthy T-groups, followed by more presentations and Consultation groups—with a daily “cocktail hour” thrown in for good measure.⁹⁵

Over the next five years, the National Training Laboratories continued to experiment with laboratories for particular professions and populations, including recurring labs for Protestant Church Workers, Community Leaders, College Students, and Educational Professionals—but none of these annual offerings came close to the popularity swiftly achieved by the Management Work Conference and Key Executive Conference. In late 1956, the organization noted an “increased interest in industrial organizations,” 45 of which had already submitted applications for the next year’s management work conference.⁹⁶ The second Annual Management Work Conference included 67 industrial delegates, more than twice the previous year’s turnout. In 1959, NTL announced that “because of the overwhelming number of applications [approximately 100] to the fifth Management Work Conference, it has been necessary to schedule a second session of this laboratory for management,” to be held in January and February of 1960.⁹⁷ In the same year, NTL began offering an Advanced Management Training Work Conference for alumni of previous Management Work Conferences who craved

⁹⁴ “Roster of Participants and Staff,” folder “Conference on Executive Behavior and Workplace Effectiveness, September 2-13, 1958,” box 1052, Bradford papers, AHAP. Note that I have included the roster from the second Key Executive Conference because the roster from the first conference is not available in published sources or the archive.

⁹⁵ This schedule comes from “Report on the Conference on Executive Behavior and Workplace Effectiveness, September 2-13, 1958,” folder “Conference on Executive Behavior and Workplace Effectiveness, September 2-13, 1958,” box 1052, Bradford papers, AHAP.

⁹⁶ *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 1 (November-December 1956).

⁹⁷ *Human Relations Training News* 3, no. 5 (Nov-Dec 1959).

more T-group experience—an option that NTL claimed had developed out of “persistent demands by conference participants” for follow-up training.⁹⁸ By the spring of 1962, NTL was annually holding three sessions of the Key Executive Conferences and four sessions of the Management Work Conference.⁹⁹ In 1963, the NTL board voted to expand the Management Training Program to include a one-week Management Team Laboratory, which would focus on training people within teams and reducing communication blocks, and a one-week Organizational Change Laboratory, which would further the knowledge of people who had participated in previous labs.

At the same time, in the second half of the 1950s, NTL built partnerships with two of the country’s leading management associations: the Society for the Advancement of Management and the American Management Association (whose president had participated in the very first Management Work Conference). The Society for the Advancement of Management began collaborating with NTL on a series of four workshops in 1959, conducting a seminar called “Human Relations Training for Middle Management” in Chicago, Lake Arrowhead, Ca, and Asheville, North Carolina, and another called “Workshop in Leadership Development” in Milwaukee.¹⁰⁰ The two organizations continued to collaborate in coming years, offering roaming courses in management development that were simultaneously more compact and less inconvenient than the 2-week marathons at the Arden House.

With the American Management Association (AMA), NTL developed an Executive Action Course: a three-day clinic first held in New York City in February 1957 for members of

⁹⁸ *Human Relations Training News* 4, no. 2 (April 1960).

⁹⁹ *Human Relations Training News* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1962). Note that three sessions of the Management Work Conference took place at the Arden House, its traditional location, and one took place in Santa Fe in conjunction with the University of Texas Human Relations Training Lab.

¹⁰⁰ *Human Relations Training News* 3, no. 1 (January-February 1959); also *HRTN* 3, no. 2 (March-April-May 1959).

the AMA, attracting the heads of small companies and the personnel managers of large ones. The first clinic, entitled “Communication Skill Clinic: Dynamics of Executive Behavior,” introduced participants to new theories of human relations, the practice of role playing, and the T-group experience.¹⁰¹ The participant roster included representatives from General Electric’s Jet Engine Department; the personnel director of Carter’s Ink Company; a project manager from International Business Machines Corp.; a manager from Gillette Safety Razor Company; and the General Superintendent of Halter’s Pretzels, Inc.¹⁰² Leland Bradford, director of NTL, was the speaker for the event, offering lectures on the period’s leading theories of group development and executive communication.

The *New York Times* was on hand to cover the AMA’s Executive Action Course and produced a lengthy report that, while largely positive, would have struck NTL leaders as a misinterpretation of their core principles. Entitled, “Psychotherapy for Executives,” the article’s author, Edith Efron, described “a vogue for what might be described as personality schools for bosses.”¹⁰³ “Through play-acting, shutting them up and other unexpected devices,” she explained, “psychologists are showing bosses how to...draw more enthusiastic work out of their subordinates.” Efron chronicled the AMA session’s lengthy role-playing exercises, the participants’ pleading for feedback, and the thick air of anxiety and “chronic uncertainty” in the room. She rightly pointed to the workshop’s emphasis on participation, close listening, and psychologically based motivational techniques, and outlined a particular role-playing exercise in which a foreman gained greater understanding of a female worker he had pretended to be. Yet

¹⁰¹ “American Management Association Executive Action Course, February 1957, NYC,” folder “American Management Association Executive Action Course, February 1957, NYC,” box 231, NTL papers, AHAP.

¹⁰² “American Management Association Executive Action Course.”

¹⁰³ Edith Efron, “Psychotherapy for Executives,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1957, SM7- 44.

Efron made the mistake of calling the Management course “group therapy,” a label that NTL had spent its 10-year existence defining itself against. She detailed the “emotional ‘confessions’” that often followed effective role-playing sessions, with one “aggressive, startlingly high-salaried man” bursting out with, “‘Fellows, I came here for the same reason you did—to find out what was wrong with me. I know a lot of my associates avoid me, my subordinates dislike me. Why? Please tell me!’” Her account made it difficult to infer whether the primary value of the workshop was organizational or deeply personal and therapeutic.

Efron concluded that there was not yet sufficient evidence to determine the effectiveness of such seminars. She pointed to critics who claimed that the work was “part of the ‘psychological claptrap’ that has invaded American society” or “‘cow psychology’ designed to make employees into calmer and happier ‘organization men’” and bring the nation’s workforce “one more step in the direction of conformity and the death of American individualism.”¹⁰⁴ Yet she also pointed to convincing evidence suggesting that such methods of training helped people learn to better listen and understand another, surely important qualities for any manager to have. And she detailed the enthusiastic responses that many participants had to the experience—like the presidents of the New York Central and New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroads, who had pledged to send “whole rosters of their top executives to take the course”; or the president and publisher of the Cincinnati *Enquirer* who declared, “‘I’m going to send our executive editor, managing editor, city editor, Sunday editor, business and financial editors, advertising director, local advertising director...production manager and assistant production manager! It will make *The Enquirer* a happier place to work!’”¹⁰⁵ Whether or not scientific

¹⁰⁴ Efron, 44.

¹⁰⁵ Efron 44.

evidence could prove the effectiveness of what Efron skeptically labeled “permissive” or “laissez-faire” management training, its increasing popularity within corporate and industrial ranks was evident.

In the mid-1950s, NTL also began providing in-house consulting to corporations. According to a 1961 newsletter, “about fifteen companies are moving strongly in the direction of installing T-group training,” and NTL staff members had begun collaborating with personnel directors of corporations to help them establish in-house programs.¹⁰⁶ As early as 1954, Harry Kolb, the Manager of the Employee Relations Department at Esso Standard Oil and a veteran of one of NTL’s Human Relations laboratories, corresponded with NTL staff about the company’s attempt to “reexamine its principles of human relations.”¹⁰⁷ What began as an exchange of literature—Kolb sent two books he had recently produced for the company, entitled “The Way to Work Together” and “What is Employee Participation?”—morphed into a relationship that lasted through the 1960s, with NTL’s Herb Shepard (a professor at Case Western) working closely with Esso Refineries on more than a decade of Organizational Development programs.¹⁰⁸ By the summer of 1960, NTL staff members including Edward Schein and Warren Bennis were conducting two-week laboratories and follow-up workshops at Esso refineries across the country.¹⁰⁹

NTL’s work with General Mills also helped to legitimate its reputation within the corporate sphere. The collaboration began after General Mills had already embraced the rhetoric

¹⁰⁶ *Human Relations Training News* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1961).

¹⁰⁷ *Human Relations Training News* 1, no. 2 (October 1954).

¹⁰⁸ This information comes from my interview with Warner Burke on July 23, 2008 at Columbia University in New York, NY. Note that Shepard worked at Esso with Jane Mouton and Robert Blake, who later branched off to start their own company called “Managerial Grid.”

¹⁰⁹ *Human Relations Training News* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1960).

of the era's humanistic management theorists. General Mills' Annual Management Conference in 1955-6 featured a lecture on "Bottom-Up Management," which soon became General Mills' central management slogan. "The successful leader," its corporate literature declared,

needs to stimulate, motivate, and energize desirable action. He needs to sell ideas, not merely tell people what to do. The old authoritarian point of view of telling and commanding the individual assumed that subordinates owed it to the enterprise and their boss to do what they were told, when they were told. The modern manager, on the hand, recognizes that individuals will be better motivated and do better work if they understand why as well as what to do."

According to General Mills' managerial mission statement, effective managers "recognize and deal with each person as a unique individual," trying to understand each employee's distinctive perspective, and that he employ participation in the form of "group thinking, group feeling, and group action" to improve his enterprise.¹¹⁰ The entire management conference could have been interpreted as an endorsement of Douglas McGregor's "Theory Y," with its emphasis on democratic leadership and the development of subordinates through group participation.

The next year, In September 1957, on a lake North of Minneapolis, NTL staff members including Leland Bradford, Warren Bennis, and Gordon Lippitt led the General Mills Inc. Management Development Conference Program.¹¹¹ Their 10-day visit with the company combined human relations laboratory training with particular training in conference leadership and featured a synthesis of the NTL approach with General Mills' preexisting commitment to participatory practices.¹¹² (One of the stated aims of the training was to "clarify and practicality

¹¹⁰ "The Importance of Leadership and Good Human Relations in Bottom-Up Management," General Mills Management Development Conference Training Materials, 1955-56, folder and box unknown, General Mills Corporate Archive.

¹¹¹ *Human Relations Training News* 2, no. 5 (November-December 1957).

¹¹² See "Management Development Conference Program, General Mills 1957," folder "Management Development Conference Program, General Mills 1957," box 231, NTL papers, AHAP.

and workability of the General Mills philosophy of Bottom-Up Management.”)¹¹³ The training sessions reflected twin commitments to organizational and individual growth, promising managerial effectiveness along with the “increase of individual awareness of the need for and methods of self development.”¹¹⁴ The Conference featured sessions on organizational theory, analysis of day-to-day management planning at General Mills, T-groups, and workshop sessions on the more general problems and tasks facing managers. It also required participants to read examples of democratic management theory, fill out worksheets summarizing their learning, and report on their learning to the larger group.

By the end of the 1950s, in sum, NTL had made a name for itself in the world of corporate management training. In addition to work with Esso, General Mills, and management associations, NTL had worked closely in organizational consultation with the Champion Paper Company, Standard Oil of NJ, the Radio Corporation of America, the Ansul Chemical Company, and the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company. NTL also began leading annual workshops for a group of executives under 45 called the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) beginning in 1957, and, in 1958, began leading workshops exclusively for YPO Wives who would “gather to look at their role problems in group and community life.”¹¹⁵

The role of the corporate wife had become prominent in cultural discourse by the end of the 1950s. Novels like *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, and *Revolutionary Road* chronicled suburban marriages in which the wives of white-collar workers who toiled in domestic obscurity

¹¹³ “Leaders Guide Introduction: 1957-58 Management Development Conference Program,” folder “Management Development Conference Program, General Mills 1957,” box 231, NTL papers, AHAP.

¹¹⁴ “Leaders Guide Introduction: 1957-58.”

¹¹⁵ See *Human Relations Training News* (November-December 1957) for announcement of the first YPO Wives program in 1958.

and dissatisfaction.¹¹⁶ Iconic sociological treatises by William Whyte (*The Organization Man*) and David Riesman (*The Lonely Crowd*) depicted a new model of corporate man who gave all of himself to his work, leaving little personality for the domestic sphere.¹¹⁷ Six years before Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, Vance Packard detailed the pressures that organizational life placed on corporate wives in *The Hidden Persuaders*. He outlined a world in which a “man’s home life” could be “scrutinized to see if it conformed to the best interests of the ‘team’ or company.”¹¹⁸ He elaborated, “Important men may not be recommended for higher priced jobs because the wives may be too flirtatious or she may not drink her cocktails too well, or she may be an incorrigible gossip. Investigations in this respect are quite thorough.”¹¹⁹ The “sizing up” of wives in the hiring process was just the first step in their transformation into corporate accessories. With her husband situated in his job, the wife was expected to accommodate the needs of his job above all else. A *Fortune* article from 1951 stated that a wife should be “highly adaptable...highly gregarious,” and comfortable with the fact that “her husband belongs to the corporation.”¹²⁰ A *Harvard Business Review* article of the same era suggested that the mid-century wife of an executive “must not demand too much of her husband’s time or interest.”¹²¹ NTL’s workshop for YPO wives addressed them simultaneously

¹¹⁶ Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Arbor House, 1955); Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road*, 2nd Vintage Contemporaries ed. (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2000).

¹¹⁷ David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd; a Study of the Changing American Character*, Studies in National Policy 3 (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1955); William Hollingsworth Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).

¹¹⁸ Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York, D. McKay Co., 1957), 197.

¹¹⁹ Packard 198.

¹²⁰ Packard citing *Fortune Magazine*, 198.

¹²¹ Packard quoting a Harvard Business Review study of 8300 executives made by Lloyd Warner and James Abegglen. Packard 198.

as appendages of their executive husbands and as individuals with needs for expression and growth.

The YPO wives' training in Minneapolis, like that of their "young president" husbands, included exposure to theories of leadership and participation, with increased attention to the function of "roles" in social groups (one paper read by the group was entitled "The Effect of Group Pressures Toward Uniformity").¹²² The wives also participated in sensitivity training, which 30 of 37 women rated as "excellent" in their final evaluations. One trainer later reflected:

[The wives] have a good deal of intellectual curiosity and behave in accordance with a self-image of the highly moral middle-aged woman. They seek others' approval... These are normal, able women who are thrust into a role fraught with many difficulties. Perhaps their most difficult common quest is to discover how to be themselves—how to become perceived as human beings, not as stereotypic 'woman,' 'executive's wife,' or 'lady of the manor.' The characteristic about them which encouraged me most was their willingness to look at themselves and their role objectively and explore solutions.¹²³

A private letter from one of the seminar's trainers described the participants as "ladies, with a high level of common assumptions about how ladies should behave." The trainer voiced regrets that he was not able to "do too much pushing" in the three sessions he had with them, and that the session participants resisted engaging in the level of conflict typical of productive T-groups. That said, the level of personal disclosure the trainer witnessed convinced him that "beneath the polished surface of every president's wife is a sensitive, frail human being who wants to be accepted and understood. And I believe they emerged from the experience with a little more self-acceptance."¹²⁴ At the end of the experience, 49 of the workshop's participants purchased

¹²² "Report on Young President Wives Seminar, Highland Park, Michigan, January 18-22, 1959," folder "Young President Wives Seminar," box 237, NTL papers, AHAP.

¹²³ "Report on Young President Wives Seminar."

¹²⁴ Letter, Malcolm Knowles to Gordon Lippitt, January 1959, folder "Young Presidents Organization," box 237, NTL papers, AHAP.

“owl charms” to commemorate the experience with NTL. Their experience well represented the delicate balance that NTL tried to maintain between the therapeutic and the skills-based, the organizational and the personal, at the end of the 1950s.

Management journals of the mid- to late-fifties took note of new opportunities in management training, which appeared as the logical tool for the implementation humanistic postwar management theories. Though programs in managerial sensitivity training were still in their early stages, some observers predicted that they would generate a new brand of self-aware, emotionally expressive, and eminently communicative manager.¹²⁵ A 1955 *Harvard Business Review* article about “Managers in Transition” (co-authored by a researcher affiliated with NTL’s west coast cousin, the Western Training Laboratories) presented a fictional reenactment of a T-group that displayed just how transformative managerial training could be.¹²⁶ It chronicled the fictional proceedings of managers at the Comet Television Company, where an outside management consultant (“Marv”) has recently reported some “disturbing ‘interpersonal problems’ among the management group”—observations which he had made based on “few facts, only feelings...just some tenuous impressions about people not working well together.”¹²⁷ Mike, the plant superintendent, is incredulous upon first hearing Marv’s diagnosis, and resentful of his line of questioning: inquiries about the relationships between individual staff members, the group dynamic at staff meetings, and the one that “finally set him off...’Are you concerned with

¹²⁵ See Argyris, “Some Unresolved Problems of Executive Development Programs”; Katz, “Human Relations Skills Can Be Sharpened”; “A Brand-New Breakthrough in Management Development,” *Factory* (July 1959).

¹²⁶ Verne J. Kellejian, Irving R. Weschler, and Robert Tannenbaum, “Managers in Transition,” *Harvard Business Review* 33, no. 4 (July/August 1955): 55-64.

¹²⁷ Kellejian et al. 56.

how your people feel?”¹²⁸ Mike “barely suppressed a surge of violent anger” at Marv’s incomprehension of “the cold realities of the business world” and resentfully concludes that “He wanted to make a tea party out of a well-ordered business.”¹²⁹

What followed in the hypothetical T-group was a series of revelations. Mike realizes that “[w]hen Bill manipulated Joe, Joe manipulated twenty people,” and “so it went in an endless, cumulative circle.”¹³⁰ He ultimately agrees to Marv’s suggestion that he institute a sensitivity training in his plant, and the men begin to meet in T-groups. Mike’s staff exhibits some reticence at first, but by the time of the fifth meeting, they’re ready to open up. Rod explains that Mike has a habit of cutting off Bill and Art before they’re finished speaking. As the men pour forth with additional examples, something starts to click into place:

Mike was gradually becoming aware that he was having a negative impact on his staff, and that some people felt that he did not give them a chance to express their feelings. But while intellectually willing to look at this, Mike wasn’t really prepared to accept it emotionally.¹³¹

Mike’s resistance gradually decreases as he watches his staff members communicate their feelings for the first time in his experience as supervisor (Rod: “Art, you really get me sometimes! I’d like to know for once—how *do* you feel about our staff meetings.” Art: “Gosh,

¹²⁸ Kellejian et al. 57.

¹²⁹ Kellejian et al. 57. It is worth noting that gendered discourse abounds—both implicitly and explicitly—throughout much of the literature on sensitivity training (as this article’s reference to a “tea party” suggests). One of the fundamental challenges of corporate T-groups was to encourage men to prize “emotional learning” over rational thought, and to listen to people in order to develop more intimate relations with them. In George E. Berkley’s *The Administrative Revolution: Notes on the Passing of the Organization Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), Berkley reports on an “interesting study” which showed that “those members of a business school class who ranked near the top of the class in a test of ‘masculine’ patterns of interest met with less success in large organizations than those whose interests were more ‘feminine.’ ‘Masculine interests’ refer, among other things, to aggressiveness and power seeking. ‘Feminine interests’ are characterized by more desire for interpersonal relationships, etc.” (87). In Berkley’s manifesto, both McGregor’s Theory Y and the T-group appear as key players in the move towards more expressive, “feminine” management patterns.

¹³⁰ Kellejian et al. 58.

¹³¹ Kellejian et al. 62.

Rod, I didn't mean to get you upset. What I just said is how I really *do* feel about our staff meetings.”¹³²).

By the time Comet has reached its sixth and final T-group gathering, it is clear to everyone that the process has had a profound effect on Mike and his sub-team of managers:

The barriers were falling. The men were learning to listen and talk to each other—not about things out in space, but about themselves, their aspirations, their fears and feelings for each other. They were learning to be sensitive—to their own needs, and to the needs of others. They were seeing each other differently...They were beginning to accept each other, not for what they would have liked each other to be, but for what they in fact were—with all their strengths and shortcomings...¹³³

In conclusion, the article's authors explain, “There was a different spirit emerging ... The top management at Comet was on its way to becoming a team.”¹³⁴

In a 1957 Harvard Business Review article entitled “Human Relations Skills *Can* Be Sharpened,” Robert L. Katz lamented the sorry state of human relations training programs and summed up their problematic approaches in four common models: the : the “tell-‘em, sell-‘em approach,” the “fire-fighter approach,” the “actor approach,” the “nice guy approach.”¹³⁵

Together, these models provided managers with information about human behavior and taught them how to *act* nice, but they failed to address the key elements of the new managerial consciousness: sensitivity and self-awareness, the ingredients of truly meaningful and effective communication. Katz saluted the T-group method of managerial training for its ability to penetrate the emotional cores of its subjects. The ideal instructor, he explained, understood that he should “neither tell the participants how they *should* feel, nor ridicule them for how they *do*

¹³² Kellejian et al. 63.

¹³³ Kellejian et al. 64.

¹³⁴ Kellejian et al. 64.

¹³⁵ Katz, “Human Relations Skills *Can* Be Sharpened,” 62.

feel. He must demonstrate by his behavior that he is genuinely trying to understand their feelings and to help them clarify those feelings.”¹³⁶ He recognized a common skepticism toward sensitivity training techniques (““What a waste of time! We’re talking around in circles and not getting anywhere...””) but reassured readers that “This kind of learning is never easy. It is terribly upsetting for a man to find out that he is not as good as he thought he was.”¹³⁷ Katz concluded his article with an assessment of the current state of sensitivity training. It was still in its early stages, he explained, and results on its effectiveness were not yet conclusive, but the programs had ultimately proved successful and were promising for the future of human relations training.

The first monograph on the T-group experience, *Inside a Sensitivity Training Group*, was distributed in 1958 as a product of the Human Relations Research Group at UCLA’s Institute of Industrial Relations (and republished for a wider audience in 1959).¹³⁸ The book by Irving Weschler and Jerome Reisel, according to Leland Bradford, was “widely read, thereby adding greatly to public awareness of the field.”¹³⁹ It presented the story of one training group—eighteen men and six women—who began meeting in 1956 under Weschler’s leadership at UCLA, which was emerging as a West Coast hub of industrial sensitivity training.¹⁴⁰ Most of the male participants were enrolled in the School of Business Administration at UCLA; most of the women were studying nursing, English, or Physical Education. Their experience was

¹³⁶ Katz 63.

¹³⁷ Katz 65.

¹³⁸ Irving R. Weschler and Jerome Reisel, *Inside a Sensitivity Training Group* (LA: UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations, 1959).

¹³⁹ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 117.

¹⁴⁰ See Laura Kim Lee, *Changing Selves, Changing Society: Human Relations Experts and the Invention of T Groups, Sensitivity Training, and Encounter in the United States, 1938-1980* (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002).

documented using tape recordings of each session, Weschler's post-session interviews, and a set of "trainee diaries." Over the course of thirty meetings in four months, the trainees recorded their reactions to their daily T-group experiences (which were themselves later analyzed by Weschler's staff according to quantitative scales of "emotionality" and sensitivity).¹⁴¹

Though Weschler asserts early in the account that "our method of approach... is essentially clinical," his report tells a different story.¹⁴² More than anything, it chronicles the moments of existential anomie, raw hostility, and therapeutic ecstasy that characterize the group's quest for authentic expression. Weschler explained at the outset of his monograph that the aim of sensitivity training was "to help the participants *feel* differently—and not merely *think* differently."¹⁴³ The T-group was a fundamentally emotional and "deeply personal" experience that "stirs and prods people into taking a good, close look at themselves and at their relations with others." The average sensitivity training session could result in "spasmodic peaks of excitement, even exhilaration... inevitably followed by long periods of apathy and frustration, characterized by expressions of futility, disgust, and anger."¹⁴⁴

Weschler's account conveyed this array of emotions as embodied by two main camps that form within his group: the believers and the non-believers. The T-group began on a note of disorder and frustration, due to Weschler's determinedly non-participative presence. (A participant named Frances reported, "My feelings during and immediately after the first hour of class period were confusion, misgiving, and depression").¹⁴⁵ As the sessions progressed, the

¹⁴¹ Weschler and Reisel 7.

¹⁴² Weschler and Reisel 12.

¹⁴³ Weschler and Reisel 1.

¹⁴⁴ Weschler and Reisel 1.

¹⁴⁵ Weschler and Reisel 13.

group fruitlessly turned to Weschler for guidance as he maintained his non-authoritarian stance. As they continued, however, things clicked into place for some participants. “Could it be that I am shielding myself in the group in such a way that no one present can get to know me or understand me?,” a man named Pete asked himself. “I think I will try to give more of myself to the group and see what effect it has on their getting to know me.”¹⁴⁶ A few sessions later, Larry announced, “Today I finally expressed my true feelings” and Lew rejoiced, “*At last, at last!* ... We are beginning to tell how we affect each other... Max told me that I sometimes go on and on, and bore him. I can see his point. I have not been as effective as I would like to be. We are making progress...”¹⁴⁷

At the same time, Weschler encountered his share of skeptics. A group of men that he and other groupmates labeled “the blockers” refused to talk about their feelings in a productive way. Duke reported, “I cringe whenever these psychological papers are being passed out... It seems to me you can’t even breathe without some idiot investigating why you do it. I am rapidly developing a temper restraint in this group lest I smash a few people in an emotional outburst.”¹⁴⁸ At some point, the collisions between the feelers and the non-feelers pushed Jean to the end of her rope:

The hostility in the group has at times made me so uncomfortable that, with external pressures from work and home, I have felt a dread of coming to class. It takes a certain amount of courage and intestinal fortitude to face a hostile group... It is any wonder that there are days when I feel a much needed rest in bed or at Palm Springs would be so much better than this badgering which gives no indication of anything, but ‘yacking’ to hear oneself ‘yack’!¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Weschler and Reisel 35.

¹⁴⁷ Weschler and Reisel 61; 87.

¹⁴⁸ Weschler and Reisel 38.

¹⁴⁹ Weschler and Reisel 51.

By the end of the group, while some members had joyously learned to express themselves and intuit others' feelings, others—like Dick—surmise that “If an outsider had come in to observe us and had been told we had been meeting for the last fifteen weeks to study and learn about group dynamics, I’m afraid he’d have said that we hadn’t learned a thing.”¹⁵⁰

One of the participants in Weschler’s *Inside a Sensitivity Training Group*, a man named Larry, offered a prescient lament. He bemoaned, “We still don’t have the feeling of ‘we-ness’ which is supposed to be present in groups. Everyone is working toward his own individual goal and suppressing the group... even though we have many hypocrites who claim they are here to learn to solve group problems”¹⁵¹ This concern reflected a cultural shift taking place in NTL in the late 1950s and 1960s. On the one hand, the 1960s were a period of great growth for NTL, and its management labs were a tremendous success, with dozens of industry journal articles and books to prove it. On the other hand, the decade witnessed a divergence from some of the original ideals on which NTL was founded. T-groups began to seem less concerned with Bradford, Benne, and Lippitt’s original emphasis on “democratic morality” and “we-ness,” and increasingly attached to the language of personal growth. Within the management community, T-groups heightened their emphasis on the individual while ostensibly serving the needs of the organization.

According to T-group historian Kurt Back, it became clear in the 1960s that “sensitivity training had arrived.”¹⁵² Over the course of the decade, NTL experienced unprecedented growth

¹⁵⁰ Weschler and Reisel 116.

¹⁵¹ Weschler and Reisel 75.

¹⁵² Back 70.

and publicity; by 1967, 50,000 people had participated in its laboratories, and innumerable institutions had developed their own in-house programs of laboratory training.¹⁵³ By the end of the sixties, NTL had established divisions in Washington, D.C.; Kansas City, Missouri; Portland, Oregon; Salt Lake City; Cedar City, Utah; and Lake Arrowhead, CA.¹⁵⁴ In 1964, Bradford, Benne, and Jack Gibb published the first book describing the history and practices of NTL, *T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method*, whose publisher hoped it would sell 2500 copies. By 1970, it had sold 25,000 copies and gone into multiple editions.¹⁵⁵ From 1964-5, two of NTL's longtime staff members, Chirs Argyris and Alfred Marrow, participated in an extensive Organizational Development program (using T-groups) in the US State Department, a project that earned NTL deep institutional credibility in the mid-1960s.¹⁵⁶ Around the same time, NTL's advisory board discussed the possibility of publishing an institutional journal; the quarterly *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* debuted on January 1, 1965 and became an oft-cited reference within the field.¹⁵⁷

NTL made one of its greatest leaps when, in 1966, it gained independence from the National Education Association, so that, while it continued to receive annual grants of \$80,000, it was able to operate as an independent institute.¹⁵⁸ A change of name indicated the transition

¹⁵³ Robert Golembiewski, "The 'Laboratory Approach' to Organization Change: Schema of a Method," *Public Administration Review* 27, no. 3 (September 1967): 211-221.

¹⁵⁴ See Howard 261.

¹⁵⁵ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 161. See also Leland Bradford, Jack Gibb, and Kenneth Benne, eds., *T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method* (New York: Wiley, 1964).

¹⁵⁶ See Alfred Jay Marrow, *Making Waves in Foggy Bottom; How a New and More Scientific Approach Changed the Management System at the State Department* (Washington: NTL Institute, 1974); Laura Kim Lee also devotes a chapter to the State Department's experiments in *Changing Selves, Changing Society*.

¹⁵⁷ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 158.

¹⁵⁸ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 132.

with its re-christening as the NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science in 1967 (the name has remained such till this day). In the meantime, NTL's techniques continued to spread throughout the world—including use by Israeli kibbutzim, Puerto Rican psychologists, Australian Human Relations experts, Colombian businessmen, and South American business schools in all countries except for Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay. *Le T-group* even entered popular parlance in France, where the method was used in prisons.¹⁵⁹ By the end of the decade, nearly 500 centers belonged to NTL's network, and its number of professional staff members had nearly doubled from 1963.¹⁶⁰

The sixties specifically marked the heyday of *corporate* sensitivity training, in which NTL witnessed a “large explosion of consultation with industry” and watched its techniques spread to corporations around the country, used in consultation with NTL and also in in-house corporate programs.¹⁶¹ In fall of 1961, NTL introduced a program for specialists in what it called “Organizational Development,” the field of trainers who crafted management development training programs and helped organizations strategize long-term planning. The program guaranteed that NTL would be a hub not just for the training of managers, but for the training of the people who trained managers, whether as independent consultants or in-house specialists.¹⁶² These forays into organizational work proved to be a major financial boon for NTL for much of the 1960s. Until NTL established its Presidents Labs for corporate leaders in 1964, its annual budget had been \$300,000. Afterwards, thanks to the influx of corporate heads,

¹⁵⁹ Back 70; Howard 256.

¹⁶⁰ Paul C. Buchanan, “Laboratory Training and Organization Development,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (September 1969): 466.

¹⁶¹ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 115.

¹⁶² See *Human Relations Training News* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1961).

the budget increased tenfold.¹⁶³ Its Key Executive labs and Management Workshops continued to attract greater and greater numbers of participants: by 1967, NTL was annually conducting two Presidents' Labs, five Key Executive labs, and four Management Work Conferences. The same year, its Midwest Laboratory for Executives attracted 100 delegates.¹⁶⁴

When Jane Howard wrote her book on the encounter movement at the end of the decade, she conceded that industry was “one of the most receptive and adventurous patrons of sensitivity techniques,” in spite of T-groups’ increasingly countercultural reputation.¹⁶⁵ When Kurt Back published his own history of the encounter movement in 1970, he noted the T-group’s “particular appeal to the high echelons of management” and explained, “sensitivity programs have become so widespread that that the companies that have used them are too numerous to list.”¹⁶⁶ Bradford reflected in his own history of NTL that “In this country, possibly in Canada, certainly in India and Japan, business and industry... have made greater systematic use of lab methods than perhaps any other segment of our society.”¹⁶⁷ By the end of the 1960s, NTL had engaged in continued training work with Esso and the Hotel Corporation of America, and expanded its repertoire to include Dow Chemical, Detroit Edison, DCA Food Industries, Inc., Union Carbide, International Business Machines, TRW Systems, Inc.,¹⁶⁸ and the Pillsbury Company.

¹⁶³ Back 169.

¹⁶⁴ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 174.

¹⁶⁵ Howard 176.

¹⁶⁶ Back 71; 161.

¹⁶⁷ Bradford, *National Training Laboratories*, 203. Bradford mentions a range of corporations that had used T-groups by this time: One of the first major breakthroughs came with the program at the Esso Baton Rouge Refinery; his other success stories included Con Edison, Dupont, General Electric, General Mills, Maytag, Standard Oil, United Airlines, and the United Parcel Service.

¹⁶⁸ For more on the humanistic experiments of TRW Systems, Inc. and its president, Sheldon Davis, see Sheldon A. Davis, “An Organic Problem-Solving Method of Organizational Change,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1967): 3–21; John Paul Jones, “Shel Davis Speaks Out,” *The Journal of Applied*

One of the companies that most famously experimented with T-groups was American Airlines, a corporation so committed to behavioral science training that it had developed an in-house “Managerial Learning Laboratory.”¹⁶⁹ The president who assumed leadership over the airline in 1968 deemed the organization too tightly structured and insufficiently flexible, so set about finding ways to create a “democratic” atmosphere that emphasized both participation in the work place and “satisfying experience” on an individual level.¹⁷⁰ Having already participated in organizational development with a company called Managerial Grid (an offshoot of the National Training Laboratories run by Robert Mouton and Jane Blake¹⁷¹) in 1965, the new president of the company appreciated the benefits of sensitivity training but regretted the “minimal return” of offsite training.¹⁷²

The American Airlines Managerial Learning Laboratory would introduce the benefits of group laboratory learning to its own corridors, offering a week-long seminar run by the company’s director of training and development (along with seven in-house “organizational

Behavioral Science 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1967): 22–24; Daniel L. Kegan, “Organizational Development: Description, Issues, and Some Research Results,” *The Academy of Management Journal* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 1971): 453–464; F. J. Roethlisberger, “Shel Davis’ Trip to the Moon,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1967): 25–28. Laura Kim Lee has also devoted a chapter to TRW Systems, Inc. in *Changing Selves, Changing Society*.

¹⁶⁹ For more on American Airlines work in management development, see “Developing the Model Manager: A Report on American Airlines Training Activities During 1967,” box “26: Business Groups,” Jane Howard papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts. In this document, American Airlines couched its management training in the context of rapid technological change: “Because of rapid growth and technological change,” it explained, “we also have needs for newer and more advanced models for organizing the ways in which we do our work.”

¹⁷⁰ Rush, *Behavioral Science; Concepts and Management Application*, 72.

¹⁷¹ For more on the Managerial Grid, see Robert R. Blake, *Building a Dynamic Corporation Through Grid Organization Development*, Addison-Wesley Series; Organization Development (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1969); Robert R. Blake, *Group Dynamics* (Gulf Pub. Co, 1961); Robert Rogers Blake, *The Managerial Grid: Key Orientations for Achieving Production Through People* (Houston, Tex: Gulf Pub. Co, 1964); Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, *Diary of an Organizational Development Man* (Gulf Publishing Co, 1976); Robert Rogers Blake and Jane Srygley Mouton, *Personality Factors Associated with Individual Conduct in a Training Group Situation* (Dallas: Human Relations Training Lab., Southern Methodist Univ. 1956).

¹⁷² Rush 73.

development” specialists) to fifteen to twenty managers of equivalent rank at a time.¹⁷³ The new program adopted the language of Kurt Lewin, promising to “‘unfreeze’ old attitudes and behavior patterns...and ‘refreeze’” new ones, offering each participant “an increased sensitivity to his own behavior and the behavior of others.”¹⁷⁴

The literature surrounding the American Airlines Laboratory celebrated self-awareness, candor, collaboration, and group development. It even replicated the NTL ideal of the “cultural island” by transporting participants to an unfamiliar location near corporate headquarters, so that they would not be distracted by usual work duties or commitments. Many seminars began with the trainer’s announcement of an exercise called “non-verbal encounter”: “‘You have ten minutes to get to know each other through any means you like, with one exception: you may not speak.’”¹⁷⁵ Other exercises included the “Fishbowl” exercise, during which one group conducted its “group processes” while other teams observed in a circle around it, and then offered feedback.¹⁷⁶ In another, the trainer schooled participants in Kurt Lewin’s theory of “force field analysis” and then had members answer questions to help them assess the various “force fields” in their own lives.¹⁷⁷ By 1969, 500 middle managers had participated in American Airlines’ Managerial Learning Laboratory, and had “unanimously report[ed] improved work habits and interpersonal relationships.” Their bosses, on the other hand, assessed the results of training in either “negative or lukewarm” terms, reporting minimal concrete improvements in job

¹⁷³ Rush 74.

¹⁷⁴ Rush 74.

¹⁷⁵ Rush 75.

¹⁷⁶ Rush 76.

¹⁷⁷ Rush 80.

performance.¹⁷⁸ Still, as of 1969, the firm's top executives remained committed to the practice of laboratory training because they insisted it raised hard-to-quantify levels of trust, candor, and participation in the organization.

In addition to flourishing in the corporate sphere, sensitivity training began making more and more appearances in business school curricula in the 1960s. One of the most successful experiments, which has been chronicled by Laura Kim Lee, took place at the University of California, Los Angeles Graduate School of Business Administration.¹⁷⁹ As has been noted earlier in this chapter, NTL spawned a west-coast offshoot called the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development (WTL) in the early 1950s. From the beginning of its existence in 1952, WTL eschewed the large-scale democratic and social visions of early NTL work, focusing more on "emotional growth as a workplace goal" before eventually promoting "emotional growth as a life goal," and an end in itself.¹⁸⁰ Its staff members tended to be psychologists oriented more toward the experiences of individuals than the dynamics of groups, and their work tended to resemble group therapy more than NTL's early work on the east coast. For the first several years of its existence, WTL held its workshops in Idyllwild, a "small, artistic mountain community" 140 miles outside Los Angeles, near Palm Springs.¹⁸¹

The first leader of WTL, a man named Paul Sheats (who had been a T-group trainer during NTL's first Human Relations Training Laboratory), was a professor of Education and Associate Director of the Extension Division at UCLA, and he helped forge critical ties between NTL's west-coast cousin and the university. The UCLA campus soon spawned a network of

¹⁷⁸ Rush 81.

¹⁷⁹ See Laura Kim Lee, Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁰ Lee 162.

¹⁸¹ Lee 168.

programs advocated by business-school academics. T-groups became a mainstay of the undergraduate business school curriculum and of UCLA's workshops for managers and assorted professionals. These programs were largely sponsored by the university's Institute for Industrial Relations and University Extension (its adult education program) and were later fortified by research by the Business School's Human Relations Research Group.¹⁸² The professors of the Graduate School of Business Administration were particularly pivotal in the promotion of sensitivity training on UCLA's campus, and in the advocacy of T-groups as a technique to be used for organizational rather than social change.¹⁸³

At the UCLA School of Business Administration, a man named Robert Tannenbaum, Professor of Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, became pioneer of sensitivity training in the business school context.¹⁸⁴ In 1951, he received funding from the Office of Naval Research to conduct leadership research, and he used these funds to establish the Human Relations Research Group with Irving Weschler and Fred Massarisk (both NTL affiliates and UCLA professors) with whom he joined the fledgling staff of the Western Training Laboratory upon its opening in 1952. These men forged a continuing dialogue between the socially oriented mission of early NTL, the more therapeutic orientation of the WTL, and the more pragmatic aims of UCLA's business school curriculum.¹⁸⁵ Tannenbaum first introduced themes of humanistic and democratic management during a Personnel Management and Industrial

¹⁸² Lee 163.

¹⁸³ Lee 164.

¹⁸⁴ Lee 166. See also Robert Tannenbaum with David Russell, *Bob Tannenbaum: An Unfolding Life* (Los Angeles: Tannenbaum, 1996).

¹⁸⁵ Lee 167.

Relations seminar series that he initiated at the school.¹⁸⁶ In the mid-1950s, he and his colleagues began integrating T-group and experiential group work into UCLA's curriculum, with the specific aim of training and developing managers. "It has been found," he wrote in a paper with Irving Weschler, "that the supervisors who are more sensitive have more efficient working groups. The key lies in being keenly sensitive, accepting and understanding of other people. These kinds of individuals are the really mature individuals. They have worked through their own personal problems and are not threatened by others."¹⁸⁷

Along with industrial psychiatrist and WTL staff member Marvin Klemes, Tannenbaum's colleague Irving Weschler soon began offering a workshop that they first entitled "Skill Practice for Supervisors," renamed "Sensitivity Training for Managers" in 1955 or 1956.¹⁸⁸ According to Weschler, sensitivity could best be understood as "the understanding of another (being empathetic) and predicting how a personal will act in a variety of circumstances."¹⁸⁹ This program soon expanded within the larger offerings of the UCLA Extension Program, attracting increasing participants and profits and expanding its number of workshop locations exponentially. In 1956, Klemes and Tannenbaum introduced new workshop called "Sensitivity Training for Top Executives" for presidents, vice presidents, and department heads. At the same time, "Sensitivity Training for Managers" expanded to include other professional groups – such as architects, clergymen, dentists, lawyers-- under the moniker

¹⁸⁶ Lee 180.

¹⁸⁷ Lee quoting Weschler and Tannenbaum paper "Gaining Leadership Skills" (paper presented at the Tenth Seminar on Human Factors in Management, University of California, Los Angeles, 27 April 1954).

¹⁸⁸ Lee 184. Lee emphasizes that the terminology here was significant because, while NTL's programs to this point had worked to goals resembling that of "sensitivity," and the word had appeared in some of their earlier materials, the word itself "was not singled out as a main objective of training" in the mid-1950s.

¹⁸⁹ Weschler quoted in Lee, 184.

“Sensitivity Training for the Professions.”¹⁹⁰ Lee reports that between 1953 and 1962, the Extension sensitivity training programs involved over 1200 participants, attracting 250-300 people annually, and constituting “as many as sixteen to eighteen groups going on during a semester.”¹⁹¹ The majority of participants were middle-class men, most between the ages of thirty and fifty-five, with gross incomes of \$10,000-\$20,000 or higher. Roughly two-thirds of program fees were paid by participants’ companies, with a little less than one third paid by the participants themselves.¹⁹²

As UCLA Extension’s sensitivity workshops expanded and grew more popular, the training programs also moved “from the edges of the Business School to the heart of its program.”¹⁹³ Tannenbaum chaired the Personnel and Industrial Relations field in the Business School from 1950-1963, and from 1963 to 1965 chaired the new Behavioral Science for Management sub-field that had branched off from the Personnel department. During his tenure, sensitivity training courses became a common and even required component of coursework within the Business School, first emerging in a course entitled “Leadership Principles and Practice.”¹⁹⁴ The course continued to be offered into the 1970s, attracting an increasingly large number of students from other parts of campus who had heard about the experimental group work in the curriculum.¹⁹⁵ In the late 1950s, the course’s readings and techniques were incorporated into the new Behavioral Science Laboratory, which consisted of one large meeting

¹⁹⁰ Lee 189.

¹⁹¹ Tannenbaum quoted in Lee, 190.

¹⁹² Lee citing Angus MacLeod and John Glass, “Former Participants Survey, Sensitivity Training,” September 1964, University of California, Los Angeles.

¹⁹³ Lee 192.

¹⁹⁴ Lee 193.

¹⁹⁵ According to Lee, the course’s popularity led to the offering of as many as four sections of twelve to fifteen students in any given semester.

room surrounded on three sides by observation booths. The Center was used not only for the conduct of sensitivity training, but for the training of new trainers to staff the rapidly proliferating niche. By 1970, UCLA had emerged as one of the nation's leading sites for the humanistic training of managers, executives, and the people who sensitized them.

If UCLA evolved to become the academic capital of sensitivity training, its east coast equivalent emerged in an unpredictable location: the hallowed halls of Harvard University. More specifically, Harvard Business School's Organizational Behavior Department became a hotbed of both research and practice in the behavioral sciences after its establishment in the late 1950s. Harvard Business School Professor Fritz Roethlisberger's intellectual biography reveals the seeds of humanistic discourse among an older generation of human relations pioneers, and the ways in which the human relations research of the interwar era bled into the behavioral science research of the postwar period.

Born in New York City in 1898, Roethlisberger was the son of immigrants: a Swiss-French mother and Swiss-German father. Having studied engineering at MIT, he was pursuing a PhD in Philosophy when Elton Mayo recruited him to join his industrial research team at Harvard Business School. With Mayo, Roethlisberger made his name researching workers at the Western Electric Company Plant in Hawthorne, Illinois, from 1927 through 1936. Mayo and Roethlisberger famously revised Frederick Winslow Taylor's principle of scientific management. In their Hawthorne Studies, they found that workers were, in fact, not machines but *people* whose rates of productivity depended on fundamentally social and subjective factors – such as their ability to work in sociable groups and the attention they were granted by supervisors. Immediately after World War II, Roethlisberger established Harvard Business School's

curriculum in the nascent field of Human Relations, in which he emphasized the importance of “warm, trusting, helping relationships” between managers and their underlings. His classes never lost track of the bottom line: He described his Administrative Practices course as, “How to get things done through people.”¹⁹⁶

Roethlisberger never celebrated the notion of “self-actualization,” but he helped establish a critical bridge between the young fields of human relations and humanistic psychology. In the 1940s, he experimented with an open-ended counseling technique that he found very useful in dealing with industrial employees. When confronted with a disgruntled worker, he spent extended periods of time listening to that worker’s frustrations and trying to understand his perspective. In the early 1950s, he discovered that this technique resembled the method of “non-directive counseling” practiced by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. (If Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was one pillar of humanistic psychology, Rogers’ non-directive counseling was the other.) Roethlisberger made Rogers’ books a staple of his human relations courses for years to come.

After serving on a conference panel together in the early 1950s, Roethlisberger and Rogers collaborated on a famous *Harvard Business Review* article entitled “Barriers and Gateways to Communication.”¹⁹⁷ They broadly critiqued contemporary communication styles, charging that people often listened to each other in order to evaluate and judge, rather than to truly *understand* each other’s points of view. Rogers outlined a method of reflective, empathic listening that could “deal with the insincerities, the defensive exaggerations, the ‘false fronts,’

¹⁹⁶ Fritz Roethlisberger, *The Elusive Phenomenon: An Autobiographical Account of My Work in the Field of Organizational Behavior at the Harvard Business School* (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1977).

¹⁹⁷ Carl Rogers and Fritz Roethlisberger, “Barriers and Gateways to Communication,” *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 1952).

which characterize almost every failure in communication” and “which threaten the very existence of our modern world[.]” In Roethlisberger’s portion of the article, he recommended a patient, understanding communication style to supervisors and suggested that empathy could quell labor discord for decades to come. Perhaps thanks to his endorsement of Rogerian psychology, Roethlisberger found himself – three years later – as the only business school professor included in Abraham Maslow’s network of people interested in “Creativeness, Self, Being, and Growth.”

In the late 1950s, Roethlisberger helped spearhead the development of an “organizational behavior” concentration at Harvard Business School, which was – according to his autobiography-- “committed to the twin values to which the label Human Relations referred: human for humanistic and relations for science.”¹⁹⁸ The informal Organizational Behavior faculty group, some of whom had originally been Roethlisberger’s students, embodied a transitional moment between pre-war and post-war human relations. According to Roethlisberger, the two generations were “astonishingly similar”: they both drew from humanistic psychologists like Maslow, Rogers, Erich Fromm, and Rollo May; they both drew ideas from behavioral science and social psychology; and they both emphasized the power of sentiment as opposed to rationality.¹⁹⁹ But Roethlisberger also noticed significant differences between the two generations. Whereas he had focused his efforts on one-on-one counseling with blue-collar workers, theorists like Argyris, McGregor, and McGregor’s protégé Warren Bennis shifted their attention to training managers in groups and placed “more emphasis on self-

¹⁹⁸ Roethlisberger, *Elusive Phenomenon*, 281.

¹⁹⁹ Roethlisberger, *Elusive Phenomenon*, 309.

actualizing needs.” This younger generation of humanistic management theorists was particularly concerned with building “authentic” relationships between people.²⁰⁰

By the late 1950s, Douglas McGregor *The Human Side of Enterprise* Harvard Business School’s management curriculum. Professor Paul Lawrence began assigning the article-length version of “The Human Side of Enterprise” within the school’s first-year required course in “Administrative Practices” in 1958. “Our teaching group found the article most helpful,” Lawrence had assured McGregor, “and would very much appreciate making it available for student use.”²⁰¹ Two year’s later, upon his book’s publication, McGregor found himself corresponding with the iconic Professor Fritz Roethlisberger—whom he had first encountered while serving on a labor arbitration committee in the mid-1940s.²⁰² Roethlisberger reported that he had read the book while teaching in an Advanced Management Program in the Philippines. “As usual” he wrote to McGregor, “I got a great kick out of it.”²⁰³

²⁰⁰ It is important not to overstate Roethlisberger’s enthusiasm for T-groups and other behavioral science methods. See his written retort to Shel Davis’s article in “Organic Problem-Solving,” which Roethlisberger entitled “Shel Davis’s Trip to the Moon”—and his letter to Warren Bennis (undated) in which he expressed skepticism about T-groups as organizational panacea—writing, “I read at first with alarm Sheldon Davis’ article on ‘An Organic Problem-Solving Method of Organizational Change’ because it sounded to me then as if T in TRW was going to stand for T-grouping and as a result we might not get to the moon before the Russians.” Letter, Roethlisberger to Warren Bennis, undated, folder “Bennis,” box C.1, Roethlisberger papers, Baker Library.

²⁰¹ Letter, Paul Lawrence to Douglas McGregor (MIT), 6 February 1958, folder “Mac/Mc/M: MacDonald - Mark, A.,” Carton 1, Paul R. Lawrence Papers, Baker Library.

²⁰² Correspondence, Fritz Roethlisberger and Douglas McGregor, 1944, folder “American Thread Co. 1944-45,” carton 1, Roethlisberger papers, Baker Library. The two men worked together in a process of labor arbitration for the American Thread Company in Fall River, Massachusetts. It seems that Roethlisberger was offered confidential information on the labor hearing so as to offer an opinion, for which he earned great lauds from Douglas McGregor, who was on the arbitration committee. In Roethlisberger’s four-page memo to the committee, he wrote that he thought management had a good case, but that he suspected that the committee would side with the union for a range of reasons.

²⁰³ Letter, Roethlisberger to Douglas McGregor, 22 September 1960, folder M1, carton 2, Roethlisberger Papers, Baker Library. In this letter Roethlisberger continued: “You are one of the few people left in the field whom I can read with profit and still without sweating and straining every minute with a new vocabulary and conceptual model. I think I understand what you are saying-- perhaps too easily. Is this good or bad? I don’t know but your writings as well as my own gives me that queer feeling of being sometimes too far ahead and sometimes too far being the pack. Are we still 'avant garde' or just 'old timers'?”

If Fritz Roethlisberger helped establish the intellectual foundations of the organization behavioral department, a man named Douglas Bunker helped cement the ties between Harvard Business School and the National Training Laboratories, which eventually led to the introduction of T-groups within Harvard Business School's curriculum. Bunker, who had served as one of NTL's first social science interns, was a member of NTL's staff when he joined the faculty of Harvard Business School's Organizational Department in 1962.²⁰⁴ The following year, he published a short article in NTL's *Human Relations Training News* in which he celebrated the possibilities of T-groups for society and culture at large. In "Valid Communication and Understanding Between People, he lamented that "[w]e live in a culture in which freedom and autonomy are often equated with social isolation. The myth us current and widely accepted that only the person who stands alone is truly free."²⁰⁵ Our uber-competitive society and its anxiety-producing organizations, he argued, persuaded people that the only endeavors worth pursuing were those with highly utilitarian, task-oriented ends. T-groups would provide an antidote to these social conditions. By breaking down the barriers to true communication between people, they would help citizens of all stripes build meaningful humanistic relationships in place of highly competitive and isolating ones.²⁰⁶

As early as the mid-1950s, HBS's first-year course in "Administrative Practices" (taught by Joseph Cannon Bailey) promised to offer students "an opportunity to develop, as far as he as an individual can, an attitude outlook, frame of mind, or way of thinking about human situations such that he will be a more useful and more responsible member of an organization"; it rested on

²⁰⁴ *Human Relations Training News* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1962).

²⁰⁵ Douglas Bunker, "Valid Communication and Understanding between People," *Human Relations Training News* Summer 7, no. 2 (1963).

²⁰⁶ Bunker, "Valid Communication and Understanding between People."

an expectation that “the student will broaden the groundwork for his future growth as a person and as an administrator in organizations in a free and democratic society.”²⁰⁷ The rhetoric of the course suggested a foundation in humanistic behavioral science theory that, within about five years, would become part of HBS *practice* within the Organizational Behavior department. By 1960, the school was offering a course from Abraham Zaleznik called “Human Relations II” with more explicit connections to NTL and its kindred institutions. This course, the catalog promised, would integrate “frames of reference and concepts...from the growing body of research in the behavioral sciences,” and would offer students opportunities to “participate in group experiments and laboratory training” in order to understand the “objectives of the course.”²⁰⁸

The next year, the language of “Human Relations” was replaced in all course materials with the title “Organizational Behavior,” including under its rubric course titles like “Two-Person Relationships,” “The Individual in Groups,” and Douglas Bunker’s own “Seminar on the culture and Organization of Work,” which offered students “an inquiry into cultural patternings of organizational models and work behavior.”²⁰⁹ By the end of the decade, group dynamics work had entered Harvard’s MBA program as well, with one of the 1st-year courses for MBA being the required “Laboratory in Organizational Behavior” (which exposed students to both theory and practice of contemporary group dynamics) and courses like Zaleznik’s “Social Psychology of Management,” which emphasized “the emotional and symbolic meanings of work transactions in the light of crises of human development and the life cycle.”²¹⁰ By the end of the

²⁰⁷ “Harvard Business School Course Bulletin, 1955-6,” microfilm, Baker Library.

²⁰⁸ “Harvard Business School Course Bulletin, 1960-61,” microfilm, Baker Library, 47.

²⁰⁹ “Harvard Business School Course Bulletin, 1963-64,” microfilm, Baker Library, 63.

²¹⁰ “Harvard Business School Course Bulletin, 1967-68,” microfilm, Baker Library, 69-70.

1960s, Harvard Business School had legitimated the role of laboratory learning and group dynamics research in conventional business education.

Throughout the 1960s, a slew of articles and books within the management and industrial psychology community communicated the growing enthusiasm surrounding corporate T-groups.²¹¹ By 1967, one writer proposed that “By now, even the most hermit-like denizens of the business world must surely have heard of T-groups, sensitivity training, and laboratory training” and cited a “veritable torrent of discussion concerning its supposed merits and limitations.”²¹² A 1964 article in *Factory* (which followed up on the publication’s first coverage of NTL in July 1959) called T-groups “the most controversial development in the history of laboratory training,” and explained that thousands of executives had already attended NTL’s

²¹¹ The articles and books are too innumerable to list here, but see B.M. Bass, “Mood Changes During a Management Training Laboratory,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* (5 November 1962); Robert Blake, Jane Mouton, and Lewis Barnes, “Breakthrough in Organizational Development,” *Harvard Business Review* 42, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1964): 133-155; Paul C. Buchanan, “Laboratory Training and Organizational Development,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (September 1969): 466-480; James Bugental and Robert Tannenbaum, “Sensitivity Training and Being Motivated,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 3: 76-85; H.L. Burke and Warren Bennis, “Changes in Perception of Self and Others During Human Training,” *Human Relations* 14 (1961); C. L. Cooper and I.L. Mangham, *T-Groups: A Survey of Research* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1971); Ralph Cranshaw, “How Sensitive is Sensitivity Training,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 126, no. 6 (December 1969): 868-873; Joseph English, “Sensitivity Training: Promise and Performance,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 126, no. 6 (December 1969): 874-6; Robert T. Golembiewski and Arthur Blumberg, eds., *Sensitivity Training and the Laboratory Approach* (Ithaca: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1970); Herbert Hand and John Slocum, Jr., “Human Relations Training for Middle Management: A Field Experiment,” *The Academy of Management Journal* 13, no. 4 (December 1970): 403-410; Steven Jaffe and Donald Scherl, “Acute Psychosis Precipitated by T-Group Experiences,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* XX1 (October 1969): p 443-448; S. Klaw, “Two Weeks in a T-Group,” *Fortune* (August 1961); Ernest Miller, “The Impact of T-groups on Managerial Behavior,” *Public Administration Review* 30, no. 3 (May-June 1970): 296-7; E. H. Schein and Warren Bennis, eds., *Personal and Organizational Growth through Group Methods* (New York: Wiley, 1965); Wendell Wolfe, “Human Relations Laboratory Training: Three Questions,” *The Journal of Business* 39, no. 4 (October 1966): 512-515.

²¹² Lyman Porter, Book review of *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods: The Laboratory Approach* by Edgar Schein and Warren G. Bennis, *The Journal of Business* 39, no. 4 (October 1966): 545-546.

two-week Management Work Conferences.²¹³ It even included a role-playing exercise that readers could do at home to gauge their own levels of sensitivity.

In the same year that *Factory* was teaching readers to turn their attention to their own perceptions of people and situations, Chris Argyris published a frequently cited article in the *Harvard Business Review* that celebrated the T-group as a solution to all modern managerial dilemmas.²¹⁴ While Argyris had long been a supporter of T-group methods, “T-groups for Organizational Effectiveness” marked his most emphatic and explicit celebration of the T-group method to date. Argyris asked, “Why do company executives become conformists as a company becomes older and bigger? Why do they resist saying what they truly believe—even when it is in the best interests of the company?” He suggested that T-groups were the ideal antidote to organizational conformity because they uprooted “pyramidal values” and promoted a new corporate culture based on “authentic relationships”—a culture in which “an individual can behave in such a way as to increase his self-awareness and self-esteem and, at the same time, provide an opportunity for others to do the same.”²¹⁵

Argyris strongly emphasized that T-groups were not therapy groups because they “assume a higher degree of health” and focused primarily on the “here-and now.” Yet he presented the T-group in suspiciously therapeutic terms: “If one truly begins to accept oneself, he will be less inclined to condemn non-genuineness in others, but to see it for what is, a way of coping with a nongenuine world by a person who is (understandably) a nongenuine

²¹³ “A Brand-New Breakthrough in Management Development,” *Factory* (July 1959); George Hoy, “Sensitivity Training,” *Factory* (September 1964).

²¹⁴ Chris Argyris, “T-groups for Organizational Effectiveness,” *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1964): 60-74.

²¹⁵ Argyris, “T-groups,” 62.

individual.”²¹⁶ The contradictions plaguing Argyris’s article reflected larger tensions plaguing the T-group movement as a whole (to be discussed in Chapter 10). By the mid-1960s, Lewin’s rhetoric of action research and democratic leadership competed with more seductive promises of personal growth. The participative philosophy espoused by the movement’s pioneers faded to the background as a goal of self-actualization for self-actualization’s sake came to the fore.

²¹⁶ Argyris, “T-groups,” 67; 69.

Chapter 8
“How Democratic Can Industry Be?”:
Rensis Likert and the Study of Organizational Behavior

While the National Training Laboratories was emerging as the premier practitioner of humanistic management training on the east coast, Rensis Likert’s Institute for Social Research (ISR) was pioneering an alternative set of management experiments in the Midwest. From the time of its establishment in the late 1940s through the mid-1960s, the ISR conducted a number of groundbreaking research projects in the new field of Organizational Behavior and ultimately inspired Likert to publish his own well regarded management treatise, *New Patterns in Management*, in 1961. In this book, Likert articulated a participative theory of management called System 4, which shared Douglas McGregor’s emphasis on anti-hierarchical communication and decision-making within corporations. Though rooted in more quantitative data than McGregor’s work, it nonetheless reflected the participative commitments that had characterized Likert’s intellectual agenda since his service in the New Deal, and the interest in morale that he had expressed in his 1930s studies of life insurance salesmen.

This chapter examines Likert’s foray into the realm of Organizational Behavior, a field in which he built his reputation as both theorist and practitioner. Beginning with a series of pioneering studies for the Office of Naval Research in the 1950s, Likert and his colleagues demonstrated that survey research was perfectly compatible with the less quantitative aims of Lewin’s action research and Maslow’s humanistic psychology. One major project for the utility company Detroit Edison, in particular, invited collaboration between Likert’s surveyors and the behavioral scientists working within the Research Center for Group Dynamics. This work not only inspired the publication of Likert’s famous management treatise, but ultimately inspired

him to build his own management consulting service. For decades after World War II, ISR's experiments in Organizational Behavior and Likert's development of System 4 affirmed the humanistic potential of survey research and offered an alternative model of organizational growth from that fostered within T groups. Likert emerged from decades of experimentation with a central conviction in tact: that capitalism was on the verge of perfectability, and that a rigorous application of social-science methods could ensure lasting social and economic harmony.

Beginning in the late 1940s, one organization was more influential than any other in shaping the course of the ISR's development as a pioneer of organizational research. The Office of Naval Research (ONR) had provided funds to the Research Center for Group Dynamics and the Survey Research Center as independent entities before they merged. In Michigan, the ONR launched a program of research in human relations and organizational behavior of such immense scope that, according to Likert, it became "the key grant in getting us started on the research in leadership and management."¹ The ONR funded a wide range of ISR studies addressing issues of management, morale, conflict, group dynamics, and productivity within organizations. Launching off the theoretical groundwork of thinkers like Kurt Lewin and human-relations theorists like Elton Mayo, these studies were designed both to build theoretical knowledge about the social dynamics of organizations and to increase the productivity of organizations through improved methods of management. The work funded by the ONR drew from each phase of Likert's intellectual biography, integrating industrial human relations, attitude surveying, and principles of democratic administration into an overarching vision of institutional harmony.

¹ James C. Worthy, "Interview with Rensis Likert, Meeting of the Academy of Management, 1979," folder "Transcripts of Oral History Interviews," box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

The ONR project at ISR, which became known the Organizational Behavior and Human Relations Program, had a profound effect on the future of the Institute in general and Likert's career in particular. It helped establish the ISR as a hotbed of research in the very young field of Organizational Behavior, which in turn attracted major grants from corporations and industries interested in the Institute's services – ultimately complicating the “public” foundation upon which the ISR was built.² It also helped launch Rensis Likert's career as a management guru. Likert's *New Patterns of Management*, published about ten years after securing the decade-long grant from the ONR, drew explicitly from research funded by the ONR grant.

The RCGD arrived in Ann Arbor in 1948 with an ONR grant in tow, thanks to Kurt Lewin's active involvement with the Navy's social science/group psychology division.³ Lewin had first encountered the ONR when John MacMillan, one of its staff, invited him to be on a wartime panel of social scientists –also including Rensis Likert—reviewing the ONR's research proposals and policies. He later obtained ONR grant money for the 1946 Connecticut leadership training workshop that spawned the National Training Laboratories.⁴ One month after Lewin's death, Cartwright and Lippitt assured one of the RCGD's other funders, the Field Foundation, that the grant money was still in place, and that the Center was developing a “new, more sharply focused research program” in large part thanks to grants from the ONR. At that time, they explained, “one major focus” was group productivity and techniques off bringing about change

² Note that Organizational Behavior programs began to appear at mainstream business schools in the 1950s. Case Western University and Harvard Business School whose Organizational Behavior programs most frequently appear in the literature.

³ “Transcript of Oral History interview with Doc Cartwright,” folder “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Cartwright, Doc,” box 1, ISR Oral Histories, Bentley Library, 15.

⁴ Alfred Jay Marrow, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 154; 213.

in group productivity.”⁵ They promised that the RCGD was continuing sponsored work in “the performance of leaders and trainers in industry, social agencies, government and labor groups” to be conducted in a laboratory workshop the following summer.⁶

A report on RCGD activities from 1947 sheds light on the broad scope of activities and research questions funded by ONR in the immediate postwar period. The “Navy Research Project,” as it was then called, was designed generally to address “the way in which attitudes are knowledge are spread” – but it more accurately provided a body of research data that both challenged and elaborated on the earlier research assumptions of Elton Mayo and Fritz Roethlisberger’s Hawthorne Experiments. The study rested on an assumption that the organizations of the postwar period were in trouble:

Industrial management, facing the problems of communicating attitudes and basic company philosophy as well as the details of policy and procedure through increasingly large organizational units, is seriously concerned over these problems. So are those charged with the responsibility of public education on such pressing matters as the economic facts essential to sound governmental policy, the considerations affecting governmental decisions on atomic power, the successful functioning of a democratic society demands a well informed public. We need badly a sound, research-based understanding of the factors determining effective communication.⁷

The future of democracy depended on the abilities of leaders in industry, government, and education to establish systems effective communication. As of August 1947, those systems were in trouble.

The RCGD embarked on a three-pronged study of the power, dynamics, and productivity of social groups as part of its work for the ONR. The first project, an aforementioned study led

⁵ Memo, Dorwin Cartwright and Ronald Lippitt to Maxwell Hahn of the Field Foundation, 19 March 1947, file “Field Foundation,” box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library.

⁶ Memo to Hahn, 2.

⁷ “A Report on the Current Research Activities and Plans of the Research Center for Group Dynamics,” 15 August 1947, file “Directors’ Files: Reports on RCGD, 1946-9,” box 25, ISR papers, Bentley Library, 2.

by Leon Festinger (another former Lewin student), examined attitudes of a housing project's residents with a particular aim in mind: "to change the attitudes of the members of this community toward each other and toward the neighborhood itself," and to counter the consensus among the very residents of housing projects that "only undesirable types of people live in the project."⁸ By examining processes of communication and attitude change, Festinger hoped to aid those government officials and administrators trying to nurture a sense of community among residents. The second study conducted under the Navy contract, spearheaded by Ron Lippitt and Jack French, revolved around a three-week conference for "top administrative and educational personnel."⁹ The directors of this project spent three weeks studying the dynamics and productivity of a group of educators, administrators, government officials, and managers as they participated in training for effective leadership. As with a T-group, the conference itself was designed to be the laboratory of change.¹⁰

It was the third major project conducted by the RCGD for the ONR in 1947 that set a powerful precedent for the direction of human relations research in years to come. This research project, commandeered by Jack French with the assistance of two graduate students, was a preliminary study of the effects of group affiliations on productivity among industrial workers. The RCGD situated the work in historic terms:

Ever since the famous Hawthorne studies of the Harvard Business School were published, it has been clear that group factors are important determinants of industrial morals and productivity. Yet the Hawthorne studies did no more than

⁸ "A Report on the Current Research Activities and Plans of the Research Center for Group Dynamics," 2. Note that according to the report, funding provided for three full-time personnel, twelve part-time interviewers and analysts, and a budget of \$15,000 through July. In 1951, the RCGD published the results of this project as Leon Festinger, *Changing Attitudes through Social Contact: An Experimental Study of a Housing Project* (Ann Arbor: Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1951.)

⁹ "A Report on the Current Research Activities and Plans of the Research Center for Group Dynamics," 4.

¹⁰ It is worth noting the other sponsors of the project: the National Education Association, University of California, University of Michigan, Columbia University, University of Maine, and Springfield College.

to break ground in this vital area. Converging lines of evidence indicate that some of the most critical problems of industrial conflict will be solved only when we know a great deal more about the way in which individual behavior is influenced by satisfactions connected with group affiliations.¹¹

The proposed study of industrial relations would take the face-to-face workgroup as an “important ‘microcosm’” to be studied intensively. The researchers would focus on a particular industrial work group for evidence of group identification, seeking to understand “the conditions under which the identification may be broadened to include larger groups up to the plant as a whole.” The RCGD promised potentially great gains for industrial leaders, reminding their funders that “hitherto unimagined levels of group loyalty and productivity are possible under proper conditions.”¹² This RCGD project set an important precedent for work that would follow for decades to come. The study of group dynamics, a fundamentally idealistic enterprise hitched to ideals of social harmony and democratic cohesion, was by no means limited to the public sphere. Unleashed in the private realm—and following the precedent of Mayo and Roethlisberger – social scientists could forge new paths for effective communication and heightened productivity within the workplace. When the RCGD moved to Michigan in 1948, the ONR assured Cartwright that it would continue to fund their research on groups, individuals, and organizations.¹³

At the same time that the ONR was funding group-dynamics research at MIT, Rensis Likert was building a relationship between the ONR and the recently established Survey Research in Michigan. The collaboration began in 1946, during a conversation between Likert

¹¹ “A Report on the Current Research Activities and Plans of the Research Center for Group Dynamics.”

¹² “A Report on the Current Research Activities and Plans of the Research Center for Group Dynamics,” 6.

¹³ “Transcript of Oral History interview with Doc Cartwright,” 15-16. Here, he reflects on his nervousness about the possibility that the funds would not continue once the RCGD moved away from its MIT location, or in the aftermath of Lewin’s death. He explains that they “would never have survived the transition to Michigan and so on financially without it.”

and Merle Tuve, a physical scientist at the Carnegie Institute in Washington. Tuve suggested that Likert get in touch with the Office of Naval Research because Likert sought funders, and Tuve's friend in the ONR had told him about the Office's interest in leadership research and the social sciences.¹⁴ His contacts encouraged Likert to submit a proposal, and a budding relationship was born.

In "A Proposed Program of Research on the Fundamental Problems of Organizing Human Behavior," Likert articulated the urgent need for social research on organizations. He alerted the ONR:

In terms of national well-being and national defense there is no more fundamental problem on which to do research than on the dynamics of social organizations. *The need for this research is especially acute at this time because of the rapid changes in human activity being brought about by results from research done in the physical sciences.* These results are compelling drastic changes in human relationships and yet so little research on the basic problems of social organizations has been done that we have few clear cut principles to apply. As a consequence, we are groping and bungling in a costly fashion. We need urgently to know the fundamental principle underlying group behavior so that we can deal intelligently and efficiently with the problems we face.¹⁵

In the era of totalitarian atrocities, the atomic bomb, and complex corporate capitalism, Likert suggested, it was necessary to increase knowledge of the complicated social systems that had produced them in the first place. Likert acknowledged important precedents for such a project: the "excellent theoretical work" of Mary Parker Follett, the "important work" of Mayo and Roethlisberger, Lewin's work on leadership and motivation, and his own Division of Program Survey's research on "processes of management with particular emphasis on morale." The next stage of social science inquiry would build on past research with new questions about how and

¹⁴ "Interview with Rensis Likert, Meeting of the Academy of Management, 1979," 12.

¹⁵ Survey Research Center, "A Proposed Program of Research on the Fundamental Problems of Organizing Human Behavior" undated (estimated 1946 or 1947). File "Projects, Bentley Library," box 19, Likert papers, Bentley library.

why groups act the ways they do, which forms of leadership are most productive, and “why certain groups become belligerent and even pathologically destructive”—an issue with deep roots in studies of authoritarianism during World War II.¹⁶

Likert offered a detailed plan of research on industry, government, and voluntary groups that would rely on both sample survey methods and “experimental techniques.” In many ways, he explained, the work would echo that which he performed on behalf of the Life Insurance Salesman Research Bureau, because it would integrate “lengthy interview[s]” administered to all levels of employee—from plant laborer to supervisor to top manager—with shorter interviews and more quantitative surveys. Likert also compared the proposed work to that he conducted for the US Strategic Bombing Survey. That project, which also focused on issues of morale, involved a successful application of the “indirect approach”: Surveyors interviewed German and Japanese civilians on a broad range of topics so that they could glean an overall sense of respondents’ attitudes, rather than zeroing in on one or two pertinent questions.¹⁷

The project’s surveys would be designed to broadly ascertain how people related to their jobs, to other individuals in their groups, and to other groups of workers. They would also address worker satisfaction and subordinates’ views of their superiors. The SRC would study a wide range of industries, from office and sales organizations to large industries and government agencies at the local and national levels.¹⁸ Likert’s ten-year proposal suggested ambitious multi-tiered interview schedules targeting hundreds of workers in the same company, and multiple companies in each industry. The proposal proved persuasive: The ONR signed off on a 10-year

¹⁶ “A Proposed Program of Research on the Fundamental Problems of Organizing Human Behavior,” 1.

¹⁷ “A Proposed Program of Research on the Fundamental Problems of Organizing Human Behavior,” 8.

¹⁸ “A Proposed Program of Research on the Fundamental Problems of Organizing Human Behavior,” 5.

funding plan, beginning with a first-year grant of \$120,000, which was replicated in 1948 and 1949.¹⁹

In the decade after the ONR approved this early SRC proposal, Michigan's program in human relations greatly expanded. The RCGD arrived in 1948 with aforementioned ONR-sponsored projects in tow, and for the SRC, Human Relations business was booming: In the first years of its ONR research, the SRC Human Relations Program conducted major research on leadership, productivity, and morale at Prudential Life Insurance, Caterpillar Tractor Company, Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company, Detroit Edison, Studebaker, and Maytag.²⁰ Researchers surveyed employees and managers on issues related to union activity, leadership practices, management processes. They grew particularly interested in organizations' responses to change, and the roles of power and control in organizational structure. Meanwhile, at the RCGD, French and Festinger continued their research on group productivity, communication, participation, and prestige through group-dynamics laboratory techniques.²¹ The work of both groups attracted research grants from additional sources, as well. From April 1947 to December 1950, industry and foundations contributed approximately \$600,000 in additional funds to support research being conducted.²²

By 1951, it was clear to Likert—by then Director of the ISR, overseeing survey and group dynamics divisions—that it was time to expand. In February 1951, he wrote to the Howard Page of ONR's Human Relations Branch with a thorough account of the progress he and

¹⁹ "Interview with Rensis Likert, Meeting of the Academy of Management, 1979." For statistics on 1948 and 1949 see letter, Rensis Likert to Howard Page of the Office of Naval Research's Human Relations Branch, 5 February 1951, folder "Corresp NOPQR," box 19, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

²⁰ Letter to Howard Page.

²¹ Letter to Howard Page.

²² Letter to Howard Page.

his colleagues had made in the past three years. Industries were enthusiastically cooperating, but Likert felt that the ISR could use a longer-term commitment and increased funding. Likert enticed Page with recent results, claiming that “we are finding it possible to achieve substantial increases in productivity, and also have preliminary evidence of favorable morale changes” thanks to three years of research in human relations.²³ The ONR ultimately signed on for a longer-term commitment of funding ISR human relations research.

After the ONR signed on, Likert contacted his friend Daniel Katz and asked him if he would be interested in leaving his tenured position at Brooklyn College to help him start up a more formal program to bridge ISR’s two centers working with Naval funding. Katz, who had conducted research on the productivity of shipyards, acquiesced.²⁴ Soon thereafter, the ISR’s Program in Human Relations and Social Organization (later called the Organizational Behavior and Human Relations Program) was born. In the early years of the program, projects varied from the specifically industrial to the broadly attitudinal. One of the major studies launched in 1953 was a nationwide sample survey of the adult population about the function of work, and another investigated the nature of conformity (framed, along with dependence, as a product of the unsuccessful “reconciliation of organizational requirements with individual needs”). In 1957, another general population study examined “why people either liked or disliked their jobs.”²⁵

²³ Letter to Howard Page.

²⁴ This period witnessed the publication of Daniel Katz, *Productivity, Supervision and Morale in an Office Situation*, Survey Research Center Series, Publication No. 2 (Ann Arbor, Mich: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1950); also see Daniel Katz, *Productivity, Supervision, and Morale Among Railroad Workers*, Survey Research Center Series publication no. 5 (Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1951).

²⁵ Anne Frantilla, *Social Science in the Public Interest: A Fiftieth-Year History of the Institute for Social Research* (Ann Arbor: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan: 1998), 30.

The majority of studies conducted by the Organizational Behavior Program funded by the ONR grant addressed the problems of particular industries, and these industrial studies became a mainstay of ISR's research agenda and revenue stream. Between 1947 and 1961, researchers at ISR conducted more than 80 studies of large organizations—unions, factories, civic organizations, political organizations—and, according to Likert, "The bulk of money came from industrial organizations." Through Likert's retirement in 1970, industrial organizations contributed approximately \$15 million to ISR's program in organizational research.²⁶

In September 1950, *Modern Industry* announced that "An exciting two-purpose experiment—to open up management communication to get more democracy into the industrial organization—is under way among the 10,600 nonsupervisory and 1,350 supervisory employees off the Detroit Edison Company."²⁷ The experiment, co-sponsored by the Office of Naval Research and Detroit Edison itself, was the second major venture of Michigan's ISR on behalf of the ONR-funded Human Relations program.²⁸ Run by Likert, Floyd Mann, Donald Pelz, and Daniel Katz, the Detroit Edison project established the ISR as a pioneer in the nascent field of Organizational Development. It also announced Likert et. al.'s commitment to an ambitious postwar mission: the project of making industry "democratic" through the application of survey research, managerial feedback, and human relations laboratory training. As a case study, Detroit Edison's massive human-relations endeavor revealed the extent to which participative management and group dynamics had filtered into mainstream industrial social science after

²⁶ See Frantilla and "Interview with Rensis Likert, Meeting of the Academy of Management, 1979."

²⁷ "How Democratic Can Industry Be?" *Modern Industry*, September 15, 1950, 64-75, 64.

²⁸ Note that Detroit Edison paid for "the portion of the survey study that directly benefits it" while the ONR paid for the more general work. See "How Democratic Can Industry Be?" 64.

World War II. It also reflected the increasingly blurry lines between Likert-brand organizational surveying and Lewinian group-dynamics techniques.

The SRC first earned public acclaim in business circles with its 1948 ONR-funded study of the Prudential Insurance Company in Newark, NJ. An SRC proposal for the work applied the language of modern human relations training: It would help Prudential's managers of white-collar workers make the transition from treating employees like "cogs in a machine" to treating them "like people."²⁹ The experiment was a success, ultimately spawning two published works that put the SRC on the industrial map: Katz, Maccoby, and Morse's *Productivity, Supervision, and Morale in an Office Situation* and Morse's *Satisfactions in the White Collar Job*, published in 1950 and 1953, respectively.³⁰ Both works presented the central finding of SRC's work at Prudential: that high levels of worker productivity and satisfaction on the job stemmed not from intrinsic qualities of the work itself, but from effective leadership. More specifically, supportive supervisors – supervisors who "are more positive toward their men, take a more personalized approach to them, and give more attention to the problems of motivation"—led more effective work teams than their less attentive peers.³¹ Floyd Mann, a sociologist who joined the ranks of the SRC in 1946, visited the Prudential operation in Newark and called it "a revelation."³² SRC's Prudential work helped establish the the research organization as a nexus of human relations research and announced its legitimacy within the field.

²⁹"Prudential Proposal," file F65, box 15, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³⁰ Katz, *Productivity, Supervision and Morale in an Office Situation*; Nancy C Morse, *Satisfactions in the White-Collar Job*, Survey Research Center Series Publication no. 10 (Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1953).

³¹ Katz, *Productivity, Supervision and Morale in an Office Situation*.

³² "ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd," folder: "ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd," box 1, ISR Oral History papers, Bentley Library.

According to Mann, two Detroit Edison personnel department representatives learned about SRC's Prudential work "by the newspaper" and decided to "[come] over to see what this was about."³³ By late 1948, the SRC and Detroit Edison had agreed on the parameters of a research project. A survey would be administered in some form to all of the employees of the Detroit Edison Power Company, supervised by Rensis Likert. The project would take several months – the time necessary to interview roughly 12,000 supervisory and non-supervisory employees by questionnaire and interviews – and cost Detroit Edison \$50,000.³⁴ The DE study, whose scope and budget exceeded the Prudential project, would introduce a promising new technique of "survey research feedback" to create networks of organizational communication and change rather than simply accumulating piles of data to be distributed among higher ups. Some of its findings, in turn, would be contributed to the master study being funded by the US Navy.³⁵

The Detroit Edison study's proposal outlined the vague and lofty objectives typical of postwar human relations research. Its surveys would measure the differences in employee working morale in the various departments of the Edison organization; determine reasons for those differences; investigate "what constitutes good leadership in the working situation"; supply data that would "increase working effectiveness"; and contribute to the University's larger project of accumulating a broad range of human relations data.³⁶ This data would, ideally, help guide tangible changes within the company to increase DE workers' morale and productivity.

³³ "ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd."

³⁴ Detroit Edison Research Proposal, 1948, folder: #21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³⁵ See Detroit Edison "Supervisor News," 9 February 1948, Folder: #21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³⁶ "Detroit Edison Survey," 1948, and the "Detroit Edison Study Design," folder: #21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

Modern Industry framed the project in more utilitarian terms: “Because people’s attitudes must be changed, in supervision and in the workforce,...the experiment has a third purpose: to find the best ways of bringing about changes of attitudes at all levels of the organization.”³⁷

Preliminary interviews with Detroit Edison’s upper-level managers and council members suggest a more concrete set of motivations for the research. Detroit Edison was, it seems, in decent shape at the end of the 1940s. Its rate of turnover, 15.2%, was considered low.³⁸ Its workers had exhibited the “esprit de corps” necessary for emergency power line work, and profits were steady. So why embark on \$50,000 worth of research on worker productivity and morale? Early interviews with higher-ups suggest that their most pressing concerns revolve around two issues: union membership and the high cost of labor. A.S. Albright, a company Comptroller (“probably in his sixties, a typical picture of a business executive,” according to his interviewer) explained in an early interview that he was “concerned with the general question of productivity and economical operation “ because “over 30% of the company’s costs are labor costs,” and “these are the only manageable costs the company has.” Albright was “convinced that significantly more economical operation would be possible” if DE could address “the relatively poor attitude of employees, supervisors, and managers” prohibiting “more economical operation.”³⁹

Other executives expressed less concern about low rates of productivity, but shared Albright’s concern about “what makes people join unions, especially where the factors which cause it are the result of company failure.” Mr. Green, the head of construction (with “very direct, clear and penetrating speech” and “relatively little regard for superficial niceties”) was the

³⁷ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 64.

³⁸ Detroit Edison “Supervisor News,” 20 May 1948, folder #21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

³⁹ “Interviews with Detroit Edison Council Members,” folder: #21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

company's principal labor negotiator. He expressed concern about DE's "slow rate of promotion" and the fact that "management will never respect and care for the interests of the worker in the same way in which the union will." A council member named HW Collins (described as "intelligent, kindly, unpretentious, fairly neutral with respect to unionization but leaning a little against") noticed that many workers were dissatisfied with their shift schedules. He also suggested that "the productivity of maintenance crews has declined somewhat recently" and wondered "whether there is any relationship between this and the fact of union organization."⁴⁰

W.W. Williams, the chief engineer of lines, expressed a different perspective. On the one hand, according to his figures, "productivity on overhead lines, construction, and maintenance has dropped off by 30% in the past several years," and construction workers had recently refused to do certain kinds of work in rainy weather. But on the other hand, his men had been "strongly unionized for 35 years," making unionization an unlikely source of declining productivity." His men's allegiance to the union made him doubt the utility of a company-based human relations initiative: "Williams said that although it might be heresy, he was convinced that the linemen didn't really work for Detroit Edison, that they worked for the union and the Detroit Edison contracted with the union for their services. He felt consequently that the men were more concerned with their standing in union circles than they were with their standing with company superiors."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Interview with Mr. Green, "Interviews with Detroit Edison Council Members."

⁴¹ Interview with Mr. Williams, "Interviews with Detroit Edison Council Members."

Union membership and alleged declining productivity, along with the “potential threat of public ownership,”⁴² clearly contributed to DE’s optimism that \$50,000 worth of research could improve rates of efficiency and morale. On December 1, 1947, DE’s President Parker sent a letter to company supervisors informing them that their employees would be receiving surveys at their home addresses.⁴³ The surveys, he explained, would help supervisors determine “what factors contribute to good employee relations at the company” and which supervisory policies and behaviors “contribute to high morale and working efficiency.”⁴⁴ Parker urged supervisors to be completely frank in their own survey responses (“there is no intent, nor would it be possible, to identify your interview”) and also tried to quell fears about company shake-ups (“I am sure that much of their findings will be commendatory of our policies and supervision”). The next day, a similar letter went out to all non-supervisory employees. “One of the big problems facing this or any large company,” Parker explained, “is that of knowing how employees feel about their company and the effect upon employees of its policies and management...and if we are to work together effectively, it is important that we understand one other’s problems and point of view.”⁴⁵ The survey would offer entirely anonymous forums in which workers could communicate candid feelings about company relationships and working conditions.

Studies of human relations in industrial settings were nothing new in 1948 – the most obvious precedent being Mayo’s studies of the Hawthorne Western Electric Plant (another utility company) approximately two decades earlier. The SRC’s study of Detroit Edison was path-breaking because of the innovative ways in which Likert, Mann, Peltz, and Katz designed and

⁴² Interview with Mr. MacLeod, “Interviews with Detroit Edison Council Members.”

⁴³ In spite of this letter, the surveys were ultimately administered at work.

⁴⁴ Detroit Edison letter to supervisors, 1 December 1947, folder #21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁴⁵ Letter from Parker, 2 December 1947, folder #21, box 14, Likert Papers, Bentley Library.

administered the study. First, the survey incorporated a mix of open-ended and closed questions, blending the “Rogerian” techniques of the Division of Program Surveys with Likert’s earlier work on quantitative questionnaires. The SRC started by administering a sample questionnaire to about 500 employees of different ages and sexes, and then tabulated the results to be sure they’d be useful.⁴⁶ Thus assured, they designed five different versions of a questionnaire with 150 to 175 questions to be distributed all of Detroit Edison’s 10,000 non-supervisory employees.⁴⁷ All versions of the hour-long survey shared a core of 40 main questions on critical topics like supervision, wages, and working conditions. The five different versions contained additional sets of varied questions, so that each subset would be answered by 1/5 of Detroit Edison’s employees. These closed questionnaires offered statements that employees could agree or disagree with and other questions to be answered on a scale of one to five. Questions included: “When you’re at work, does the time usually pass slow or fast?” “Are you doing the kind of work you would really like to do?” “How satisfied are you with your current wages?” “How much personal interest does [your supervisor] take in you and your problems?”⁴⁸

After non-supervisory employees had completed their surveys, SRC staff sat down for one-on-one, open-ended interviews with all 1000 members of DE’s supervisory staff, from the president of the organization to 3rd-line supervisors and foremen. The interviews took between one and three hours per person, and more closely resembled the non-directive surveys used during Likert’s days at the DPS. The pre-determined questions contained multiple-choice questions such as:

⁴⁶ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 64.

⁴⁷ Note that this information comes from the *Modern Industry* article. In his oral history, Floyd Mann says something slightly different: that the survey was administered to 8000-8200 non-supervisory employees. See “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd,”

⁴⁸ Questions taken from the “Non-Supervisory Survey” forms, folder #21, box 13, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

What are the toughest problems you have in your job?...How do you feel about the amount of authority you have?....Do you have discussions with your employees about how things are done?...Some supervisors think that it is a good idea for employees to make recommendations to their supervisors; others feel that it is generally a waste of time. How do you feel about it?...How do you feel about the progress you have made in the company up to now?⁴⁹

The supervisory questionnaire addressed its subjects as both manager and managed, addressing issues of communication with subordinates and treatment from above. When these interviews were complete and sent to the SRC headquarters for coding, the SRC chose 10% of the non-supervisory employees (all of whom had filled out questionnaires) who were equally distributed across “organizational families,” to partake in a similar one-on-one interview process. Staffers urged subjects to flesh out the answers they had provided on questionnaires, to give more detailed impressions of their experiences and relationships at work. Having completed these thousands of questionnaires and interviews, SRC staff returned to their institutional home base for months of tabulation.

The Detroit Edison project sparked a moment of synthesis between the quantitative work of the SRC and the more experiential work of the Research Center for Group Dynamics. Mann later reflected:

As soon as [the RCGD] found out ... what I was doing with these small teams [in Detroit Edison] and they said, ‘Hey, what you need to know more about is group dynamics.’ So they trucked me off to a national center—a National Training Laboratory [sic] in Bethel, Maine. And that’s where I ran into Lippitt and...Jack French...and Cartwright and Zander.⁵⁰

The process of group dynamics meshed with an experiment of Supervisory Conferences that the DE Personnel Planning Department had independently initiated, in which men of different

⁴⁹ Questions taken from “Supervisory Questionnaires,” forms A and B, file #21, box 13, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

⁵⁰ “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd,”

management levels would meet with supervisors to discuss concerns and brainstorm solutions.⁵¹ These conferences, along with Mann's commitment to survey feedback, incorporated the survey data into a larger experiential process of organizational development.

Mann incorporated the methods of the RCGD into his administration of survey results. Having emerged with a set of quantitative results and qualitative evaluations, Mann and his colleagues returned to Detroit Edison to conduct exercises in "survey feedback." It was important to Mann to consider the "correspondences and discrepancies between the perceptual world of the employed and the perceptual world of the supervisor."⁵² How, in other words, did subordinates' concerns and impressions differ from supervisors' experiences of the same matters? How often did an employee report feeling unheard by a supervisor who considered himself a good listener? How many supervisors accurately predicted the rates of their subordinates' satisfaction? The SRC was particularly interested in the extent to which supervisors failed to accurately perceive their own behaviors.⁵³ Mann later recalled that through the process of "bringing the findings from the bottom up to the top," the DE Survey "developed into a laboratory."⁵⁴

⁵¹ "How Democratic Can Industry Be?" 65.

⁵² "ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd."

⁵³ Likert's staff employed a strategy similar to that he had used at the LISRB years before. They quantified "morale scores" for employees in units doing similar work, particularly emphasizing their attitudes toward supervision. They then pulled out the 100 units with the highest scores and the 100 units with the lowest, and studied the comparison for evidence of the most effective leadership behaviors. The findings of the high/low morale comparisons reinforced those of Likert's days studying life insurance salesmen: The most successful managers (those with the highest rates of productivity and morale among subordinates) took interest in their employees as individuals; invited their underlings to participate in project planning; and accurately employed dissatisfactions among their men. Lower morale tended to exist among employees who felt their supervisors treated them as cogs in a machine and disregard their concerns. See report "A Comparison of High Morale and Low Morale Employees in Detroit Edison," June 1949, folder 47, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library. This report contains some unsurprising findings: high morale tends to exist among employees who are white collar (not blue); who make more money; and who work in small groups rather than large.

⁵⁴ "ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd."

Modern Industry later reported that the “Greatest novelty in the survey is the ‘feedback’ of results to all levels of management, supervision, and rank-and-file employees” because “everyone not only had his attitudes canvassed; everyone had the results presented to him in a matter which let him interpret them, called upon him to do something about whatever findings showed the need for a remedy, gave him the opportunity to do something.”⁵⁵ Through the process of reporting back survey results to high-level managers, foremen, and workers alike, the survey became more than a tool for “disclosing the state of employee morale”; it became “a tool for improving morale” in and of itself.⁵⁶

Mann later celebrated the survey feedback’s ability to “stimulate self-examination in the organization”⁵⁷ and called the DE study the “first of the organizational development kind of efforts in that whole field.”⁵⁸ Through the process of reporting survey data back to employees of DE, Mann found that “It’s the how—not the what” that mattered in organizational change. The raw data became useful only when employees at all level of an organization engaged with and processed it.⁵⁹ What worked so well about the process, he explained, was what he called its fundamentally “non-directive” nature: Instead of entering the offices of DE bigwigs with survey results in tow, ready to “tell them what they need to know,” Mann et al would present supervisors with results and ask, “What do you see here? What’s relevant?...a lot of Carl Rogers

⁵⁵ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 64.

⁵⁶ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 64.

⁵⁷ “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Pelz, Daniel,” folder: “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Pelz, Daniel,” box 1, ISR Oral History papers, Bentley Library.

⁵⁸ “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd.”

⁵⁹ “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd.”

stuff.”⁶⁰ The act of involving supervisors in the analysis of data and sparking their own self-analysis seemed to promise far greater returns than an expert’s authoritative diagnosis.

Detroit Edison’s inclusive distribution of survey results thus reflected a larger ideological mission of the ISR: to promote democracy in the workplace. The 1950 *Modern Industry* article about Detroit Edison, entitled, “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” was followed by the subheading, “Give people a voice in what they do and they’ll do it better, research men said. The company tried it, found it good.”⁶¹ Its author promised that the DE survey experiment “has long-range promise of buttressing employee faith in the system of democratic capitalism beyond the possibilities of current free enterprise campaigns.”⁶² The company and the SRC both designed and executed the project to bolster feelings of democratic communication.

The SRC infused its surveys from the beginning with the language of democracy, asking numerous questions about the extent of workers’ participation and brand of supervision. According to Pelz, “We had a number of questions that were derived from this concept of authoritarian vs. democratic or participative [management]...Likert was very much interested in this, and some his research in large business organizations had led him to feel that participatory styles of management were, in fact, more effective.”⁶³ Questions on the survey targeted the extent to which workers felt included in decision making, the extent to which they felt supervisors respected their opinions, and the extent to which managers treated them “as people.” Conversely, questionnaires of supervisors contained multiple questions about the responsibility invested in underlings and attitudes toward feedback from subordinates.

⁶⁰ “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Mann, Floyd.”

⁶¹ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 64.

⁶² “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 64.

⁶³ “ISR Oral History Transcripts: Pelz, Daniel.”

The democratic theme running through the survey questions reinforced a simultaneous training effort taking place at DE, which had initiated an independent “Human Relations in Supervision Program.” This program offered a course for all management groups, all the way through the “line organization” and its assembly or “organizational families,” in modern theories and techniques of participative management. Managers would attend a large talk with a Michigan-based psychologist named Norman Maier – who had “a flair for industrial talk rather than academic jargon” – and learn general principles of management which they would then break into small groups to discuss. The training stressed one aim above all: the forging of democratic relationships. Maier had worked with Lewin and Lippitt on their famous Iowa studies on the differences between autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership.⁶⁴ His Detroit Edison sessions sprung from that research, which also influenced the company president’s spoken principles of leadership. “Democratic work relations,” President Parker asserted, would be “a force that will provide workers with a real stake in the American industrial economy.” While “no one at Detroit Edison votes on what his pay rate is to be” (because “that is a subject reserved to a different group”), the company had already embraced participatory rhetoric by the time SRC staffers arrived to conduct their surveys.⁶⁵

Mann and his colleagues were committed to sharing their findings with workers and management at all levels of the organization – even if it was only the bigwigs who had the power to change working conditions or pay rates. For its part, DE issued a series of employee publications that almost compulsively updated employees on the status of the project. Its weekly

⁶⁴ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 67.

⁶⁵ “How Democratic Can Industry Be?” 67. For a broader history of the term “industrial democracy,” (which usually carried very different associations from the experiments chronicled in this dissertation, having originated within the labor movement), see Clinton S Golden, *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy* (New York, London: Harper & brothers, 1942); Nelson Lichtenstein, Ed., *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise* (Washington, D.C.: New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Supervisor News newsletter kept all levels of supervision abreast of the survey's progress and recent developments. For those below the level of supervisor, there was *Synchroscope*, the monthly magazine of the Detroit Edison company. *Synchroscope* itself exemplified widespread corporate attempts of the late 1940s to earn worker loyalty back from unions and the federal government, as Elisabeth Fones-Wolfe has persuasively argued in *Selling Free Enterprise*.⁶⁶ The magazine, a glossy, monthly publication with a full-color cover and lush photographs inside, communicated a fundamentally friendly, recreational company vibe. It regularly featured photos of employees' new babies, reports on DE golf and softball teams, news from employees' recent vacations, and a cordial question/answer column with the plant's executive vice president.

By early 1948, the SRC's human relations study was also a fixture of the magazine, with articles including abundant photographs of SRC staffers and explanations of the survey process—all clearly intended to communicate its fundamental trustworthiness. An April 1948 article on the survey offered the subheading, “Researchers from the University of Michigan doing Careful, Thorough, Confidential Job” alongside a photo of Likert (“in the privacy of his U of M office”) leisurely reclining in a chair and paging through results.⁶⁷ The article explained that research for the study was half done and reviewed the three-step interview/questionnaire study design, before explaining the nitty-gritty details of the survey's administration thus far. “The fine cooperation of every department and employee,” the article explained, “is making it

⁶⁶ Elisabeth A Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁶⁷ *Synchroscope*, April 1948, folder 21, box 14, Likert Papers, Bentley Library.

possible to conduct the survey with minimum difficulty.” That cooperation would ultimately help the company determine “what can be done to make the company a better place to work.”⁶⁸

When the study had come to a close and the December 1948 issue of *Synchroscope* reported the “Findings of the Employee Survey,” it was in the most accessible format possible. Each summary of survey data was illustrated with cheerful cartoon characters made of lighting bolts. Two mascots—one smiling, one frowning—hovered around a chart illustrating the findings of the question, “Taken as a whole, how satisfied are you?” Twelve per cent of employees were so satisfied they wanted no changes; 44% satisfied but with some things they would like to see changed; 32% “quite satisfied but there’s lots to be changed”; and 8% “very satisfied.” This chart was followed by a breakdown of those results by the type of work the respondents performed. A significant 71% of the company’s professional workers expressed “overall satisfaction,” while only 40% of unskilled laborers felt the same (with clerical and skilled workers falling somewhere in between – at 59% and 52%, respectively). The results got worse: Just 57% of employees thought working conditions were okay (43% did not) and only 40% saw chances for future promotions. Overall, the Detroit Edison mascots had plenty of disappointing results to relay, but they communicated the company’s commitment to transparency and the idea that, disappointing results or not, employees and their superiors were in this together.

⁶⁸ *Synchroscope*, April 1948. The cover of the September 1948 issue of *Synchroscope* featured a group of young female employees lounging near a lake in bikinis. Inside, the publication took readers on “A Visit to the Survey Research Center” with a photo diary of the SRC staff “[working] hard to get the answers,” as it summarized the massive amounts of data gathered for months before at DE. It pictured Charlie Cannell sorting questionnaires as they arrive at the university; Donald Pelz overseeing the work of the diligent “coding group”; and staffer Hellen Low verifying the results of spiraling, printed tapes containing questionnaire data. After more photos of tabulated cards and analyzing sessions, was a smiling photo of Rensis Likert, “busy finding out what we employees like best—and what we like least—about our jobs.” See *Synchroscope*, September 1948, folder 21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

A follow-up article the following September—almost a year later—featured photographs indicative of continued action among all ranks of DE employees. The survey results had not simply inspired strategizing among the suits, it suggested, but had provoked a veritable torrent of brainstorming at all levels of the organization. The opening of the article promised:

There has been a lot of action on the employee survey since preliminary results were reported in *Synchroscope* last December. The pictures on these three pages show you the kind of meetings that have been taking place all over the company—quiet, friendly, constructive meetings where folks in each department can get together to talk over informally the local situation. One of the helpful uses of the survey is that it is encouraging council members, department heads, supervisors and all of us to sit down together and talk things over. Out of these meetings and conversations we are developing a fuller understanding—a mutual understanding—of what it takes to improve the teamwork of working together.⁶⁹

This “adventure in better understanding,” the article assured, “will continue in the months ahead, giving us all an opportunity to make our company an even better company...our selves happier in our work...our service to the people of southeastern Michigan an even better service.”⁷⁰

The article featured photos of some of the usual suspects: President Parker discussing results with council members; the Sales Department and Assistant Treasurer discussing how to improve employee-supervisor understanding of the retirement plan. But it also showed foreman eagerly leaning over piles of data, construction shop men discussing surveys while eating lunch at a table they had requested from supervisors, and motor transportation workers discussing “their current feelings about needed improvements.” More than two years later, in December 1951, *Synchroscope* announced more evidence of the survey’s impact. In 1948, 61% of workers had expressed dissatisfaction with the retirement plan; by December 1951, after a series of

⁶⁹ *Synchroscope*, September 1949, folder 21, box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 17.

⁷⁰ *Synchroscope*, September 1949, 17.

meetings with employees and the union, the retirement plan had been revamped.⁷¹ In 1948, 68% of employees had wanted more information regarding company-wide job openings; by December 1951, there was a new “well liked” communication system in place. The publication promised that Detroit Edison would continue to conduct informal sample methods for the indefinite future.

The Detroit Edison study marked a turning point for the ISR and, on a more individual level, Rensis Likert. Having conducted a major study on organizational development, the ISR attracted many more corporate clients in the coming decades, conducting studies for Maytag, Studebaker, Caterpillar, General Motors, General Mills, Standard Oil, and Texas Instruments. Likert also corresponded with executives from AT&T, Sears, the Ford Motor Company, and Allied Chemical. The ISR never ceased conducting studies of social and political problems, which remained significant parts of its institutional agenda, but these corporate experiments supplied the majority of funding and helped keep the ISR prosperous throughout the 1950s.

The DE study had also set a new methodological precedent for blending the interview and survey techniques of the Survey Research Center with the more experiential methods of the Research Center for Group Dynamics. In this new model, surveys emerged as the centerpiece of a larger human relations project, providing data but also sparking so-called democratic communication within the workplace. For the companies involved, ISR’s surveys seemed to promise a more satisfied and productive workplace that was, ideally, less likely to turn to unions for both material and psychological needs. From the perspective of Likert and his comrades, evolving techniques of survey research promised to usher in a utopian era characterized by

⁷¹ *Synchroscope*, December 1951, folder “#21 – PUBLICITY,” box 14, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

democratic relationships, productive organizations, and an absence of conflict in social institutions.

The ISR's work for the Office of Naval Research did more than solidify the institution's reputation within the young field of Organizational Behavior. It also propelled Rensis Likert's rise as a prominent management theorist. Overseeing studies of organizations like Detroit Edison, Maytag, and Prudential Life Insurance, Likert began to formulate concrete rules about the qualities of effective management. His publications of the 1950 and 1960s argued that the managers of the country's most productive organizations operated according to a consistent set of principles: They treated their employees as people as opposed to machines; they afforded subordinates freedom as well as structured guidance; they communicated regularly with subordinates about work and personal concerns; they nurtured group loyalties. Most importantly, as Likert asserted in treatise after treatise for nearly two and a half decades, effective supervisors encouraged their subordinates to participate in decision making. This practice, which Likert later labeled "System 4," was also referred to as participative or democratic management in the literature of his day.

According to Likert, participative management would serve as both organizational and social panacea. It would nurture personal growth and ego recognition individuals, unforeseen levels of productivity in organizations, and generally harmonious relationships in postwar society at large. With such pronouncements, Likert joined the ranks of humanistic management theorists like Douglas McGregor, Chris Argyris, and Abraham Maslow. He remained a vehement proselytizer of participative management until his death in the early 1980s, by which point he had left ISR to establish his own management consulting firm. In Likert's theoretical works, the

graphs and statistics of survey research melded with the lofty psychological concerns of Maslowian psychology, with participation emerging as the ultimate antidote to both material and emotional dilemmas of postwar capitalism.

Likert worked on *New Patterns of Management* from 1952 – in the immediate aftermath of the Detroit Edison study—to 1959, writing on weekend and vacations during his long stint as director of the ISR.⁷² By that time, Likert had started integrating the ISR’s organizational findings with some of what he had gleaned during his days at the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau and the Division of Program Surveys. His magnum opus promised motivation, morale, productivity, and democracy through the use of quantitative and open-ended surveys, feedback sessions, and management training in group dynamics—the techniques he had developed and refined throughout his career as a social scientist. In the early life insurance studies, Likert later reflected, "All I did ... was to [show] that the more managers behaved in ways which at that time I said met an agent's desire for ego recognition (later on they called it personal worth) ... the higher the morale and the more successful the agency was."⁷³ By the 1950s, it had become clear to him that one could measure those behaviors through surveying, on a scale of “highly punitive to less punitive,” or from “exploitative authoritarian” to “participative.” He had also determined that one could *change* managerial attitudes and behaviors with proper techniques of feedback and training. *New Patterns* packaged 30 years of organizational and psychological research in a 250-page manual.

In the book, Likert claimed that the particular conditions of the postwar era demanded a new breed of management theory. Likert listed six “important forces” that accelerated the need

⁷² Oral history with Likert, marked “12/70, between Doug and Ren,” folder “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library. See also “Measuring Organizational Performance,” *Harvard Business Review* (1958).

⁷³ Likert Oral History 12/70, 13.

for new modes of leadership in all types of organizations—schools, hospitals, labor unions, corporations.⁷⁴ First, the US was experiencing increased competition from other industrially developed countries around the world. and “one way of holding a satisfactory share of the market, domestically and abroad, will be to increase the productivity of our enterprises.”⁷⁵ Second, Likert noted more abstract psychological changes taking place within the American populace as a whole. ISR interviews with supervisors and managers, he explained, had revealed shifting attitudes toward authority:

[P]eople are less willing to accept pressure and close supervisions than was the case a decade or two ago. The trend in America, generally, in our schools, in our homes, and in our communities, is toward giving the individual greater freedom and initiative. There are fewer direct, unexplained orders in schools and homes, and youngsters are participating increasingly in the decisions which affect them.⁷⁶

He connected this mainstream anti-authoritarian impulse to a third postwar development: a substantial increase in the educational level of the work force. Likert explained that in 1940, 39.1% of workers had a high school or college education; by 1959, that number was 62%, and growing. Education in turn increased workers’ high expectations for “the amount of responsibility, authority, and income they will receive.”⁷⁷

Likert noted a number of additional distinct factors in the postwar landscape: the increasing cultural concern with the “growth of individuals into healthy, emotionally mature adults”; a growing “restless dissatisfaction” with current management theories and practices; and an increasing number of workers with training in specialized, complex technological skills (in

⁷⁴ Rensis Likert, *New Patterns of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), v. It is worth noting that while celebratory of the practical application of his ideas in the non-profit realm, Likert focused this book on methods of industrial management. He would later attract criticism for disregarding the important differences between these two realms.

⁷⁵ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 1.

⁷⁶ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 1.

⁷⁷ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 2.

fields like plastics, electronics, and missiles) who needed to be managed in distinctly modern ways. He notably did not mention the ways in which any of these cultural trends—restlessness, dissatisfaction, increased education—translated into higher rates of unionization, turnover, or absenteeism across the industrial landscape.

Having established these premises, Likert offered a manifesto sprinkled with chart after chart relating data about managerial techniques and worker attitudes: bar graphs, flow charts, and grids communicating the results of a decade of ISR studies. The quantitative and statistically derived charts were intended to transfer Likert's general observations of management behavior into scientific fact – but the observations themselves often reinforced a more fundamentally emotional, humanistic worldview. Likert argued that according to study after study, managers inspired the most productivity in their employees when they took a “employee-centered approach” rather than a “job-centered” one. Taylorist management broke jobs down into simple tasks, hired people to do those simple tasks, and supervised them closely until the tasks were done. Employee-centered management, on the other hand, focused on “the human aspects of subordinates’ problems” and aimed to build effective work groups with “high performance goals.”

Likert quoted one “high-production” manager from a 1952 study who had explained that he “[let] people do the job they want so long as they accomplish the objectives.” “I believe in letting them take time out from the monotony,” he explained, and also in making employees feel that “they are something special...not just run of the mill.”⁷⁸ He tended to shed corporate formalities in favor of trusting interpersonal relations, discussing problems with employees at their desks rather than in his office (“Sometimes I sit on a waste paper basket or lean on the

⁷⁸ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 7.

files”) and getting to know each individual well.⁷⁹ According to Likert, this type of manager ultimately inspired higher rates of productivity per man hour, satisfaction, and motivation among employees. He also registered lower rates of turnover, absenteeism, and scrap loss. Likert asserted that research in many industrial sectors (automobiles, chemicals, electronics, insurance) all drove the same point home.

Likert was adamant that the productivity-boosting manager offered his subordinates a very particular sort of freedom. While this manager eschewed close, hovering supervision and punishments, he exuded a fundamental commitment to and investment in his employee’s work. It was one thing to give an employee “the freedom to do the job at his own pace, guided by his own ideas about how to do the job best”; it was another to exude a form of laissez-faire permissiveness that inspired organizational anarchy. And while it was helpful to express interest in an employee’s personal life, too much emphasis on these concerns could trump productivity in the workplace. The most successful supervisors treated employees like “human beings” while respecting the hierarchical organizational structure and offering structured leadership. They fostered group loyalties by holding frequent work meetings, communicating constantly with subordinates about job concerns, creating “cooperative” goals, and encouraging a sense of commitment to all other members of the larger organization.⁸⁰ What emerged was a circumscribed brand of freedom in which the employee “knows and accepts what is expected of

⁷⁹ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 7.

⁸⁰ Likert offered what he would later call managerial “technologies” and structures to help an organization transition into the new age of heightened communication. In what he called his “linking pin” theory, Likert proposed breaking an organization into overlapping groups, with some managers serving as members of more than one group. Like McGregor’s “Theory Y” managers, these people would help level the distribution of power across the organization—making sure that “mutual influence” would become more powerful than “authoritarian influence. The overlapping groups would foster cooperation and encourage lateral communication.

him and often takes a major role in setting the goals himself.⁸¹ In Likert's ideal organization, the individual who felt that his needs were being attended to by a superior would ultimately adopt the group's goals as his own.⁸²

Likert formalized these principles in what became the most famous chapter of his book. In "Comparative View of Organizations," he laid out four different categories of organizations (which would, in his next book, come to be known as Systems 1 – 4).⁸³ The first system, "exploitative authoritative" (i.e. System 1), capitalized on employees' desire for status and security; its managers ruled by "fear, threats, punishment, and occasional rewards." The next, "benevolent authoritative" (System 2), fed on workers' "economic and occasionally ego motives" and ruled through a system of rewards and punishment. The next system was called "consultative" (System 3) for its blend of employee involvement with more traditional forms of punishment and rewards. Finally, there was the pinnacle of organizational evolution: "Participative group" management, aka System 4. Within this model, groups set their own goals, approved their own progress, and even agreed on their own compensation system. System 4 harnessed worker motivations—for money, status, and ego recognition – for the sake of the individual, the organization, and the group. Likert assured readers that material rewards accompanied the systems in ascending order, contrasting System 1's "mediocre" productivity with System 4's "excellent" levels, and inverse levels of turnover or waste.

⁸¹ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 24.

⁸² Likert was well aware of his predecessors in these theoretical realms. He acknowledged the work of Mayo, Lewin, and Roethlisberger's work on the effectiveness of groups and the importance of peer-group loyalty. He also acknowledged Argyris's work on the virtues of integrating the individual with the organization. He knew that he was not treading entirely new ground here, but rather offering new ISR data to back up those findings, along with a relatively novel survey feedback technique that could be used to reach human relations goals.

⁸³ Likert, *New Patterns of Management*, 223.

New Patterns of Management was greeted with a largely favorable critical response. One reviewer of the “important book” in the “Michigan tradition” applauded Likert for avoiding the “shrill, value-laden, emotional tone” common to human relations books, countering the genre’s standard subjectivity with “specification of findings” and “rich” data. This reviewer also appreciated Likert’s acknowledgement of *executive* morale and motivations, as opposed to the usual focus on just workers and supervisors – a shift indicative, the reviewer said, of the field’s progress since the writings of Mayo and Lewin.⁸⁴ Another reviewer heralded Likert’s book as “required reading” for those interested in human relations. Though Likert defended his theories with “missionary enthusiasm” and could strike the casual reader as “tender-minded,” he deserved credit for his balance of emotional and material concerns: “All of the humanistic solutions given are heavily rationalized as leading to better performance *in the long run*, when *all costs* (human and material) are computed.”⁸⁵ Likert’s “tough concern with getting the job done” and his commitment to “the service of a higher rationality” buffered him from some of the criticisms of his more touchy-feely peers (to be discussed in Chapter 11). Harold Leavitt, a renowned behavioral scientist in his own right, celebrated Likert’s presentation of empirical data in contrast to McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise*, which was more of a “think-type exposition.”⁸⁶

That said, Likert’s reviewers all hinted at the brand off critique that would trail him throughout his career as a management theorist. One reviewer praised Likert for his “departure

⁸⁴ Amitai Etzioni, Review of *New Patterns of Management* by Rensis Likert, *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 5 (October 1962): 709-710.

⁸⁵ Thomas Lodahl, Review of *New Patterns of Management* by Rensis Likert, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 17, no. 2 (January 1964): 336.

⁸⁶ Harold J. Leavitt, Review of *New Patterns of Management* by Rensis Likert, *Management Science* 9, no. 1 (October 1962): 162. Note that Leavitt was not entirely negative about McGregor’s book, which had been published the year before Likert’s. He writes that both of them have “done excellent jobs of presenting this human relations perspective,” and that the two authors have “a great deal in common,” stemming from the lineage of Mayo, Lewin, and Carl Rogers. But Leavitt is ultimately more satisfied by the quantitative approach taken by Likert in *New Patterns* than by McGregor’s more qualitative approach.

from the armchair tradition” of contemporary human relations work and applauded his use of empirical data, but questioned the accuracy of his conclusions: While the ISR data did indicate clearly that participative management encouraged “more favorable employee attitudes,” this reviewer found that “its advantages in terms of production and efficiency are by no means certain.”⁸⁷ Thomas Lodahl similarly acknowledged that the entire social science of organizations was still in a “primitive state” and alleged that “management, like psychotherapy, is still largely an art,” though Likert’s book represented a move in the right direction.⁸⁸ Harold Leavitt expressed his own lingering concerns about the causal relationship, “if any,” between productivity and morale and questioned Likert’s conclusions about the short-term nature of hierarchical management results.⁸⁹ Like many of Likert’s future critics, these reviewers also expressed concern about the reductive nature of Likert’s work. They cited his eagerness to apply his theories to all brands of organization (small and large, for-profit and voluntary), his static view of hierarchical management, and his categorical dismissals of certain brains of management, regardless of the circumstances.⁹⁰

Six years after the publication of *New Patterns of Management*, Likert returned undaunted with an evangelistic endorsement of participative management. In *The Human Organization* (1967), Likert reiterated many of the theories of *New Patterns* in a more user-friendly format.⁹¹ This volume, filled with do-it-yourself questionnaires and charts, was aimed at

⁸⁷ Raymond Katzell, Review of *New Patterns of Management*, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (September 1963): 273.

⁸⁸ Lodahl 336.

⁸⁹ Leavitt 162.

⁹⁰ See Leavitt and also Frank Sherwood, “The View from the Outside,” Review of *New Patterns of Management* by Rensis Likert, *Public Administration Review* 23, no. 4 (December 1963): 247-252.

⁹¹ Rensis Likert, *The Human Organization; Its Management and Value* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

the manager who wanted to deduce his placement on the spectrum of Systems 1 through 4. Using these questionnaires, managers could check off boxes indicating the extent of their collaboration with underlings; the extent to which they knew about subordinates' personal lives; and their openness to criticism. These questions echoed some of those used back in the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau studies of the 1930s, but now with more pointed implications. Having located himself on the scale of management styles, the manager in question would theoretically make moves towards achieving the participative ideal, by following Likert's instructions for open communication, continuous group work, and feedback sessions. Likert bolstered his reassertion of these principles with evidence from new organizational studies at ISR, including data from a study of the Weldon Company, which had been purchased by the Harwood Company and adopted a participative management program with ostensibly spectacular results.⁹²

To such case studies of organizational change, Likert added his newly articulated system of "human asset accounting"—a process of "attaching dollar estimates to the value of a firm's human organization and its customer good will."⁹³ Human asset accounting was designed to satisfy those executives who demanded dollar signs attached to their progress in human relations: it translated morale and worker satisfaction into dollar values that employees could total up with the rest of their assets. According to Likert, these tangible assets were actually very significant indicators of an organization's productivity and success. The very premise of calculating such assets encapsulated Likert's contributions to the field of postwar management theory: He had found a way to synthesize the quantitative approach of survey research with the more nebulous

⁹² Note that this same study was chronicled at length in Alfred Jay Marrow, *Management by Participation; Creating a Climate for Personal and Organizational Development* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). This work was a collaborative effort of Marrow, Bowers, and Seashore.

⁹³ *Human Organization* 148.

concerns of humanistic psychology, emerging with a system that could appeal to both hardnosed industrial realists and lofty, reform-minded idealists.

In 1968, the Industrial Conference Board published a 175-page report entitled *Behavioral Science: Concepts and Management Application* about the “growing number of companies” turning to behavioral science like Likert’s for knowledge about worker motivation and morale.⁹⁴ According to this researched report, 80% of surveyed firms reported “some interest” in the behavioral sciences; and of the 302 surveyed firms, 88 said that Rensis Likert had influenced their management structure, making him the third most popularly cited theorist around.⁹⁵ The report’s author, Harold Rush, profiled a number of corporations at which Likert’s techniques loomed large. The Hotel Corporation of America (HCA), a 7,000-employee operation run by Roger Sonnabend, had launched an intensive program of survey feedback amongst all levels of management, which produced a large body of data about the company’s communication structures. These data were used as springboard for a three-day, feedback-heavy conference held offsite, which in turn spawned a broad Organizational Development initiative focused on improving communication between second-level management and their superiors.

A former vice president of human resources later enumerated the pros and cons of HCA’s endeavor: On the one hand, he observed top management’s commitment to “a meaningful business philosophy” and the idea “that people are important,” along with “an extremely open and candid atmosphere at the top.” But this former executive conceded that HCA still had room to grow or had, in some instances, gone too far. Rush reported of the VP: “He feels that the

⁹⁴See “Highlights for the executive” in Harold M. F. Rush, *Behavioral Science: Concepts and Management Application*, Studies in Personnel Policy no. 216 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1969).

⁹⁵ Rush 10.

company's strong insistence upon decentralization 'has made control a dirty word,'" while at the same time, "central office 'exerts more control than it admits,' thereby blurring the whole concept of decentralization."⁹⁶ On the whole, HCA executives expressed optimism about their future as a "System 4" organization built on participation and open communication, but also recognized the continuing need for traditional controls in their management system."⁹⁷

The Conference Board report also related at least semi-successful experiments in System 4 management at the Raymond Corporation (a producer of construction equipment in NY state); Steinburg's Limited (a food wholesaler in Montreal); and TRW Systems Group (an aerospace technology company in California). At these companies, System 4 served as a theoretical springboard for experiential work in group dynamics, such as sensitivity training and the managerial grid.

The influence of all of these techniques had, according to Rush, also spread outside the US. The management committee of a Mexico City-based pharmaceutical company called the Syntex Corporation (which produced steroid hormones and oral contraceptives) met in the mid-1960s and decided that they wanted an organizational system modeled on Likert's System 4, with "decisions pushed down into the organization as far as possible."⁹⁸ In 1966, Syntex—which had research centers in Palo Alto, Sweden, Spain, and other international locations—hired a behavioral scientist to help it implement a long-term organizational development program with

⁹⁶ Rush 111.

⁹⁷ Rush 112.

⁹⁸ Rush 130. One manager expressed confidence that these goals would be particularly attainable at an organization like Syntex because "the characteristics of a participative organization are inherent in the scientific tradition, in which people share information, work cooperatively, are experimental and innovative, are motivated toward self-actualization, are interdependent, and respect and trust each other."

these objectives in mind⁹⁹ By 1968, a vice president reported some changes in the organization: more “introspection and instantaneous feedback among managers,” a greater commitment to subordinates’ career paths, more involvement of rank and file employees, and lower rates of absenteeism. At the same time, the VP recognized that “most analyses have been based on subjective evaluations rather than objective measurement,” and conceded that the large population of scientists at Syntex had expressed a demand for more quantitative data.¹⁰⁰ Even the most enthusiastic supporters of System 4 and related training efforts, it seemed, grappled with the connection between psychological benefits and bottom-line results.

One of the most famous companies to experiment with participative management in the 1960s was Texas Instruments, a Dallas-based corporation producing electronics and military products with a staff of 48,000 employees.¹⁰¹ Texas Instrument’s experiments in organizational development were the subject of the widely read articles and book by M. Scott Myers, TI’s Management Research Consultant and industrial psychologist.¹⁰² TI had experienced a rapid spate of growth after 1952, when it expanded its petroleum contracting business and started making transistors. For almost ten years, its staff and scope grew rapidly along with profits; but in the early 1960s, its increased production coincided with a faster decrease in the market’s prices for semi-conductors, and TI’s top management struggled to maintain a balance between its culture of family-style entrepreneurialism and a need for higher productivity and lower labor

⁹⁹ Note that Syntex’s efforts also involved extensive sensitivity training programs.

¹⁰⁰ Rush 136.

¹⁰¹ Rush 139.

¹⁰²Rush 139-156. Also M. Scott Myers, *Every Employee a Manager; More Meaningful Work Through Job Enrichment* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970); M. Scott Myers, “Who Are Your Motivated Workers?,” *Harvard Business Review* 42, no. 1 (February 1964): 73–88.

costs.¹⁰³ Its extensive behavioral science project was designed to increase individual motivation among employees and lift the company's profits.

The Texas Instruments experiment, one of the most famous organizational development efforts of the 1960s and the subject of a series of articles in the *Harvard Business Review*, reinforced the legitimacy of System 4 management – providing what Myers called “cooperative evidence of the wastefulness of bureaucracy and the advantages of democracy.”¹⁰⁴ . Employees completed questionnaires on which they were asked to rate statements like: “Everyone helps set goals for his work group”; “Employees have plenty of freedom on the job to use their own judgment”; and “Supervisors feel a responsibility to help individuals develop and grow with the organization.”¹⁰⁵ Company directives ordered that supervisors change their roles from “authority-oriented” to “goal-oriented” and urged supervisors to build work environments in which people could have “a sense of working for themselves.”¹⁰⁶ According to Myers, these surveys and the intensive programs that followed had resulted in improvements for “such diverse criteria as reduced costs, higher yields, less scrap, accelerated learning time, fewer complaints and trips to the health center, reduced anxiety and improved attitudes and team efforts, and increased profits.”¹⁰⁷ TI was gradually transforming work from “punishment” into “opportunity” by making it “meaningful” for employees at all levels and challenging the fundamental nature of the “authority-oriented foreman” and the “conformity-oriented operator.” Myers concluded that

¹⁰³ Rush 139-40.

¹⁰⁴ Myers, “Who Are Your Motivated Workers?” 9.

¹⁰⁵ Rush 153.

¹⁰⁶ Myers, “Who Are Your Motivated Workers?” 17.

¹⁰⁷ Myers, “Who Are Your Motivated Workers?” 9.

TI's efforts had, by 1968, made significant progress toward shattering the “management-labor dichotomy” and making—as his book later promised—“every employee a manager.”¹⁰⁸

By the end of the 1960s, experiments in participative management had proven to be at least initially successfully, and Likert was crowned as one of the reigning kings of behavioral science – with one admirer calling him the “Picasso of Organizational Research.”¹⁰⁹ At the same time, according to one member of the field, “only a handful of companies have had the courage to apply Rensis Likert’s findings.”¹¹⁰ Likert thus stood at a crossroads: the coming decade would bring either the triumph of participative management and further validation of his logic, or his ideas would gradually fade from corporate consciousness. In 1971, Likert decided to take a gamble. He retired as director of the ISR and started up his own management consulting firm, called Rensis Likert Associates (RLA). In the coming decade, he continued to consult frequently with ISR, but he focused much of his energy on propagating System 4 through his private consulting firm.

At RLA, Likert and his colleagues focused on working with corporations, but actively tried to extend System 4 management principles into the non-profit realm of governments, cities, and schools. Likert envisioned an entire social fabric of free-flowing communication, open relations, and democratic supervision. An early RLA handbook for the “unique” consulting firm announced its dedication to “improving the productive capability of the human organization” but with an explicitly bottom-line goal: to “translate the learnings of behavioral science into practical

¹⁰⁸ Myers, “Who Are Your Motivated Workers?” 18.

¹⁰⁹ William F. Dowling, “Conversation with Rensis Likert,” *Organizational Dynamics* 2, no. 1 (1973): 33-49, 33.

¹¹⁰ Marvin Weisbord, “Management in Crisis: Must You Liquidate People?” from *The Conference Board Record* (February 1970): 10-16, file “Transcripts of Oral History Interviews,” box 1, Likert papers, Bentley Library, 11.

applications technology to benefit a wide variety of organizations in terms of improved productivity and performance.”¹¹¹ RLA would deliver these end results through survey feedback sessions, as perfected at ISR, and Likert’s method of “Human Organization Assessment.”

In 1975, Rensis Likert Associates led a well-publicized organizational development program at the General Motors Lakewood Plant near Atlanta, Georgia. This effort, which was chronicled in the journal *Organizational Dynamics*, pointed to System 4’s continuing promise and some of its damning ambiguities.¹¹² In an article entitled “At General Motors: System 4 Builds Performance and Profits,” reporter William Dowling quoted the retired president of GM raving about System 4, “The boys are spreading it as fast as they can”—and describing an unprecedented number of System 4 managers “moving into key positions at GM.”¹¹³ According to Dowling, System 4 management had transformed GM’s Lakewood plant from one of the company’s worst to one of its best, thanks to a personnel manager named Frank Schotters. Schotters entered the plant determined to convert its “System 2” management to System 4, implementing “more than 20,000 hours of training” for plant personnel during the first year of its project. He made hourly employees aware of organizational changes, future products, and cost data—information previously kept tightly confidential—and gave hourly workers feedback about their own labor costs, compared to other plants. Schotters also established new training programs for foremen and gave them “utility trainers” who could focus on the nitty-gritty of operations while they focused on managing people.¹¹⁴ Workers sat down with engineers who

¹¹¹ Rensis Likert Associates Handbook, folder “RLA, RLA Handbook,” box 22, Likert papers, Bentley Library.

¹¹² William Dowling, “At General Motors: System 4 Builds Performance and Profits,” *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter 1975, 23–28; Dowling, “At Lever Brothers: Sales Moves toward System 4,” *Organizational Dynamics*, Summer 1973, 50–66.

¹¹³ Dowling, “At General Motors,” 23.

¹¹⁴ Dowling, “At General Motors,” 27.

helped them redesign their work areas, and operators got chances to give suggestions about the nature of their jobs.

In the first year of the program, Dowling explained, “human organization scores” increased rapidly while “productivity and cost deteriorated.”¹¹⁵ But two and three years into the experiment, the downward trend reversed and labor efficiency began to climb, creating a “substantial” overall improvement in plant efficiency between 1969 and 1972.¹¹⁶ By 1975, Lakewood was “still one of the best-performing assembly plants at General Motors,” and the System 4 effect had been corroborated by comparing the human organization and efficiency scores to those of two other plants in Georgia and Michigan.¹¹⁷ Dowling acknowledged some necessary caveats – like the short-term nature of the study, the limited sample of plants, and the fact that not all of the decisions at Lakewood were ever made my consensus. But he concluded that the Lakewood experience likely ranked “as the most impressive validation of Likert’s theory to appear in print to date.”¹¹⁸ He ended his story on an optimistic note: Perhaps these “not-so-brilliant times” would inspire more companies to experiment with human resources, rather than lock into old-fashioned methods of organizational control.¹¹⁹

Likert never stopped insisting that System 4 was a capitalist science capable of delivering tangible improvements in profit, productivity, efficiency, and labor performance. He pitched participative management using economic incentives first and foremost, and expressed a

¹¹⁵ Dowling, “At General Motors,” 29.

¹¹⁶ Note that the article remained vague on statistics because GM would not make these figures public.

¹¹⁷ Dowling, “At General Motors,” 30.

¹¹⁸ Dowling, “At General Motors,” 31.

¹¹⁹ Dowling, “At General Motors,” 33.

consistent commitment to economic expansion. Yet interviews with Likert from the later part of his career reflect a broader motivation for his endorsement of participation: For him, System 4 administration could be an agent social evolution. “I think there is a basic desire on the part of mankind,” he explained in 1970, “to develop more effective ways of learning to work with and in cooperation with rather than in conflict with his fellow man. He can learn to live cooperatively – how to work together and coordinate human effort.”¹²⁰ Likert acknowledged that the US had already experienced great stages in this “social evolution,” with occurrences like the American Revolution and the Civil Rights movement, but foresaw a phase of development that would make such conflict fundamentally obsolete. He promised, “[W]e have reached a level of productivity today that we don’t need exploitation of human labor to live well. So it is not necessary for people who want to live well to exploit the great masses.”¹²¹

Naïve as Likert’s convictions may strike us in retrospect – the very idea that American society could outgrow conflict and class strife—these sentiments offer some clarity regarding his own philosophical motivations. From his earliest days of ISR research on behalf of the Office of Navy Research to his final tenure within his management consulting firm, Likert was not simply trying to spread a particular rhetoric or style of social cohesion in a divided society. In his mind, the US was on its way to transcending its longstanding conflicts, and needed a new system of egalitarian administration to support the organizations of the future. He looked sympathetically at the students of the New Left demanding participative democracy, explaining that while “we have legitimized the right of the people to be involved in decisions affecting them, . . . we have not

¹²⁰Rensis Likert 12/70 Oral History, 22.

¹²¹ Rensis Likert 12/70 Oral History, 23.

changed the institutions in which people live to enable them to be involved in decisions.”¹²² The government, schools, communities and corporations simply needed to catch up with the philosophical and economic conditions of the future. The right kinds of organizations would guide American society into a phase of humane democracy that was—in Likert’s eyes—inevitable. His broad concerns about humankind, though often expressed in quantitative terms, shared foundational assumptions with the foremost humanistic thinkers of his day.

¹²² Rensis Likert 12/70 Oral History.

Chapter 9 Maslow on Management in the 1960s

By the time that Abraham Maslow's second book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, was published in 1962, the psychologist had transformed into a cultural icon. Legend has it that in the summer of that year, while driving through the fog on California's Big Sur coastal highway, Maslow was drawn to an intriguing sign that read "Esalen," and pulled over to explore. He soon found himself in the country's first "human potential" and personal growth center, a bastion of early countercultural types dedicated to self-exploration in cliff-side hot springs. Coincidentally, on the day of his arrival, Esalen staffers had just received copies of his recent book—a testament to his transformation from academic outsider to popular-psychology guru.¹

Maslow's new book built upon the ideas published in *Motivation and Personality*, but presented more philosophical meditations on the nature of personality and experience. In his 1962 volume, Maslow argued that each person contains an "essential inner nature" that is fundamentally good. Each person's nature is to some extent unique, and to some extent common, containing qualities shared across all people and cultures. As people learn and exist in the world, the voices of their inner natures tend to become weaker and quieter, and can be "very easily drowned out by learning, by cultural expectations, by fear, disapproval, etc."² Because the inner nature is a fundamentally positive force, the healthiest and most authentic people are those who learn how to *hear* their inner "impulse-voices" and let them guide their sense of what they are meant to do in the world. If we can "bring out" and "encourage" the voice, Maslow argued,

¹ See Abraham H Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1962). This opening anecdote can be found at http://www.abraham-maslow.com/m_motivation/Motivation-and-Personality.asp, accessed April 1, 2012. For more on Maslow's relationship with Esalen, see Walt Anderson, *The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the American Awakening* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1983); Jeffrey John Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

² Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*.

and if it is “permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy.”³ Conversely, if we suppress our inner voices, we become “sick,” either in the present or in the future.

Maslow extended his argument beyond the realm of the individual, locating critical processes in society at large. “A new vision is emerging of the possibilities of man and of his destiny,” he promised, “and its implications are many, not only for our conceptions of education, but also for science, politics, literature, economics, religion, and even our conceptions of the non-human world.”⁴ A sick culture, he explained, encourages the stifling and repression of spontaneity and self-expression, while a healthy culture grants its members opportunities to hear their inner voices and act without the mediation of criticism or control.

Maslow classified a new subset of psychology as “Being” psychology, which would focus on the moment of the “peak experience.” The peak experience built upon Maslow’s existing conception of self-actualization: it was the moment in which one experienced creative pleasure, self-insight, and “mystic communion” and identified one’s “essential biologically based inner nature” and “deepest needs.”⁵ Maslow couched individual transcendence within a larger quest for the unification of mankind: “The ‘good human being’ can be defined only against some criterion of humanness...A good human being (or tiger or apple tree) is good to the extent that it fulfills or satisfies the concept ‘human being’ (or tiger or apple tree).”⁶ While Maslow once again presented his work as subset of psychology, claiming empirical evidence for his theories of peak experience and self-actualization, his writing had veered into new territory. One reviewer wrote that “although Professor Maslow's book is addressed to students of psychology, it is laced

³ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 4.

⁴ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 177.

⁵ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 69; 150.

⁶ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 160.

with philosophically provocative contentions.’’⁷ With this new work, Maslow called into question the contours of selfhood, the value of culture, the nature of man, and the meaning of existence itself.⁸

Surprisingly, Maslow ultimately found that the most suitable context for his philosophical ruminations was not Esalen or one of its countercultural offshoots, but a series of American corporations and the rising field of organizational psychology. As previous chapters have addressed, Abraham Maslow’s ideas were a foundational inspiration for much of the humanistic management theory of the 1950s and ‘60s, but Maslow himself did not put thought into management techniques – or read McGregor’s treatise—until the early 1960s, when he became interested in American industry as the next pivotal arena of large-scale social change. After observing corporate relationships firsthand and immersing himself in the humanistic management theories of his day, he published his own revelations about enlightened management.

His 1965 book *Eupsychian Management*, in turn, spawned a new chapter of Maslow’s career—one in which he hobnobbed with corporate executives, delivered speeches at business schools, consulted with businesses, and entered active dialogues with the management theorists

⁷ I. Thalberg, Review of *Toward a Psychology of Being* by Abraham Maslow, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 25, o. 2 (Dec., 1964): 288.

⁸ It is worth noting here that in asking these questions, Maslow was not alone: He belonged, rather, to a cadre of existential psychologists like Rollo May who were asking those very same questions, trying to bridge the philosophy of Nietzsche or Sartre with modern psychological insights into mental processes and motivation. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner, 1955); Rollo May, *The Art of Counseling* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1939); Rollo May, *The Discovery of Being: Writings in Existential Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1983); Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

of his day.⁹ The ten years before his death in 1970 found Maslow emerging simultaneously as a figurehead of the West Coast counterculture and of America's transforming business culture. Maslow saw no fundamental tension between these two worlds. The more critical he became of the counterculture's individualistic tendencies, the more confident he grew that American organizations could be a significant agent of mass self-actualization. Over the course of the 1960s, Maslow's support of Theory Y management reflected both a patriotic commitment to American growth and a conviction that all workers could find enlightenment if offered the right tools.

Maslow's formal entry into the world of management theory came about thanks to a man named Andrew Kay, whom he met in 1958. Kay was the CEO of Non-Linear Systems, a digital test equipment company founded in 1952 and based out of Del Mar, California, famous for producing the first commercial digital voltmeter.¹⁰ The company, which employed 350 people in 1964, was non-unionized and originally functioned with a strictly pyramidal structure. By 1964, it was conducting about \$7 million in business annually.¹¹ Kay himself was a child of eastern European immigrants who became interested in chemicals and electronics as a teenager. According to Andrew Gabor, he tried to reproduce Nikola Tesla's rocket propulsion experiments in his parents' basement, nearly blowing his leg off, before heading to MIT for a Bachelors

⁹ Abraham H Maslow, *Eupsychian Management: A Journal*, The Irwin-Dorsey Series in Behavioral Science (Homewood, Ill: R.D. Irwin, 1965); republished as Abraham H. Maslow, *Maslow on Management*, 1st ed. (Wiley, 1998).

¹⁰ Non-Linear Systems was renamed Kaypro Corporation in 1982, after releasing a personal computer of the same name. The company declared bankruptcy in 1984. As of the publication of *Maslow on Management*, Kay was the CEO of Kay Computers.

¹¹ "Motivating Employees to be Manager's [sic] Partners," *Personnel Management*, 25 February 1964, 625-30, from folder "Management: No Author," box M415, Maslow papers, AHAP.

degree and then to work for a company called Jet Propulsion Industries after World War II.¹² Launching Non-Linear Systems a few years later, he joined a legion of engineers on the West Coast committed to innovating digital technology; one writer christened him “one of the fathers of the digital revolution.”¹³

Kay first encountered Maslow’s *Motivation and Personality* in the late 1950s, when he was experimenting with ways “to unleash the potential” of the several hundred employees who worked on his company’s assembly lines.¹⁴ After several years of operating his company, he had noticed a pattern in the morale of these workers: The workers at the beginning of the line were unhappy, while “the happiest ones were at the end of the line that finished the job”¹⁵ – because, he concluded, those at the beginning had “little or no contact with the final product,” and therefore no “closure” or “sense of job well done.”¹⁶ Kay began reading voraciously in the field of motivational psychology in search of a technique that would stimulate this feeling of accomplishment in all members of his assembly line, not just those at the end. With Maslow’s *Motivation and Personality* as his guide, he embarked on a “radical management experiment” to boost the health and happiness of his workforce, convinced that the self-actualization of his employees would also fuel their productivity.¹⁷

¹² Andrea Gabor, *The Capitalist Philosophers: The Geniuses of Modern Business--Their Lives, Times, and Ideas*, (New York: Times Business, 2000), 180.

¹³ Maslow, *Maslow on Management*, 116. Note that this book contains supplementary material—including interviews with management theorists – by Deborah C. Stephs and Gary Heil.

¹⁴ *Maslow on Management*, 116.

¹⁵ Kay quoted in interview in *Maslow on Management*, 116.

¹⁶ Gabor 181.

¹⁷ Gabor 181. Note that Kay used Peter Drucker as a guide for his management experiments as well, though not to the same extent that he drew from Maslow’s ideas.

The resulting experiment would have stirred pride in McGregor, Likert, or any other humanistic management guru of the era. Reflecting on the period, NLS vice president Arthur Kuriloff explained that while many companies of the era were “quietly experimenting” with Theory Y, his was one of the first to publicly “make the switch” and actually “[talk] about it.”¹⁸ The result of Kay’s reform was not just a new style of managerial communication, but a dismantling of the entire assembly line system--- and, within that, a rejection of Taylorist methods in favor of those closer to the pre-industrial craftsmen system. NLS did away with the assembly line, introduced a horizontal corporate structure, gave workers unprecedented autonomy in their own self-management, and increased the material rewards of the job. Kay and his collaborators believed that their experiment would not only boost the profits and productivity of their organization (which it did, in the mid-1960s), but also that they could engineer self-actualization among the ranks of their workforce.

Unlike many other experiments with Theory Y management of the era, Kay’s reforms touched every level of his organization, and were widely heralded as some of the most successful experiments of their kind.¹⁹ He and Kuriloff began by eliminating the assembly line altogether. They broke workers into teams into six or seven people, and made each team responsible for the

¹⁸ Arthur Kuriloff, “Most Men Lead Lives...of Quiet Dedication,” *Linen Supply News*, May 1964, found in folder “Management,” box M415, Maslow papers, AHAP, 21.

¹⁹ For accounts of the success of efforts, see Gabor; *Maslow on Management*; and archival sources: Kuriloff, “Testing Theory Y: Most Men Lead Lives of Quiet Dedication”; and Non-Linear Systems internal memorandum, all from folder “Management,” box M415, Maslow papers, AHAP. Also note that in an undated survey with Harvard Business School professor Fritz Roethlisberger, the professor is asked if he can think of “the most illustrative and significant instances” of the application of Theory Y. Roethlisberger lists three successful pioneers: the president of Non-Linear Systems, Shel Davis’s, TRW Systems, and Jim Clark’s work at UCLA. (See Folder: “F” #1, carton C. 1, Roethlisberger papers, Baker Library). In the same survey, Roethlisberger expresses ambivalence about the applications of Theory Y, charging that the management world has misread and oversimplified McGregor’s intentions. He chides the survey writers for asking questions that distort McGregor’s ideas—writing, “You are too hipped on X and Y theory and you apply X and Y to both subordinates and superiors and want to put square pegs in square holes and so on. In matters of human behavior the hole makes the peg and the peg makes the whole; they are mutually interacting interdependent elements. I’m sorry things are complex and not simple but don’t blame me. I didn’t make the world that way.”

entire manufacturing process, from assembly to inspection. The teams would determine their own production schedules and decide how the work could best be accomplished. Kay encouraged employees to “learn as much as they could about all of the operations” so that “it got to the point where each person in the group was able to do the entire assembly line from beginning to end.”²⁰ As the products produced by NLS grew more complicated, he encouraged workers to write and design their own work manuals—rather than delegating such duties to a staff or management position – and to organize their work in the ways they thought would work best.²¹ In most cases, one worker would be responsible for the manufacture of an entire product from start to finish, a process that could take up to three weeks. (NLS warned its customers that they should be patient with delivery times, for the company prized quality over speed.)²² One internal company memo celebrated, “What an opportunity for individual advancement and growth! Instead of the boring and stultifying experience of performing repetitive operations, one has the opportunity to uncover his latent abilities by assuming more and more of the complete task.”²³

²⁰ Kay quoted in *Maslow on Management*, 118.

²¹ In an interview with Kay published in *Maslow on Management*, he noted that this process had a particularly powerful effect on the women working at NLS, who gradually developed confidence performing a range of technical tasks of which they had previously deemed themselves incapable. One of Kay’s anecdotes pertains to a particular increase in the confidence of the Mexican women on his factory workforce. Later in the interview, Kay explains one of his projects to boost the “general English vocabulary” of his workers: He spent \$800,000 on equipment that would help them increase their vocabulary through tapes, and “Soon the women who were doing the inspection of silk screens were listening to the tapes all day long.” Later, his son got into the venture and started up vocabulary improvement centers. Kay said that he got this idea from Maslow himself, who told Kay that he had learned through research that “if one increased his vocabulary, he would also dramatically increase his learning by 10 to 100 per cent.” *Maslow on Management*, 119.

²² Kuriloff, “Most Men Lead Lives...of Quiet Dedication.”

²³ Memorandum, Non-Linear Systems, Inc. Executive Council, June 1963, “The Consultative Marketing Man (Composite Individual),” Folder “Management,” box M415, Maslow papers, AHAP.

Upon completion of a product, the worker would sign his or her name to it, thus taking pride in its accomplishment and responsibility should something go wrong—in which case a customer could return to that particular worker for repairs.²⁴ If there was a call for particularly quick delivery, two or three workers in a group might pitch in to make a device together, but the original builder maintained “prime responsibility for its perfection.”²⁵ According to Kuriloff, the idea of “closure”—that an employee should have the opportunity to complete a task from start to finish—was central to his company’s implementation of Theory Y.²⁶ Employees were encouraged to work in the areas of their greatest pride and competence; to shift to new areas as they saw fit; and to continually develop skills that would allow them mobility and flexibility in the company. Though NLS claimed it was too young to offer a profit-sharing or pension program, it offered generous tuition reimbursement to workers and managers interested in learning new skills.²⁷

Non-Linear Systems’ work teams were offered an unusual level of autonomy in their work lives. They set their own hours (within the framework of a 40-hour week) and designated their own breaks, and their pay was not docked for lateness or absences. The company adamantly banned time clocks because, according to Kuriloff, time clocks were “an offense to human dignity and imply a mistrust of people.”²⁸ Even the architecture of work spaces reflected this emphasis on trust: Each team of six or seven members received its own room (about 16x20

²⁴Vance Packard, “A Chance for Everyone to Grow,” *Readers Digest*, November 1963, 114-118, folder “OD Behavior,” box M445, Maslow Papers, AHAP. Packard notes that Chris Argyris experimented with a similar technique at IBM and in other studies of labor relations. Argyris christened this approach “factory without foremen.” 116.

²⁵ Packard 115.

²⁶ Kuriloff 25.

²⁷ “Motivating Employees to be Manager’s [sic] Partners,” 628.

²⁸ Kuriloff 23.

feet) in a low-rise complex, with its own separate door to the outside. Workers were encouraged to exchange information and ideas with fellow units, but they were also encouraged to conceive of their team as “its own little business.”²⁹ More than one observer of the company’s experiment noted enthusiastically that workers at NLS had the opportunity to decide the décor and color scheme of their designated work rooms.³⁰

The corporate structure of NLS reflected the company’s commitment to the more material manifestation of McGregor’s Theory Y principles. Every worker at the company earned a salary. Laborers started out making \$85 a week, but received promotion to \$100 a week after a short trial period—a wage that was roughly \$24 more a week than comparable jobs in the area, and was calculated to ensure that workers would earn enough to cover their fundamental living expenses with some amount of money left over.³¹ Salary increases were doled out frequently, in \$10 or \$15 increases, so that workers could receive steady doses of validation, and there was no salary ceiling for any given position. The company celebrated its commitment to hiring people carefully, training them consistently, and promoting from within to ensure a sense of mobility and possibility within its ranks.

Kay also simplified the hierarchy of his company into a 3-part horizontal structure. On each team, one worker was appointed as a technician, who loosely coordinated the work of his peers but distinctly did not act as a foreman. Above the team level, thirty department managers oversaw the day-to-day tactical activities of the organization; Kuriloff insisted in his account of NLS management that “we regard management as basically an affair of teaching and training,

²⁹ “Motivating Employees to be Manager’s [sic] Partners,” 628; Packard 114.

³⁰ See Packard 114.

³¹ Kuriloff 23.

not one of directing and controlling. “³² Just as workers attended skill-building seminars and classes, managers attended leadership training that taught them how to be concerned with “the *whole human being*, not just a pair of hands, “ and to recognize people as “individuals, with different attitudes, aptitudes, talents, and needs.” The job of the manager, according to one account, was not to direct but to “discover” those aptitudes so that “these people’s creative talents will be unleashed; they’ll do more and better work; they’ll get satisfaction from their jobs and lead more rewarding lives.”³³ Finally, Kay built an executive council of eight people – himself and seven vice presidents—whose job it was to be in constant communication with these managers and every other member of the organization. Instead of issuing a string of formal memos, he urged the executive council members to engage in informal, open-door conversations and solicit feedback from their underlings.

The rhetoric surrounding Non-Linear System’s Theory Y management invoked Maslow explicitly. In his 1964 account of the company’s experiments, Vice President Kuriloff explained the ways in which NLS policy would satisfy the needs of man (a “creature of ever-expanding wants”) at every level of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Physiological needs, he argued, were met by the living wage and sick pay. Safety and security needs were met through the maintenance of a “calm, unharried atmosphere” and through NLS’s promise of steady employment (as opposed to the common practice of letting works go after peak production cycles had passed). The small group approach, with its stimulation of “gregariousness, affiliation, belonging” would satisfy the social needs of employees, and the skilled labor expected of each member would bolster his or her “ego needs”; workers would develop pride and display competence to their fellow

³² Kuriloff 23.

³³ “Motivating Employees to be Manager’s [sic] Partners,” 625.

teammates. Finally, Kuriloff promised that NLS work could offer the coveted achievement of “self-actualization” to its employees, and that this factor “holds the greatest potential for organizational growth and improvement.”³⁴ Attentive managers would “release dormant creativity” in employees, and training classes would challenge employees to gain skills that would, in turn, increase their sense of competence and possibility. A job at NLS would theoretically “engage the whole man,” so that “self-actualization becomes a vital motivating force.”³⁵ Such self-actualization, according to Kuriloff, would bolster the growth of both the individual and the organization.

In 1963, the famous social critic Vance Packard—author of the previous decade’s bestselling *The Status Seekers* (1959) and the advertising expose *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957)—built on these accolades with an article about Non-Linear Systems in *Reader’s Digest*. Entitled, “A Chance for Everyone to Grow,” Packard reinforced the idea that NLS offered employees opportunities for personal growth that had been squelched by the Taylorist institutions of the industrial landscape. Calling NLS “one of the most revolutionary companies in America,” he celebrated the company for “[throwing] out” not just assembly lines, but “a host of assumptions which businessmen have been making for 50 years about the nature of man as an employee.”³⁶ The recognition that “ordinary people have great potentialities for growth,” he insisted, flew in the face of control-based management that reduced jobs to their dullest, most repetitive elements—the very techniques that made workers resist working in the first place and made them feel “impoverished about their lives.” Packard (already a great critic of modern culture, from its suburban competitions to its false consumer promises) thus reinforced the

³⁴ Kuriloff 24.

³⁵ Kuriloff 25.

³⁶ Packard 114.

convictions of Kay, Kuriloff, and some of their humanistic management comrades. He suggested that the foundational premises of modern enterprise were stifling capitalist progress rather than unleashing it in the postwar period. Old-fashioned skill and craft would redeem the American economy as it soared into the future.

By the early 1960s, Kay's determination to get workers to "think like owners" had proven profitable.³⁷ After an initially rough 9-month transition period (when some employees and managers had trouble adjusting to a less structured, routine-based environment), the company's sales and productivity "soar[ed]" while turnover and customer complaints decreased substantially.³⁸ Both efficiency and morale of the workforce were "way up" and turnover had dropped to 25% of the national average. According to Packard, sales doubled after three years of the new regime, and although NLS had 30 competitors in its area, it dominated half of the market.³⁹ While it is inherently difficult to identify the exact causes of industrial upturns—and dangerous to suggest that such a shift could have been uni-causal, stemming only from NLS's shift to Theory Y management—the company's observers in the period were anxious to attribute it to just that. NLS emerged as a poster child for Theory Y's psychological and economic promise.

At the dawn of the 1960s, Kay invited the most high-profile observer yet to assess his company's management techniques. Kay had met Abraham Maslow in 1958, after Kay attended a seminar in the San Diego area for the heads of companies (the same seminar that had first introduced him to Maslow's work). One of his fellow attendees, Richard Farson, encouraged

³⁷ *Maslow on Management*, 116.

³⁸ "Motivating Employees to be Manager's [sic] Partners," 626; Gabor 184.

³⁹ Packard 115.

Kay to stop with him in Boston to meet Dr. Maslow (whom Kay later remembered as “a very strong individual,” with “a head which reminded me of Stalin’s.”⁴⁰) Impressed with their encounter, Kay offered Maslow a fellowship at NLS for the summer of 1962: Maslow would spend time simply observing company operations – not consulting or offering feedback—and recording his thoughts each night with a tape recorder. Unlike McGregor’s experiences at Procter & Gamble or Likert’s experience at Detroit Edison, Maslow was brought to NLS to witness a company whose Theory-Y “transformation” was “complete,” not because it was in need of external guidance.⁴¹ According to Kay, Maslow thought of the experience as a “luxury” because NLS provided a secretary to transcribe his tapes as he dictated them. The experience also left Maslow with time to meet with business leaders and thinkers on the west coast, particularly the faculty members of UCLA who would travel to meet with him in San Diego.⁴²

It was during and after observing the operations at NLS in the summer of 1962 that Maslow immersed himself in the field of Management theory, reading the works of McGregor, Likert, Argyris, and Peter Drucker with particular vigor. Only then did he realize the extent to which those authors either confirmed or explicitly deferred to his own view of human nature. He later reflected:

I had never before had any contact with industrial or managerial psychology, so the possibilities for general psychological theory hit me with great force, as I read first the books by Drucker and McGregor that were used as ‘textbooks’ at Non-Linear. I began to understand what Andrew Kay was trying to do there, and I read on voraciously in this fascinating new field of social psychology.⁴³

⁴⁰ Kay in *Maslow on Management*, 117.

⁴¹ Gabor 184.

⁴² Kay in *Maslow on Management*, 116-118.

⁴³ *Maslow on Management*, xxi.

As he recorded his observations of Non-Linear Systems, he also dictated his responses to the management treatises he began to explore. The resulting book, *Eupsychian Management*, announced Maslow's presence on the organizational landscape when it was published in 1965.

Eupsychian Management read unlike any other management treatise of its time. Because it assembled the transcriptions of a large number of tape-recorded memos that Maslow recorded while in residency at Non-Linear Systems (typed by secretaries and published without evidence of a strong editorial hand), its prose struck many readers as disjointed and free-associational.⁴⁴ Chapters could range from a paragraph in length to many pages, and sometimes included incomplete sentences. From one to the next, Maslow might offer his own observations of organizational life or a synopsis of the reigning principles in humanistic management theory. He strove for a sense of spontaneity in his dictating, allowing his readers to discover new principles and ideas as he did. The work was distinctly not a case study of "a particular plant," he explained, but rather the study of "the plant that opened up to me a body of theory and research which was entirely new to me and which set me to thinking and theorizing."⁴⁵ Maslow also made clear in his writing that he was not inventing a new theory of management, but rather exploring a preexisting body of management literature (which he called "enlightened") and observing that theory in action at NLS.

The tone of *Eupsychian Management* could vary from one chapter to the next. On the one hand, he repeatedly expressed optimism for the possibilities of worldwide change through

⁴⁴ See reviews of *Eupsychian Management*: William D. Litzinger, Review of *Eupsychian Management*, *Personnel Psychology* (1966): 217-219; Leonard Sayles, Review of *Eupsychian Management*, *The Journal of Business* (1966): 106-107; and "Personnel Management Bookshelf": Review of *Eupsychian Management*, *Management of Personnel Quarterly* (1966): 40.

⁴⁵ *Maslow on Management*, xxi.

better management in organizations, heralding “enlightened” management as one of the next major frontiers of social reform. In the absence of offering universal individual psychotherapy, he suggested, humanistic management might be the most realistic hope for a transformation of human consciousness across the world. (The very term “Eupsychian” was his invented shorthand for the kind of society that could exist if all of its members were self-actualized and living in a state of perpetual psychological health.⁴⁶) Maslow celebrated the workplace as the site of most people’s creative self-actualization (where the process he called “synergy” was most likely to take place), and argued that, by extension, the transformation of workplaces offered increased likelihood for mass self-actualization. He also positioned “enlightened” management as a tool for American transcendence in the Cold War—an arena in which the American spirit could triumph both therapeutically and politically. In spite of some criticisms of the era’s most well regarded spokespeople for participative management, *Eupsychian Management* offered an endorsement of McGregor and Likert’s ideas and thus helped Theory Y reach a broader audience seeking human transcendence in a corporate age.

In *Eupsychian Management*, Maslow approached the workplace simultaneously as arena and agent of change. Given the primacy of work in the lives of most human beings, Maslow explained, work had the potential to exert a greater influence on Americans than education, religion, or individual psychotherapy. (“I gave up long ago the possibility of improving the world or the whole human species via individual psychotherapy,” he explained. “This is

⁴⁶ See transcript, Maslow’s appearance at Robert Tannenbaum’s seminar at UCLA, folder “Tannenbaum Tape,” box M449.3, Maslow papers, AHAP. Maslow explains of the term “Eupsychian”: “It’s a word I made up instead of utopia... [T]he roots here are—‘eu’ is the Greek word for ‘good,’ ‘desirable’ and ‘psyche’ us obvious...[T]he way I define it first is the society which would be generated by a thousand self-actualizing people left to their own resources and not interfered with. I’ve seen this happen in small groups and it’s a very interesting game to play and now of course it’s getting serious.” 48.

impracticable.”⁴⁷). Work emerged in his analysis as a perfect testing ground for the questions and hypotheses of humanistic psychology: “How good a society does human nature permit? How good a human nature does society permit?”⁴⁸ It could provide a “new kind of life-laboratory” for Third Force psychology, a site at which to examine the compatibility of humanistic psychology with real-world aims.⁴⁹

Maslow optimistically surmised that industrial psychology could also become the most important, effective *tool* of his field. He proposed that the “proper management of the work lives of human beings, of the way in which they can earn a living, can improve them and improve their world and in this sense can be a utopian or revolutionary technique.”⁵⁰ The “industrial situation” could, in other words, serve as the “new laboratory for the study of the pseudo-dynamics, of high human development, of the ideal ecology for the human being.”⁵¹ Though *Eupsychian Management* found Maslow wrestling with foundational ideas of industrial psychology and questioning some of the foundations of the field’s preeminent theorists, his optimism about the place of industry in America’s psychological revolution resonated throughout his treatise.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Maslow on Management*, 1-2. Maslow wrote that “Only recently has it dawned on me that as important as education perhaps even more important [sic] is the work life of the individual since everybody works.” This sentiment highlights one of the key missing threads of his argument: What about those people in America, like women or disenfranchised minorities, who were ritualistically excluded from the professions that most accommodated self-actualization? What about those who were excluded from the workforce all together? Maslow not only did not acknowledge the limits of his prescription for self-actualization in the modern world; he acknowledged no hierarchies of gender, race, or class.

⁴⁸ *Maslow on Management*, 4.

⁴⁹ *Maslow on Management*, 4.

⁵⁰ *Maslow on Management* 1.

⁵¹ *Maslow on Management* , viii.

⁵² *Maslow on Management*, 1.

Maslow's faith in management's transformative potential rested on some fundamental assumptions about the very essence of self-actualization. Maslow chided the "youngsters" of the early 1960s who conceived of self-actualization as "a kind of lightning stroke which will hit them on the head suddenly without their doing anything about it." They misconstrued self-actualization, he charged, "in terms of the getting rid of all inhibitions and controls in favor of complete spontaneity and impulsivity."⁵³ And they could not be more wrong: Self-actualization was not an individualistic experience that occurred when one retreated from the world and pursued spiritual enlightenment; it was, to the contrary, the product of symbiosis between a person and his world, the act of submitting oneself to a task that benefitted the larger whole. Maslow clarified, "S-A [Self-Actualization] work is simultaneously a seeking and fulfilling of the self *and* also an achieving of the selflessness which is the ultimate expression of *real* self" – a process that "resolves the dichotomy between the selfish and the unselfish... so that the world and the self are no longer different."⁵⁴ He connected this principle to his friend Ruth Benedict's ideal of synergy, a culture in which what is beneficial for the individual is beneficial for everyone. In contrast to some of his followers' misguided, hedonistic assumptions, self-actualization not only required hard work and dedication, but was most frequently achieved *through* the act of work.

Maslow's treatise rested on the claim that because work delivered salvation, it should be nothing less than a calling. He cited the Japanese concept of *Ikiru*, "i.e. salvation via hard work and total commitment to doing well the job that fate or personal destiny calls you to do, or any job that 'calls' for doing." It was only through "commitment to an important job," he explained,

⁵³ *Maslow on Management*, 9.

⁵⁴ *Maslow on Management*, 9.

that one could locate “the path to human happiness”; by extension, “[t]he only happy people I know are working toward something they consider important.”⁵⁵ Work emerged in his prose as not only a duty, but as a product of fate or destiny. It was each person’s task to locate the job for which he was most suited, and to immerse himself completely in that job upon locating it. He warned, “One must respond to one’s fate or one’s destiny or pay a heavy price. One must yield to it; one must surrender to it. One must permit oneself to be chosen.” The act of choosing a professional path was akin to that of locating a soulmate and “pick[ing] one’s wife,” and the act of *performing* work could verge on the erotic: “[T]o recognize one’s responsibility or one’s work out there is like a love relationship, a recognition of belongingness, a *Zusammenhang*; it has many of the paradoxical or dichotomy-transcending qualities of sexual intercourse and love embracing, of two becoming one perfectly.”⁵⁶

Such sentiments exposed some fundamental contrasts between Maslow and management thinkers like McGregor or Likert: While hints of the spiritual could infuse the rhetoric of the loftiest management thinkers, no others discussed work in terms of cosmic destiny. And Maslow’s celebration of the transcendental properties of work revealed a critical limitation of his management treatise. In linking jobs to fate and even salvation or deliverance, Maslow failed to acknowledge the realm of unskilled labor in an industrial economy, or the other necessary jobs that rarely tapped anyone on the shoulder with a message of cosmic inevitability. His book fluctuated awkwardly between a discussion of managing lower level workers and a celebration of high-level work in the professions.

⁵⁵ *Maslow on Management* 8; 9. Recall that Maslow’s list of “happy,” i.e. truly self-actualized people, was the basis for his book *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

⁵⁶ *Maslow on Management*, 14.

Having established a connection between self-actualization and work, Maslow offered a detailed presentation (consisting of thirty-six principles, to be exact) of what he labeled “enlightened management policy”—principles gleaned primarily from the works of McGregor, Argyris, Likert, and Drucker. His chapter labeled “Enlightened Economics and Management,” in fact, read very much like a humanistic psychologist’s summary of McGregor’s Theory Y (which was, in turn, a management theorist’s application of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to the world of work). Here, Maslow reiterated what he viewed as the central tenets of “third wave” or “humanistic” management—while withholding his own evaluation of the principles’ validity. His list of tenets included: “Assume everyone is to be trusted”; “Assume in your people the impulse to achieve”; “Assume that everyone can enjoy good teamwork, friendship, good group spirit...and group love”; “Assume the preference for working rather than being idle”; and, in one of the most direct references to his own theories, “Assume that everyone prefers to feel important, needed, useful, successful, proud, respected, rather than unimportant, interchangeable...unused.”⁵⁷ Having gleaned these principles from works like *The Human Side of Enterprise* and Likert’s *New Patterns of Management*, and from their application at Non-Linear Systems, he went on to lament some of the limits of the principles’ applications.

In a number of chapters of *Eupsychian Management*, Maslow offered systematic critiques of the theorists under consideration. Peter Drucker, he concluded, was too focused on crude motives like low turnover and high profits, rather than the utopian goals fueling Maslow’s own strides toward psychological revolution. While promising that enlightened management *would* deliver material returns, he urged management thinkers to espouse the principles because they

⁵⁷ *Maslow on Management*.

valued healthy societies, healthy organizations, and widespread self-actualization.⁵⁸ Maslow encouraged managers, in turn, to formulate concrete goals and “think in broad-range terms, in utopian terms, in value terms”—and to trust that by taking into consideration “utopian and eupsychian and ethical and moral recommendations,” everything about an enterprise would improve – “*and this includes profits.*”⁵⁹ Reflecting on the larger landscape of management thinking, he concluded that “an awful lot of people are doing an awful lot of things and doing a lot of talking, and they don’t have the courage to delineate carefully the goals, the purposes, the far aims of all that they are doing.”⁶⁰

At the same time, he criticized a thinker like Rensis Likert for thinking *too* loftily about human nature, presuming that participative management would work in any variety of industrial settings or in any number of economic contexts. While enlightened management might work perfectly well in good times, at a good company, there was no telling what results it could produce in less favorable circumstances. He conceded that “enlightened management policies are in fact very fine in today’s United States, with citizens who are fairly healthy, sophisticated, and autonomous” – where the workers were “brought up under political democracy and in circumstances of wealth where they can tell a boss to go jump in the lake and can go off and get a job if they didn’t like the one they have.”⁶¹ But he challenged Likert’s naivety for not realizing that, should the United States be hit by an “atomic catastrophe” or a “great bubonic plague,” or should the country even enter stormy economic times, there was no assurance that participative

⁵⁸ *Maslow on Management*, 49.

⁵⁹ *Maslow on Management*, 50.

⁶⁰ *Maslow on Management*, 48.

⁶¹ *Maslow on Management*, 91-92.

management would continue to prove effective. A theory for only good times, he argued, was a limited theory indeed.

In his assessments of McGregor's theories, Maslow played a spirited devil's advocate. He ultimately concluded that Theory Y management promised far more success in every arena than the outdated, authoritarian style of Theory X, but he nonetheless challenged many of the foundational premises of McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise*. While there was enough data to justify *experimenting* with Theory Y, he suggested – and enough data to suggest the inutility of Theory X – we should not overstate the finality of that data. In a strange turn from his own argumentation, he argued:

[T]he whole philosophy of this new kind of management may be taken as an expression of faith in the goodness of human beings, in trustworthiness, in enjoyment of efficiency, of knowledge, of respect, etc. But the truth is that we don't really have exact and quantitative information on the proportion of the human population which does in fact have some kind of feeling for workmanship... [W]e don't have any mass surveys of large populations that would give us some quantitative indication of just how many people prefer to have somebody else do their thinking for them, for instance. We don't know the answer to the question: What proportion of the population is irreversibly authoritarian?⁶²

In another departure from his own presumptions expressed earlier in the book, he suggested that psychologists did not yet know for sure what proportion of the population actually wanted to participate in management decisions, or the extent to which a fundamental “physical...or psychic inertia” made people lazy. He also acknowledged that McGregor had based many of his conclusions on Maslow's own work—but conceded that “I of all people should know just how shaky this is as a final foundation” and urged psychologists to produce more concrete studies of industrial situations before assuming congruence with Maslow's own studies of individual

⁶² *Maslow on Management*, 67-68.

therapy patients.⁶³ In conclusion, he suggested that there was insufficient evidence to treat Theory Y as a fact of human nature or social psychology, but that there was even less to support the application of theory X.

In spite of Maslow's pronounced reservations about Theory Y management, his book ultimately offered a powerful endorsement of enlightened management. Not only did he come out in favor of McGregor's principles (and by extension, Non-Linear System's practices), but he offered one of the most evangelistic, hyperbolic celebration of Theory Y yet to be published. On the one hand, Maslow ultimately argued that Theory Y management would improve the psychological health of society at large. He cited what he called a "network of interrelations": "The better the society, the better the productivity; the better the managers, the more psychologically healthy the individual men; the better the leaders, the better the managers; the better the individual men, and so on and so on, the better the enterprise."⁶⁴ Having established a firm link between participative management and the self-actualization of workers—which would function predictably as long as the organizational conditions were healthy—he elaborated what can best be understood as a self-actualization trickle-down model: Self-actualized managers would encourage personal growth and productivity in their underlings, and these underlings would then influence the world around them in positive ways, leading to an overall elevation of the human spirit. The consequences he suggested were nothing short of a therapeutic revolution with implications for the entire species.

Maslow at many points in his treatise appeared less concerned with universal salvation than he did with the very particular circumstances of the United States in the postwar period.

⁶³ *Maslow on Management*, 71.

⁶⁴ *Maslow on Management*, 97.

Namely, he argued that the widespread adoption of participative (aka democratic) management would help the US win the Cold War. Maslow established that so-called “authoritarians” would have no place in the “enlightened organization”, in which the “sharing of goals” and “identification with team objectives” would be standard. For authoritarians accustomed to dividing the world into “hammers and anvils, lambs and wolves,” or to organizing the world into the controllers and the controlled, the “brotherhood” of Theory Y would never work.⁶⁵ But Maslow’s argument about Cold War dominance transcended metaphorical claims. He suggested that humanistic management techniques would produce two main products: economic productivity (or profit making) and “human products, that is, the psychological health of the workers, their movement toward self-actualization.”⁶⁶ The role of the first “product” in the Cold War was a given, and consistent with the dominant capitalist ethos of the postwar era. It was the second “product,” Maslow promised, that would deliver to the US an unexpected edge and ultimately swift victory in its rivalry with the Soviet Union and would take on “huge importance” in coming years.

Maslow explained that the public image of the United States would be critical in winning the race against Russia. How, he wondered, could the US positively affect perceptions of itself around the world? The answer lay with management practice:

The question is who will be loved and respected more by the neutral nations, Russia or the United States? And how shall this be judged except in terms of the individuals that people will see as tourists all over the world, and from what they read in the newspapers about what goes on inside the United States? And, in effect, what else does this mean but that the cold war will be won by the nation that turns out the better type of human being.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Maslow on Management*, 21.

⁶⁶ *Maslow on Management*, 99.

⁶⁷ *Maslow on Management*, 99-100.

Because Theory Y management “definitely turns out a better kind of human being, a healthier person, a more lovable, more admirable...more attractive, friendlier, kinder, more altruistic kind of person than does the Theory X or authoritarian management,” Maslow deduced, it could also help Americans be more “liked throughout the world.”⁶⁸ He cited the Germans in contrast, reminding his readers that “The Nazis were about the most unpopular people there were.” He lamented that he had no corresponding data about the popularity of “Russian tourists and visitors and diplomats” in neutral nations.⁶⁹ Given this uncertainty, it was that much more important that the United States continue to produce a “better type of human being” and that major leaders recognize the potential of Theory Y in doing so.⁷⁰

Maslow’s celebration of likeability as a weapon in the Cold War related paradoxically to many of his other assertions in the book. If the ultimate goal of self-actualization was to locate and fulfill one’s own destiny and higher calling, how did the popularity of US tourists in neutral nations fit into the scheme? If Theory Y principles were as context-specific as Maslow insisted, why would they necessarily be appreciated or admired in the transfer from one culture to another? Ultimately, Maslow’s plug for the political utility of enlightened management provided just another peg in a rather free-associational – and deeply evangelical—defense of his beliefs. Perhaps the most transparent endorsement of his views came with his insistence that “Enlightened management is one way of taking religion seriously, profoundly, deeply, and earnestly” – not “for those who define religion just as going to a particular building on Sunday and hearing a particular kind of formula repeated, this is all irrelevant”, but for those who define

⁶⁸ *Maslow on Management*, 100.

⁶⁹ *Maslow on Management*, 100.

⁷⁰ *Maslow on Management*, 100.

religion in terms of “deep concern with the problems of the human species.”⁷¹ His book offered less an endorsement of the “science” of management (in spite of his protests to the contrary) than of an ethical, democratic mindset that would propel the US toward both unprecedented collective psychological fulfillment and global dominance.

In his 1998 foreword to the republished and retitled edition of *Eupsychian Management*, Warren Bennis (acolyte of Douglas McGregor) reflected on the impact of the Maslow’s only management treatise. It attracted little attention upon its first publication in 1965, Bennis explained, and slipped into obscurity among actual managers and corporate executives.⁷² The book inspired mostly tepid reviews, in which reviewers warned that its jargon would alienate a general audience and that its free-associational, “disjointed rambling” might lead some to perceive it as an incomplete work.⁷³ While nodding to the freshness of Maslow’s ideas, his reviewers agreed that his impressionistic, data-less delivery failed to substantiate his claims with the force he likely intended. That said, *Eupsychian Management* undoubtedly helped propel Maslow into a position of power in the broader management community. By the end of the 1960s, he was lecturing at business schools, consulting with new corporations, and being cited by the National Conference Board as one of the most influential management thinkers of the era.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Maslow on Management, 82.

⁷² Warren Bennis, Foreword to *Maslow on Management*, xii. Bennis theorizes that the lack of attention given to the book upon its publication might have been attributed to a “rather complacent industrial America” that wasn’t much interested in business books in the triumphant years after World War II—a hypothesis that would seem to be contradicted by the massive popularity of Douglas McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise* and other landmark books of the humanistic management movement.

⁷³ See reviews in *The Journal of Business*, *Management of Personnel Quarterly*, and *Personnel Psychology*.

⁷⁴ It is also worth noting that *Eupsychian Management* enjoyed a renaissance in the 1990s, when humanistic management principles re-entered the corporate Zeitgeist.

As Maslow became absorbed by his own meditations on management practices, he entered the network of those thinkers and businesses that exemplified humanistic business thought in the postwar period. No connection was more significant than his developing (though short-lived) relationship with Douglas McGregor himself. Between Maslow's arrival in Del Mar in 1962 and his tome's publication three years later, Andrew Kay engineered an introduction between Maslow and McGregor. Having learned with shock that the two men had never met in spite of living in the same city (Maslow taught at Brandeis and McGregor at MIT), Kay seized the opportunity during one of his trips to Boston in the early 1960s to introduce the two. Reflecting on the occurrence years later, he recalled that he said, "'Abe, grab your coat!'" and drove the psychologist to MIT to meet McGregor, his kindred spirit.⁷⁵ McGregor died within two years of the encounter, but Maslow continued to pay tribute to the man and his ideas through his own career on the 1960s business circuit.⁷⁶ In 1970, Maslow corresponded with a psychology doctoral student at the University of Chicago who inquired about the students most influenced by Maslow's work. The short list Maslow assembled included McGregor's name with a caveat: "Douglas McGregor was not a student but rather a friend. His use of my motivation theory in *The Human Side of Enterprise* had very great influence on management theory."⁷⁷ Though the two men had communicated briefly as far back as 1944, and McGregor's

⁷⁵ *Maslow on Management*, 120.

⁷⁶ Also note that in 1956, as previously mentioned in this chapter, McGregor had written to Maslow to celebrate the usefulness of his *Motivation and Personality* in an MIT seminar he had led with seventeen executives. It was in that letter that he wrote, "We had a long discussion about your self-actualization concept and it was quite clear that the whole idea not only made sense but fired their imagination because of its implication in industry." See Letter, Abraham Maslow to Douglas McGregor, 16 November 1956, folder "Correspondence—MI," box M395, Maslow papers, AHAP. This suggests that while the two men had never met and Maslow had never read the *Human Side of Enterprise*, he was at least slightly familiar with McGregor when he went to NLS in 1962.

⁷⁷ Letter, Abraham Maslow to Paul T. Costa, 20 March 1970, folder "AHM—Personal, From 1969," box 449.20, Maslow papers, AHAP. Other students mentioned include Joel Aronoff of Michigan State University, Milton Rokeach, Deborah Tanzer, Hung-Min Chiang, and Norbett Mintz.

book had paid open tribute to Maslow as intellectual inspiration, their meeting signaled a torch-passing of sorts. After McGregor's death, Maslow would continue to advocate for the adoption of Theory Y by corporations that he deemed healthy and prepared for humanistic shake-up.

In 1965, less than a year after McGregor's death, Maslow delivered a lecture to his Brandeis psychology students entitled "The Human Side of Enterprise."⁷⁸ This lecture, an ode to McGregor and the larger field of Organizational Psychology, reflected the extent to which Maslow had begun to integrate his thoughts about organizations into his larger schema of Third Force Psychology. In this lecture, Maslow commanded that his students read *The Human Side of Enterprise* some time in the coming decade—not just because of what it would teach them about business and industry, but because of what it communicated about society as a whole. Because Theory Y was, in its broadest sense, about the delicate balance between freedom and control, one could apply Theory Y logic to the act of child-rearing or to the subtle power dynamics of marriage.⁷⁹ "I would like you to be large enough," Maslow instructed, "to see [the book] not in its...immediate aspect...I would like you to see it in the way that I do as a first step in the direction of a new kind of thinking for the next century or so. ...Everything he says here is applicable for instance to our situation right here at Brandeis University on this campus."⁸⁰ He lamented that McGregor had titled his book with an emphasis on "Enterprise," for "I know many of you are not interested in business or the factory or labor-economics ... I wish he would have called it 'The Human Side of Society,' 'The Human Side of Organizations.'"⁸¹ Maslow

⁷⁸ "Dr. Abraham Maslow—Lecture of May 17, 1965: 'The Human Side of Enterprise,'" folder "Management Lecture," box M395, Maslow papers, AHAP.

⁷⁹ This suggestion, of course, turned McGregor's own analogy on its head, for throughout *The Human Side of Enterprise* he repeatedly suggested that managers conceive of themselves as nurturing parents.

⁸⁰ Maslow, "Lecture of May 17, 1965," 2.

⁸¹ Maslow, "Lecture of May 17, 1965," 2.

suggested that had McGregor lived longer, he “would have gone on to generalize to the social problems...the relationship between human nature and society.”

Having made such concessions to less industrially oriented students, Maslow offered a ringing endorsement of Theory Y in practice and of the field of industrial psychology in general.⁸² American businesses, he lamented, still largely operated according to the “carrot and stick notion of motivation,” assuming that people are “buyable” – that “if you pay them well enough they are supposed to do anything that you want them to do.”⁸³ This theory went hand in hand with a larger cultural conception that money could buy happiness and that “material satisfactions” were the primary reward of a job well done. The burgeoning field of industrial psychology, with McGregor’s tome at the helm, challenged these assumptions in a fundamental way by suggesting that the motivation to work, and the rewards of working, could be psychological rather than merely material.

Maslow also challenged Marxist critics of humanistic management, like Herbert Marcuse, who “didn’t like this [Theory Y] at all” and thought that “[t]his was a plot” intended simply to manufacture greater profits through the manipulation of workers.⁸⁴ Marxist critics missed the point, Maslow suggested, in assuming that there was a necessary inverse relationship between the interests of workers and the interests of bosses. “I don’t think Marx is that foolish,” he explained, but Marx’s interpreters had erred in assuming that workers and managers operated

⁸² In this lecture, he also recommends *The Psychology of Industrial Behavior* by Henry Clay Smith and John Gardner’s *Self Renewal*. He connects McGregor’s organizational thinking to a book about British labor politics called *New Statesman* by Michael Stewart and offers a lengthy description of a recent Harvard Business School dissertation that discussed the advantages of Theory Y management for assembly line workers.

⁸³ Maslow, “Lecture of May 17, 1965,” 9.

⁸⁴ Maslow, “Lecture of May 17, 1965,” 20. For Marcuse’s own perspective on industrial culture, see Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization; a Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Humanitas; Beacon Studies in Humanities (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956); Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

with a fundamental antagonism—a position that unwittingly mirrored the perspective of Theory X managers themselves. Maslow encouraged these critics to open their minds to the Theory-Y conception that “what’s good for the workers seems to be also good for the boss or the stockholder.”⁸⁵ Citing “dozens” of examples of supporting experiments in the literature, he issued his most emphatic endorsement to date of Douglas McGregor’s guiding assumptions and their revolutionary potential for all of society.⁸⁶

Maslow supported McGregor’s ideas through the circuit of major American business Schools, which he traveled throughout the 1960s, and particularly at the end of the decade: By the time of his death in 1970, he had lectured three times at Harvard Business School, visited Robert Tannenbaum’s seminar at UCLA, and met with Sloan Fellows of the Stanford University Business School.⁸⁷ Maslow’s relationship with Harvard Business School reached back into the 1950s. In the second half of that decade, Professor Fritz Roethlisberger (who famously collaborated with Elton Mayo on the Hawthorne Studies of the 1930s) started building a faculty group devoted to Organizational Behavior, which later became its own department.⁸⁸ The

⁸⁵ Maslow, “Lecture of May 17, 1965,” 20.

⁸⁶ Interestingly, this lecture contains less ambivalence toward the supporting research of Theory T than *Eupsychian Management*, which was published the same year. This 1965 lecture offers very few reservations, if any, about the applications of Theory Y in the real world, or about McGregor’s empirical foundations. It is possible that McGregor’s death might have tempered some of the reservations expressed in *Eupsychian Management*.

⁸⁷ Abraham Maslow, Harvard University lecture notes, folder “Lectures (1),” box M442, Maslow papers, AHAP; Maslow, Excerpts from UCLA Seminar, 17 March 1970, folder “Tannenbaum Tape,” box M449.3, Maslow papers, AHAP; Maslow, Transcript from Sloan Fellowship Meeting, Stanford University, unspecified year, folder “OD Behavior,” box M445, Maslow papers, AHAP. It is worth noting that these appearances built on a preexisting network of associations: Tannenbaum, who ran the UCLA seminar, was one of the West Coast’s most adamant proponents of T-groups (see Chapter 7) and was linked to important figures like Sheldon Davis of TRW Systems, Inc. and the National Training Laboratories. Tannenbaum made UCLA, in turn, a nexus of discussion about the role of behavioral science in organizations.

⁸⁸ See Fritz Roethlisberger, *The Elusive Phenomenon: An Autobiographical Account of My Work in the Field of Organizational Behavior at the Harvard Business School* (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1977), 281.

members of this group, some of whom had originally been Roethlisberger's students, drew their theoretical orientation from humanistic psychologists like Maslow, Carl Rogers, Erich Fromm, and Rollo May, and were steeped in the languages of behavioral science and humanistic psychology.⁸⁹ Though Roethlisberger's most public collaboration was with Carl Rogers, that other pillar of midcentury humanistic psychology, his correspondence with Maslow dates back to 1955.⁹⁰ In that year, Maslow produced and circulated a list of people involved with the areas of "Creativeness, Self, Being and Growth" and circulated it to his network of correspondents.⁹¹ Of the twenty-one names on the list (an assortment of psychologists, anthropologists, and educators), Roethlisberger was the only representative of a business school.⁹² Five years later,

⁸⁹ Roethlisberger, *Elusive Phenomenon*, 309.

⁹⁰ See Carl Rogers and Fritz Roethlisberger, "Barriers and Gateways to Communication," *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 1952): 46-52. Roethlisberger never celebrated the notion of "self-actualization," but he helped establish a critical bridge between the young fields of human relations and humanistic psychology. In the 1940s, he experimented with an open-ended counseling technique that he found very useful in dealing with industrial employees. When confronted with a disgruntled worker, he spent extended periods of time listening to that worker's frustrations and trying to understand his perspective. In the early 1950s, he discovered that this technique resembled the method of "non-directive counseling" practiced by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. (If Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs was one pillar of humanistic psychology, Rogers' non-directive counseling was the other.) Roethlisberger made Rogers' books a staple of his human relations courses for years to come. After serving on a conference panel together in the early 1950s, Roethlisberger and Rogers collaborated on their soon-to-be-famous *Harvard Business Review* article entitled "Barriers and Gateways to Communication." They broadly critiqued contemporary communication styles, charging that people often listened to each other in order to evaluate and judge, rather than to truly understand each other's points of view. Rogers outlined a method of reflective, empathic listening that could "deal with the insincerities, the defensive exaggerations, the 'false fronts,' which characterize almost every failure in communication" and "which threaten the very existence of our modern world[.]" In Roethlisberger's portion of the article, he recommended a patient, understanding communication style to supervisors and suggested that empathy could quell labor discord for decades to come.

⁹¹ Letter, Abraham Maslow to Fritz Roethlisberger, 23 December 1955, folder "Maslow, Abraham, 1956-7," box 2, Roethlisberger papers, Baker Library. In this letter Maslow wrote: "Dear Dr. Roethlisberger: For purposes of my own, I have made up a list of people to whom I mail reprints and from whom I ask reprints, because of their interest in Creativeness, Self, Being, Growth, Self-Actualization, etc. I thought you might want to use the list for the same purpose." Circulating this list in 1957, Maslow wrote: "This list was made up to encourage intercommunication among people in different fields who should know each other's work. I have suggested to each of them that they use it as a mailing list for exchange of reprints or mimeographed materials. Some are not known to me personally but have been suggested to me by others..." .

⁹² It is worth noting that the same year, Roethlisberger was invited by M. Kendig of the Institute for General Semantics to be part of a seminar panel on the topic of "Creativity" with Maslow himself. Roethlisberger

Roethlisberger and Maslow worked together--- albeit unsuccessfully—to get an article by Maslow published in the *Harvard Business Review*, and the two men later appeared as panelists at the 1967 Douglas McGregor Conference at MIT.⁹³ By the end of the 1960s, as has been noted elsewhere, Maslowian management had gained prominence and acceptance at the nation’s top business school.

Maslow’s appearance at a Stanford Business School seminar in the late 1960s found him endorsing but also wrestling with the idea of Theory Y management. While continuing to celebrate McGregor—calling him “a friend of mine[,] a charming man, a lovable man, just a marvelous guy, and a psychological connoisseur”⁹⁴—he balanced his endorsement of the theorist’s ideas with new nuance. McGregor had insisted that to build a “Theory Y person” one need only build a “Theory Y environment,” thus assuming a direct, causal relationship between environment and the psychology of man.⁹⁵ Maslow challenged this equation and called for increased empirical support. He had been studying psychopaths, he explained, and a number of subjects whom one could consider “evil.” He believed increasingly not only that “there is human evil,” but that this evil “comes out of genes, partly, and bad biochemistry.” Behavioral scientists

respectfully declined. See Roethlisberger correspondence, M. Kendig, Director, Institute of General Semantics, Lakeville CT, 23 Dec 1955, Folder: K(2), box 2, Roethlisberger papers, Baker Library.

⁹³ Letter, Roethlisberger to Maslow, 9 May 9 1963, folder “R,” box M398, Maslow papers, AHAP. Here, Roethlisberger writes to Maslow to follow up on an article that Maslow submitted to the *Harvard Business Review*. Roethlisberger explains that the *Review* liked the article but wanted to meet with Maslow about some potential changes. Roethlisberger urged Maslow not to make any changes unless he believed they were right, citing his own frustration with the journal’s editors insistence on “jazzing up what I write.” For information on the McGregor Conference, see Memo, “Proposed Design for the McGregor Conference,” folder 40, box C.2, Roethlisberger papers, Baker Library. Roethlisberger and Maslow were two of participants at the McGregor Conference, Oct 12-14, 1967, along with pivotal humanistic management theorists and practitioners like Chris Argyris, Richard Beckhard, Warren Bennis, Robert Blake, Paul Lawrence, Rensis Likert, Alfred Marrow, Jane Mouton, Robert Sonnabend, and Edward Schein.

⁹⁴ Maslow, Transcript from Sloan Fellowship Meeting, 2.

⁹⁵ Maslow, Transcript from Sloan Fellowship Meeting, 3.

therefore needed to be cautious about attributing all human failings to damaging environments and social structures.⁹⁶ Conversely, while truly “evil” subjects might comprise 1% or less of the larger population, so might the truly self-actualized among us exist with rarity: the ability to flower creatively and operate with total, enlightened purpose was a cherished trait of the privileged few. While insisting that it was in society’s best interest to build democratic and participative institutions, Maslow suggested to his audience that they avoid conceiving of enlightened management as panacea for the human condition.

When the National Industrial Conference Board released its 1968 report on the application of Behavioral Science in industry, it found that Maslow was one of the five most influential thinkers in the field.⁹⁷ (By this time, Maslow was also the president of the American

⁹⁶ Maslow, Transcript from Sloan Fellowship Meeting, 4-5. Maslow elaborated, “In general, the world of social science is dominated – not dominated, but is statistically as though the larger number of psychologists will think rather in terms of whatever we do that’s bad is really not, in a certain sense, our fault. We blame society. Or education. And bringing up. And your mother is to blame. And your father...Doug McGregor’s position, in effect, is change the environment—within the factory, within the hospital, within the schools—lift the lid of suppression, repression, and of rules, bureaucracy, etc., and then people would flower. They would develop. They would become creative automatically. They would become self-fulfilling; they would become brotherly; they would become leaders in the democratic sense; they would be automatically democratic in the deep sense.”

⁹⁷ Harold M.F. Rush, *Behavioral Science: Concepts and Management Application* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1969). The top six management thinkers cited by industrial survey responders were (in order of their popularity): Douglas McGregor, Frederick Herzberg, Rensis Likert, Chris Argyris, Abraham Maslow, and the team of Robert Blake and Jane Mouton. Note that in the same year, 1968, the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences* published an article about the increasing empirical evidence for the role of self-actualization in organizations and celebrated a new “short-hand” tool for actually measuring self-actualization among members of an organization. See Charles M. Bonjean and Gary G. Vance, “A Short-Form measure of Self-Actualization,” *Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 4, no. 3 (1968): 299-312.

In this article, Bonjean and Vance offered a new, efficient technique for measuring the “self-actualization” of workers. They explained that self-actualization was at this point commonly recognized as a factor in worker behavior (thanks to Kurt Goldstein, then Maslow, and later Chris Argyris). We now understand, the authors wrote, that insufficiently actualized workers can succumb to a whole range of disruptive and destructive behaviors: absenteeism, turnover, daydreaming, aggression towards supervisor and coworkers, ambivalence, regression, apathy, disinterest in work, errors, slowdowns, the creation of destructive informal groups, a focus on material factors, cheating, etc. If we could test employees for their levels of self-actualization, they suggested, we could prevent some of these negative, unproductive behaviors. But how? Chris Argyris had come up with a “long-form” survey for the study of workers’ self-actualization. It was a structured interview that asked workers to describe their jobs, to explain their personal satisfactions, etc. Then an analyst would read the answers to figure out 1) what the person

Psychological Association and increasingly a household name.) “If someone had surveyed businessmen ten years ago to find out which...behavioral scientists had influenced them,” the report offered, “it is unlikely that the name Abraham Maslow would appear on the list” – adding that Maslow himself had not evidenced “any particular awareness” of the “world of work” until the early 1960s. Yet by the time of the report’s publication in the late 1960s, “the influence of Maslow on the whole behavioral science movement in industry is profound.” The report’s author suggested that the hierarchy of needs had fundamentally redefined the way many managers conceived of motivation.⁹⁸

Though Non-Linear Systems was the first company to gain notoriety for its connection to Maslow, it was not the first to forge a relationship with him. The end of the 1950s found Maslow scheduling talks at the Aluminum Company of America (as part of their Creativity Program) and at Sylvania Electronic Systems.⁹⁹ After 1960, thanks to the publication of McGregor’s Maslow-indebted treatise and Maslow’s own involvement with Non-Linear Systems, Maslow’s ideas appeared increasingly in corporate literature, and his relationships with businesses increased exponentially. Nationwide Insurance Companies sent Maslow a copy of their corporate mission statement in 1963. Their “Summary of Principles and Objectives” could not have been more

wishes to achieve at work; 2) the extent to which he is achieving it; and 3) as a result, that person's self-actualization score. This was all well and good, but it was *very time-consuming*. It could take more than an hour to interview and score someone. Vance and Bonjean were thus pleased to introduce the “Short-Form Structured Self-Actualization Survey.” It could be completed in five to eight minutes and scored in as little as 45 seconds. A respondent would fill out a card ranking desired and achieved qualities of their work (being alone v. being with people, directing other people's activities, having varied tasks, making money, job security, having responsibility, having good physical surroundings). An analyst would then add up a score for the "achieved expression" column, dividing it by the “desired expression" column, and emerge with a score that was simpler and more reliable than Chris Argyris's test. Note that the researchers tested this survey out on a group of 332 salaried managers, hourly paid workers, and independent businessmen in a Southern industrial community.

⁹⁸ Rush 16.

⁹⁹ Letter, HP Knight of the Aluminum Company of America to Abraham Maslow, 3 July 1957, folder “Correspondence – MI,” box M395, Maslow papers, AHAP; Letter, Robert Rollf of the Sylvania Personnel Department to Maslow, 30 September 1960, folder “Correspondence—R,” box M398, Maslow papers, AHAP.

clearly indebted to the psychologist's theories.¹⁰⁰ The document began with a declaration: "We believe that man has human, social, and economic needs which the individual must satisfy in order to realize his greatest worth as a human being" and that "business organizations should help all people satisfy those needs."¹⁰¹ Pledging itself to social progress, sound economic practices, and the promotion of "the dignity of the individual," Nationwide announced its responsibility to "[engage] individuals in activities which help them gain a sense of personal worth, dignity, and freedom" because "WE BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE HAVE WITHIN THEIR OWN HANDS TO FASHION THEIR OWN DESTINY" [their emphasis].¹⁰² Nationwide declared its determination "[t]o promote the growth of the individual" by "engaging the individual in activities that will challenge him as a whole person, that will help him gain insight into the meaning of his work and life, enabling him to tap those spiritual resources that lead to self-awareness and self-fulfillment."¹⁰³

Ultimately, the insurance company promised the same self-actualization trickle-down effect that Maslow would suggest two years later in *Eupsychian Management*. To promote the growth of the individual, the company's mission statement explained, was to promote the growth of the whole, for "spiritually mankind is indivisible: one man's spiritual poverty makes all men poorer; one man's spiritual growth improves the lot of us all."¹⁰⁴ While Nationwide did not address the psychological growth of the individual as its only aim – its mission statement also

¹⁰⁰ Nationwide Insurance Companies, "Summary of Principles and Objectives," 6 March 1963, folder "Management," box M415, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹⁰¹ Nationwide Insurance 1.

¹⁰² Nationwide Insurance 1-2.

¹⁰³ Nationwide Insurance 2, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Nationwide Insurance 4.

emphasized the importance of corporate social responsibility, the power of democratic ownership, and the role of collective decision-making—its explicit valuing of “self-realization” and “self-awareness” revealed the extent to which Maslow’s language had penetrated the mainstream by even the early 1960s. Throughout the 1960s, this rhetoric would be replicated in the corporate publications of Canada’s Northern Electric Company, Limited¹⁰⁵ and the Armstrong Cork Company (already known in the field for its support of behavioral science principles), among others.¹⁰⁶

One of the companies most famously affiliated with Maslow’s “Third Force” psychology in the late 1960s happened also to be one of the most reviled corporate agents of the era. Dow Chemical emerged from the 1960s as a symbol of corporate complicity in the Vietnam War—linked to iconic images of Vietnamese children covered in Napalm, skin singed and faces contorted in horror. Few other corporations inspired such massive protest for their complicity in war crimes. Yet in its day, the management press celebrated Dow for its triumphant global

¹⁰⁵ For another example of the corporate embrace of Maslow’s principles, see the Advanced Devices Centre, a subsidiary of Canada’s Northern Electrical System – a company that designed, manufactured, and distributed products for the nation’s communication systems (like wire and cable). On January 4, 1967, Norman Fletcher, a psychologist working with the Centre, wrote to Maslow to introduce the company and invite Maslow to visit the plant and offer feedback on their efforts. Fletcher explained that the Advanced Devices Centre, like Non-Linear Systems, was very interested in Theory Y management, and that there was a lot of support for Theory Y in Canada in general. With his letter, Fletcher included the Advanced Devices corporate report from 1965, which detailed the steps the company had taken toward Theory Y Management in order to cope with labor/management conflict, a rapidly changing economic and technological landscape, and the needs of a new generation of workers. The company’s strategy emphasized the “wholistic” approach of “engaging the whole man” through challenges and communication, detailing a management strategy based on participation and teamwork. The growth of the individual, this report suggested, would deliver the growth of the corporation. See Letter, Norman Fletcher to Abraham Maslow, 4 January 1967, folder “Management,” box M415, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹⁰⁶ Note that Armstrong Cork Company was one of the companies highlighted in the National Industrial Conference Board report for its application of behavioral science theory. On November 2, 1967, Plant Personnel Manager C. Gordon Patterson wrote to Maslow to praise the experiments of Non-Linear Systems and express his intent to visit NLS in the near future. Having been impressed by Andrew Kay’s experiments at the company, Patterson was simultaneously enthusiastic about and daunted by the prospect of applying Theory Y methods at Armstrong. It is worth noting that Patterson knew Maslow from their time together with the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine. Correspondence, Gordon Patterson to Maslow, 2 November 1967, and Maslow to Patterson, 14 November 1967, folder “Miscellaneous,” box 449.24, Maslow papers, AHAP.

expansion, attributing the company's success to its embrace of so-called "enlightened" or "humanistic" management. In April 1967, *Chemical Week* published an article saluting Dow for its tremendous success. President Ted Doan and Chairman Carl Gerstracker had taken the Midwestern company from a largely domestic operation in the 1950s to a staggeringly successful international corporation by the late 1960s, with profits increasing roughly 15% a year since the beginning of the decade, and with financial stats trumping those of its major competitors, DuPont and Union Carbide.¹⁰⁷ While any number of factors might have helped propel Dow to success (including wartime demand), author Bruce Bendow emphasized one change more than any other: the company's transition from a hierarchical management structure ruled by "a few strong men" to a "structured decision-making organization" built on communication and teamwork.¹⁰⁸ He cited president Ted Doan's convictions that "[b]ureaucracy is dying" and that "the traditional pyramid scheme of command is obsolete"—for "the only organization that will work is an 'organic' one" that is "loose, freedom-oriented."¹⁰⁹ The shift to team-based management and horizontal corporate structure had allegedly ensured Dow's emergence as an international powerhouse.

In mid-1968, one of Abraham Maslow's associates at the Thomas Jefferson Research Center (TJRC) wrote to the psychologist to celebrate the *Chemical Week* article's revelations. The California-based research center, a non-profit corporation, was dedicated to the application of "professional systems management and Third Force Psychology to the solution of social

¹⁰⁷ Bruce Bendow, "Dow Faces Up to Its New World," *Chemical Week*, April 22, 1967, 89.

¹⁰⁸ Bendow 86.

¹⁰⁹ Bendow 92.

problems.”¹¹⁰ Working primarily with organizations in the non-profit sector, the Thomas Jefferson Research Center’s Consultant roster included an all-star cast of humanistic social scientists— Abraham Maslow, Warren Bennis, Chris Argyris, Rensis Likert -- and one corporation: The Dow Chemical Leadership Training Corporate Education Department.¹¹¹ When Frank Goble of the Center wrote to Maslow in 1968, it was to alert him to the application of his ideas at Dow, which the Thomas Jefferson Research Center had celebrated in a recent newsletter. Citing external reports and Dow’s own mission statement, Goble wrote of the company, “I think it is one of the outstanding examples of Theory ‘Y’ management in a large corporation.”¹¹² He quoted Dow’s “Corporate Objectives,” which pledged to promote “participation in management...to the highest degree possible” and “the development the individual” through “systems that contribute to the growth and fulfillment of their participants.”¹¹³

The TJRC newsletter attributed the company’s triumphant earnings since 1963 to the adoption of Maslow and McGregor’s management philosophies and concluded, “DOW HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THE AMERICAN ETHIC WORKS JUST AS WELL IN THE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AS IT DOES IN GOVERNMENT,” thanks to its strong emphasis on “freedom, justice, integrity, optimism, opportunity, respect for the individual, decentralization, and individual responsibility.” Dow’s team-based approach proved to this community of social

¹¹⁰ Letter, Thomas Jefferson Research Center to Abraham Maslow, 1968, folder “Miscellaneous,” box M449.24, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹¹¹ “Consultants to the Thomas Jefferson Research Center,” 1968, folder “Miscellaneous,” box M449.23, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹¹² Letter from Frank Goble to Abraham Maslow, 24 June 1968, folder “Miscellaneous,” box M449.23, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹¹³ This Dow document was reprinted in the Thomas Jefferson Research Center Newsletter No. 17, June 1967, folder “Miscellaneous,” box M449.23, Maslow papers, AHAP.

scientists that while some members of the business world initially “greeted McGregor’s text with considerable skepticism,” McGregor and Maslow’s principles were in fact “highly practical.”¹¹⁴

Unfortunately for such proponents of Theory Y, the Dow story never made it into the lexicon of Maslow’s successes. In June 1968, Frank Goble suggested to Maslow that they include the story of Dow Chemical Co.’s management transformation in a book the two men were putting together about “third-force psychology in action.” Maslow firmly resisted. While the case study did seem thematically consistent, he explained, “We have done a little testing of college student reaction and it tends to be rather negative and emotional in regard to Dow Chemical. As we presently visualize the audience for the book we are writing, college students may be an important segment of that audience.”¹¹⁵ Goble and Maslow shelved the prospect of celebrating Dow in their Third Force manifesto.¹¹⁶

Maslow’s final relationship with an American corporation developed in the last months of his life. At a time when Maslow was growing increasingly impatient with both Brandeis undergraduates and humanistic growth centers like the Esalen Institute, he was offered a fellowship to spend multiple years at a food service corporation in Menlo Park, California, called

¹¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson Research Center Newsletter No. 17, 2.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Frank Goble to Mr. Tead, 28 June 1968, folder “Miscellaneous,” box M449.23, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹¹⁶ Note that continued to experiment with behavioral science throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s. See correspondence between C. P. Alexander, a Project Manager of Functional Products and Systems at Dow, and Harvard Business School professor Paul Lawrence in May of 1971 about the two men’s conversations about introducing an “OD intervention” at Dow. As of the May 17, 1971 letter, Alexander had broached the topic of such an intervention with David Kolb of MIT (who was interested but too busy), “some OD people” with TRW in Cleveland, and Sherman Grinnell of Case Western Reserve University. Alexander suggested that he was already working with Rensis Likert Associates. Notes from the two men’s conversation from May 6, 1971 show that Lawrence had suggested that Dow work with Richard Beckhard (a consultant affiliated with NTL) instead of Likert, because of Likert’s strong research/survey orientation. Lawrence also recommended the NTL-OD network as a professional organization, and the work of Mason Haire. See Correspondence between C. P. Alexander, Project Manager of Functional Products and Systems at Dow, and Paul Lawrence, 17 May 1971 and 6 May 1971, folder 36, box C.1, Paul Lawrence papers, Baker Library.

Saga Foods. Maslow had met the president of Saga, William Laughlin, in the late 1960s at a National Training Laboratories T-group for young corporate presidents. Maslow had served as a speaker-observer in the group, and Laughlin took an immediate liking to him.¹¹⁷ Soon thereafter, Laughlin attended another NTL T-group for chief executive officers at which he met Andrew Kay, whose company Non-Linear Systems had hosted Maslow for a summer some years before. When Laughlin mentioned to Kay that he was interested in similarly bring Maslow to his company, Kay engineered a conversation between the two men.¹¹⁸

Laughlin called Maslow on December 9, 1968 and made an unusual offer: He was willing to provide a two-to-four year fellowship at Saga during which time the Professor would have no formal obligations to Saga whatsoever. Laughlin had learned that, by the late 1960s, Maslow was increasingly frustrated with teaching – not just because his unruly undergraduates confounded him (to be discussed below), but because a serious heart condition left him easily fatigued and concerned about his health. Laughlin told Maslow that, having heard of his discontent, he “simply wished to give him unlimited free time for writing and scholarly work.”¹¹⁹ Laughlin would fund the fellowship using his own personal account (not that of Saga Administrative Corporation), offering Maslow a “handsome” salary, a new Mercedes Benz, and a private office “with full secretarial services” at Saga’s Menlo Park headquarters, which was close to Stanford University. Maslow would use his office at Saga as a haven for writing and, if he wished, the occasional observation of managerial workings. Thanks to Saga’s location,

¹¹⁷ The two men’s meeting is chronicled in Edward Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow*, (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1988), chapter 17.

¹¹⁸ For Kay’s account of this conversation, see *Maslow on Management*, 117.

¹¹⁹ Hoffman 316.

Maslow would also be able to maintain regular contact with his longtime West Coast colleagues, visiting for seminars at Stanford and UCLA and the Esalen Institute.

Maslow took a week to consider the offer, which would mean relocating himself and his wife Bertha to California after nearly 18 years of living in the Boston area, near a strong network of friends. In that period, he visited Saga to meet with Laughlin and two of his top collaborators: William Crockett, the director of management training, and James Morrell, the executive vice president. Impressed by what he observed, Maslow accepted the fellowship in the last weeks of 1968. A press release issued by the WP Laughlin Foundation on March 4, 1969 announced Maslow's acceptance of the fellowship and his intention to spend his time at Saga working on seven different projects (papers and books on topics ranging from race relations to the nature of evil) and to ultimately "develop and promote an all-inclusive psychological approach to human nature and society" whose paradigm-shifting import would rival that of Freud, Darwin, or Einstein.

Maslow's biographer, Edward Hoffman, suggests that Maslow felt his decision validated by events on the Brandeis campus in the period before his departure. At the end of the 1960s, a group of young black militants took over a campus building to protest institutional racism, and their actions spurred the vandalism of student theses in the campus library.¹²⁰ Maslow was "disgusted with their behavior" and also the "timidity of his colleagues" in responding to the

¹²⁰ For background on this demonstration, see Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998). Note that Forman does not include the exact date of the riot (it is either 1968 or 1969) but explains that these black student activists were part of a larger movement to establish Black Studies programs at the end of the 1960s. At Brandeis, they announced the establishment of "Malcolm X University" in the center of campus and demanded the establishment of a Black Studies program, with student participation in both faculty hiring and curriculum design. The University president, Morris Abram, a longtime civil rights crusader, "took a laid-back approach" to the activists' charges of the administration's "racist attitude," and he refused to call the police. The students were ultimately successful in establishing a department of Black Studies. See Forman 146-7.

assault.¹²¹ Moreover, he found the tone of his final seminar meetings at the school to be “angry and confrontational” and announced to his students that he was leaving his post there “partly because he was too old to put up with [their] adolescent nonsense.” He came to believe that they had learned nothing from him about the nature of humanistic psychology.¹²²

Soon thereafter, having moved to California, Maslow gave a talk at the Esalen Institute in which he articulated this growing set of concerns about the student Left and the counterculture. During a broader discussion of the relationship between humanistic psychology, democracy, and politics he decried “the tendency among the counterculture, and some specifically at Esalen, to ridicule those with conventional values and lifestyles” and urged his audience to have greater “respect for individual differences.” “In any political situation,” he explained, “this respect, coupled with the willingness to compromise for the greater good, is essential for our democratic way of life.” He also lambasted the young Left for their embrace of violence “as a legitimate response to social problems like poverty and racism,” suggesting that violence should only be used as a “last resort,” when the rule of law had evaporated—as in the Deep South on the eve of the Civil Rights movement.¹²³

This expression was typical of the psychologist’s stance toward the domestic disorder of the late 1960s. Maslow, whom his biographer has christened “the uneasy hero of the counterculture,” repeatedly insisted that the radical Left was causing more harm than good.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Hoffman 319.

¹²² Hoffman 319.

¹²³ Maslow quoted in Hoffman, 318.

¹²⁴ Hoffman, Chapter 16. Also see letter, Bertha Maslow to William Crockett, 25 January 1971, folder “Miscellaneous,” Box M449.19, Maslow papers, AHAP. In trying to decide which of Maslow’s letters to include in a volume for publication, Bertha explains that Maslow had contempt for Herbert Marcuse, whom many celebrated as the philosophical inspiration for the counterculture. “Abe didn’t like to strike at people,” she wrote, “but he was getting angry enough and he particularly thought Marcuse an evil influence on the young.”

Having witnessed “how close Western civilization had come to collapsing under the onslaught of Nazism,” he was “not going to let the situation happen again.”¹²⁵ At the same time, he charged the more spiritual expressions of the counterculture—epitomized by Esalen’s experiential curriculum and the spiritual expressions of what Tom Wolfe would later call the “Third Great Awakening”¹²⁶ – as being frivolous, self-absorbed, and ultimately “divorced from ethics.”¹²⁷ According to his biographer, Maslow had grown “deeply concerned, even alarmed, about the widespread tendency to seek unusual sensations in the name of the spiritual.”¹²⁸ His departure from Brandeis afforded him an opportunity to both physically and ideologically reject the restless, chaotic stirrings of America’s radical youth. At Saga Foods, he located a peaceful haven in which to express a psychologically based patriotism that would have seemed anachronistic to many of his youthful devotees.

Saga Foods was a rapidly growing, 20-year old company when Maslow became a fixture of its pastoral campus in early 1969. The company had been established in 1948 as a small partnership between Laughlin and two other young men, who recognized a need for coordinated food services in the struggling cafeteria of Hobart College. They pooled their resources, started running the dining hall and soon won the contract at a local women’s college as well. The company was running the food services of 19 colleges by 1957, and 98 by 1961. Throughout the

¹²⁵ Hoffman 319.

¹²⁶ Tom Wolfe, “The Me Decade and the Third Great Awakening” in *The Purple Decades: A Reader*, Berkeley trade paperback ed. (New York: Berkeley Books, 1983).

¹²⁷ Hoffman 328. Hoffman brings this up in the context of a paper Maslow started writing (he did not complete it before his death, leaving behind just a memorandum on the topic), a “critique of the Esalen Institute and its countless imitations.” By this period, Hoffman explains, “He was so thoroughly disenchanted with Esalen’s stress on experientialism and self-absorption that he felt it desirable to be ruthlessly honest in his assessment.”

¹²⁸ Hoffman 330.

1960s Saga diversified, venturing into the arenas of hospital and retirement communities, and it went public in 1968.

In spite of dramatic economic and geographic growth – or perhaps because of it—the company struggled with a “steady deterioration of employee morale.”¹²⁹ Two surveys conducted in the mid-1960s revealed a population of workers who felt pushed out of decision-making and largely powerless within the company. In response to these findings, Laughlin recruited two management consultants from the rapidly growing field of Organizational Development. One was Robert Tannenbaum, the UCLA professor who famously championed T-groups and worked closely with Sheldon Davis in his experiments with behavioral science at TRW Systems.¹³⁰ The other was William Crockett, who had been a career foreign service officer with the State Department, and appointed by John F. Kennedy as the State Department’s Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. In the mid-1960s, Crockett worked with Yale professor and National training Laboratories affiliate Chris Argyris, who studied the management system of the State Department and helped engineer its “managerial revolution.” Crockett ultimately wrote the preface to a report that deconstructed the Department’s dysfunctional communication patterns and proposed a revamping of its “living system.”¹³¹ Crockett was also in charge of inviting

¹²⁹ Hoffman 320.

¹³⁰ For more on TRW Systems, see Laura Kim Lee, *Changing Selves, Changing Society: Human Relations Experts and the Invention of T Groups, Sensitivity Training, and Encounter in the United States, 1938-1980*, 2002.

¹³¹ For more on Argyris’s efforts with the State Department, see Alfred Jay Marrow, *Making Waves in Foggy Bottom: How a New and More Scientific Approach Changed the Management System at the State Department* (Washington: NTL Institute, 1974). For Crockett’s work with Argyris, see “State Department Study Finds Diplomats Avoid Policy Debates,” *New York Times* January 27, 1967. This article details the findings of the report Argyris published after consulting with the State Department, entitled “Some Causes of Organizational Ineffectiveness within the Department of State.” This report, culled from interviews with 91 Foreign Service officers, concluded that the “Social System” of the State Department made its members reluctant to take risks or “make waves” in their communication because of the largely mistrustful, competitive, argumentative atmosphere. Argyris concluded that the State Department “contains norms that inhibit open confrontation of difficult issues and penalize people who take risks.” Crockett wrote the preface to Argyris’s report, in which he explained that the

civilians to serve as advisors to the Department, one of whom was Laughlin of Saga Foods. The two men struck up a friendship. Soon after offering Maslow his fellowship, Laughlin asked Crockett if he would be willing to create and direct Saga's first Organizational Development program.¹³²

Saga's Organizational Development (OD) Program, was one of the era's most celebrated OD efforts, with its blend of humanistic management training and concrete survey research.¹³³ Laughlin and Crockett went far beyond the efforts of a company like Nationwide or Dow, for whom the ideal of self-actualization had shaped corporate rhetoric more than corporate practice. At Saga, Crockett and Laughlin embraced humanistic theory and practice, running countless T-groups (the company preferred the term "team-building sessions"), making the candid expression of feelings a centerpiece of corporate procedure.¹³⁴ Maslow took great pleasure in being on premises. From his arrival at Saga in early 1969 through his death in June 1970 at age 62, conversations with Crockett and Laughlin -- whom he "particularly liked" -- became part of his daily routine.¹³⁵

Each day of his Fellowship period, Maslow would rise in the morning and go for a swim in his Laughlin-funded pool (doctor's orders because of his cardiac condition), then head to his

decision to publish the uncensored study "was not taken lightly," but ultimately seemed a constructive way to promote "frankness" among State Department personnel.

¹³² Hoffman 323.

¹³³ Hoffman explains that the Saga OD endeavor had two components, both considered "radical" at the time: 1) Organizational diagnosis through a formal survey of managers' problems; 2) A series of seminars for managers to discuss the findings of these surveys, as part of larger teams. Hoffman 320.

¹³⁴ For Crockett's love of feelings, see Letter, William Crockett to Hubert Humphrey, 26 February 1970, folder "OD Behavior," BoxM445, Maslow papers, AHAP. In this letter, Crockett celebrates the expression of feelings as a necessary part of human—and organizational—experience. He argues that the suppression of emotional expression contaminates our society "at every level."

¹³⁵ Hoffman 323.

Saga office for a day of writing and reading. He commonly stopped by the offices of his Saga colleagues to chat and lunched with employees in the company cafeteria (in which, adhering to Theory Y tradition, people from all levels of the organization mingled and ate together).

At Maslow's suggestion, Crockett and Laughlin formed a kind of "permanent encounter group" with each other, agreeing to be "completely open with one another in expressing their feelings."¹³⁶ Crockett later recollected, "The first time I met Abe he said we must not let any phoniness endanger our relationship. We could be much better friends if we could be completely candid with each other about our feelings, and it did indeed work out that way."¹³⁷

Maslow possessed a keen awareness of his declining health while at Saga and devoted much of his time there to intense work on his own projects – exploring the topics of humanistic education, spirituality, politics, democracy, and others. But he took time, too, to meditate on Laughlin and Crockett's organizational experiments and continued to build on his theories about healthy relationships between people and organizations. In a memo from February 1970, Maslow explained that a conversation with Bill Crockett had helped him understand links between men, their status, and their workplace. "Every man," he wrote, "is sacred and infinite. Ultimately, like beautiful sunsets, or beautiful women, or beautiful flowers, they are noncomparable" – for "[e]ach one is.... the most perfect in the world."¹³⁸

The challenge of Saga's team-building groups, according to Maslow, would be to build their members' sense that "they all live up to their best possibilities" and "can be said to be

¹³⁶ Hoffman 324.

¹³⁷ William Crockett, "Eulogy for Abraham Maslow," folder "Miscellaneous #2," box M449.19, Maslow Papers, AHAP.

¹³⁸ Abraham Maslow, "AH Maslow Journal Memorandum," 23 February 1970, folder "OD Behavior," box M445, Maslow papers, AHAP.

equal, noncomparable, equally worthy of respect and love, equally transcendent.”¹³⁹ For men to have healthy esteem, they needed to be made aware of the things they excelled at, regardless of pecking order. They also needed to adopt a “non-rivalrous” attitude, to “opt out of the dominance hierarchy” without a fear of “jeopardizing any sense of masculinity, or of adulthood, or of strength.”¹⁴⁰ Saga’s team-building efforts would succeed if members of those teams could do away with inferiority complexes, hero worship, and ruthless competition. According to Maslow, there was a place for the celebration of everyone’s strength’s in an organization like Saga, as long as people learn to toss macho pride aside and not take hierarchies personally.

Our best record of Maslow’s response to Saga’s Organizational Development efforts comes from a memo he wrote after observing a conference of ten College and Hospital Division managers at corporate headquarters in Menlo Park in November 1969. Sherm Moore, the company’s executive vice president, invited Maslow to sit on one of his team-building workshops.¹⁴¹ Moore arranged the meeting to solicit feedback from the division managers about what might work better at the company, and urged Maslow to contribute feedback as well. When Maslow recorded his impressions of the meeting three months later, he could not have offered a more celebratory endorsement of its success, or of Saga’s Organizational Development efforts in general. “Of all the jobs I’ve ever had in the organizations I’ve been in,” he wrote, “I’ve just never seen anything like this. It’s about the best I’ve run across in terms of...openness, the possibility of discussing things – and the open ear.”¹⁴²

¹³⁹ “AH Maslow Journal Memorandum,” 1.

¹⁴⁰ “AH Maslow Journal Memorandum,” 3.

¹⁴¹ “Comments by Mr. Abraham Maslow,” February 1970, folder “Team-Building,” box M421, Maslow papers, AHAP.

¹⁴² “AH Maslow Journal Memorandum,” 2.

Maslow marveled at the candor of the managers' communication with each other, their lack of any evident fear in front of their executive vice president, and their comfort with the presence of a psychologist in the room. Calling the company's meetings a "marvelous" example of "Theory 'Y' in action," he went so far as to suggest that their "set up represents a great revolution in the history of mankind."¹⁴³ He labeled this revolution "post-Marxist," because Saga's employees had clearly transcended class conflict and power struggle:

We're working together in goodwill and good faith, and the assumption is that it's desirable for you to do a good job, even for your own sake in the sense that you don't think of your next level of superiors as your innate, inborn enemies or anything like that. You have to get along with them... You behaved like a group of colleagues... If this works out well, then mankind has a very different interest than the Marxist [sic] claim.¹⁴⁴

For Maslow, Saga's OD triumph was evident in its managers' willingness to identify with the organization as a whole, and to treat one another as trusted comrades.

To Maslow, the success of Saga's OD program did not just signal a triumph for a particular corporation or loftily abstract revolution for humankind; it reflected the strength of the American dream and a validation of the nation's prowess in the world stage. Saga's experiments affirmed the patriotism that had been bubbling within Maslow since his youth as a Jewish immigrant, and which he felt had been fundamentally challenged by the events of the 1960s. "It's going to sound very corny and very square," he conceded, "but the kind of thing that's happened here in the last couple of days just wouldn't happen anywhere on the face of the earth except in America." He continued:

There's a lot of talk about American imperialism, this, that, and the other thing, but the fact is that Americans are more efficient, more desirable, and accomplish more wherever they go. They just do a better job than other people do. And half

¹⁴³ "AH Maslow Journal Memorandum," 8; 3.

¹⁴⁴ "AH Maslow Journal Memorandum," 3.

of this is capital and the bigness of the country, etc., but the other half is just American management. This managerial skill, by the way, is essentially a by-product of democratic feeling.¹⁴⁵

In an unusual moment of autobiographical reflection, he related Saga's successes to his own biography:

I'm a sidewalk boy who's gone on to a marvelous vocation. I got to exactly the spot that I was born for...I don't know where you come from individually, but the fact is that it could be anyplace. None of you need any pull; you don't need a relative; you don't need any privilege; you don't have to go to a particular school...It depends on your capability and talents. I think that it's helpful, as it has been for me, to be very aware of simply or good fortune, just our plain luck -- in being part of this American dynamic...I feel this fact for myself, and I suggest that you become aware of it and just feel privileged to be an American...¹⁴⁶

Having celebrated the patriotic potential of "enlightened" management in *Eupsychian Management* five years earlier, Maslow had finally located a corporation whose humanistic techniques would lift the United States from a troubled decade into an era of restored political, economic, and cultural leadership on a global scale.

Five months after writing this memo celebrating Saga's OD efforts, on June 8, 1970, Maslow rose for his typical morning swim and collapsed suddenly by his home's pool. By the time his wife Bertha rushed over to him, he had died from a massive heart attack. Yet according to his Bertha, he died at what he would have thought to be a high point of his career. Reflecting on her husband's West Coast tenure in the Foreword to a memorial volume of his writings, she celebrated the "unparalleled good fortune" that she and Abe had to be associated with the W.P. Laughlin Charitable Foundation (which had been renamed International Study Project, Inc., and was dedicated in part to the posthumous coordination of Maslow's unpublished writings). The Saga Administrative Corporation had, she gushed, "offered the climate and conditions absolutely

¹⁴⁵ "AH Maslow Journal Memorandum," 1.

¹⁴⁶ "AH Maslow Journal Memorandum," 1-2.

ideal for Abe's work. He was ecstatically happy and productive during his too-short tenure as a Fellow with the Foundation."¹⁴⁷

Maslow is commonly memorialized as a philosophical hero of the 1960s counterculture, the mascot of self-seekers who wanted to transcend mere material satisfactions to achieve "peak experiences" and self-actualization.¹⁴⁸ Yet in the end, Maslow was more at home on the campus of a corporation than in the halls of a university or in the encounter groups of Esalen. His "Eupsychia" turned out to be compatible with the very capitalist and corporate principles that many of his youthful disciples intended to dismantle. As he grew disenchanted with the individualistic expressions of humanistic psychology and alienated from the political actions of the nation's youth, Maslow retreated from countercultural arenas to what would have been considered the most conservative environment of the 1960s: an American corporation. Yet for Maslow, this retreat did not signal a decline of idealism. In the end, a food service corporation seemed to him more likely to fulfill the promise of mankind than many of the more self-consciously utopian communities with which he had become affiliated. Maslow, a second-generation immigrant, never stopped being fiercely dedicated to the American dream, and he viewed corporations as one of the most likely agents to fulfill the dream's promise. A product of World War II and the ideology of the Cold War, he also believed that humanistic management could restore America's reputation on the world stage and offer peaceful ammunition against its ideological foes. In the years following his death, these assumptions would come under attack by a number of critics from both inside and outside the world of business.

¹⁴⁷ Bertha Maslow, Foreword to *Abraham H. Maslow: A Memorial Volume* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1972).

¹⁴⁸ See Ellen Herman, "Being and Doing: Humanistic Psychology and the Spirit of the 1960s" in Barbara Tischler, Ed., *Sights on the Sixties* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

Chapter 10

The Decline of Humanistic Management Theory and the Return of “Benevolent Autocracy” in the 1970s

In 1969, the National Industrial Conference Board published a 170-page report entitled *Behavioral Science: Concepts and Management* as part of an ongoing series on Personnel Policy. Writing on behalf of the Conference Board, an “institution for scientific research” whose “sole purpose [was] to promote prosperity and security,” Harold M.F. Rush reported that behavioral science had taken the business world by storm over the course of two decades.¹ In a study of more than 300 American and Canadian firms, approximately 80% indicated interest in the findings of behavioral scientists, and many of those had initiated programs within their companies to implement prominent theories from the field.² Rush assembled the Board’s survey findings and summarized the theories of those purported to be the business world’s six most significant theorists: Douglas McGregor, Chris Argyris, Rensis Likert, Robert Blake (with Jane Mouton), Frederick Herzberg, and Abraham Maslow.³ He offered analyses of the period’s most prominent behavioral science applications (primarily sensitivity training and a variation on sensitivity training called the Managerial Grid) and detailed corporate experiments with

¹ Harold M.F. Rush, *Behavioral Science: Concepts and Management Application* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1969).

² The firms surveyed for this study represented a broad range of industries and company sizes. For example, the Conference Board surveyed twelve companies with under 1,000 employees and twelve companies with more than 100,000 employees, with the majority falling somewhere in between. It surveyed companies representing industries including aerospace, textiles, chemicals, electronics, machinery, retailing and merchandising, the service industry, banking, and metals. Rush concluded in the survey that it was very difficult to reach conclusions about the kinds of industries that were more or less likely to experiment with behavioral science techniques. We should also leave room for the possibility that some of the firms that expressed interest in behavioral science did very little to build on that interest on a day-to-day level.

³ Case studies included American Airlines; Armstrong Cork Company; Corning Glass Works; Genesco, Incorporated; Hotel Corporation of America; Raymond Corporation; Steinberg’s, Ltd.; Syntex Corporation; Texas Instruments, Incorporated; and the Systems Group of TRW, Inc. These firms were noteworthy for being particularly dedicated to the application of behavioral science theories, primarily through their use of sensitivity training and the Managerial Grid. The six behavioral scientists were chosen based on the number of firms that cited them as influential: 134 for McGregor, 96 for Herzberg, 88 for Likert, 85 for Argyris, 54 for Maslow, and 52 for Blake/Mouton.

behavioral science. One took place at the Armstrong Cork Company, a 21,000-employee company in Lancaster, Pennsylvania that had developed an in-house “Seminar in Human Behavior” after sending a training executive to “one of the earliest sensitivity training laboratories.”⁴ Other companies using laboratory training or similar offshoots (going by names like “team building laboratories,” “organizational planning,” and “power structure seminars”) included Corning Glass Works in Corning, New York; Genesco, Incorporated, an apparel company in Nashville, Tennessee; the Hotel Corporation of America in Boston, Massachusetts⁵; the Syntex Corporation, a pharmaceutical corporation in Mexico City; and Texas Instruments Incorporated in Dallas, Texas.⁶

Sensitivity training groups, also known as T-groups, appeared in the report as the most significant manifestation of behavioral science principles in management training. Rush suggested that sensitivity training had evolved into “perhaps the most influential and widespread application of behavioral research in education and in industry,” employed to instill in managers the self-awareness necessary for productive and transparent communication networks.⁷ At the same time, he suggested, the technique was “controversial,” noting that “among executives who know about it, it is common to find strong opinions ‘pro’ or ‘con,’ and usually those opinions are coupled with strong emotions.”⁸

⁴ Rush 87.

⁵ Note that Roger Sonnabend, the head of the Hotel Corporation of America and an adamant supporter of the National Training Laboratories, dabbled in humanistic management theory himself. See Roger P. Sonnabend, *Your Future in Hotel Management*, Revised (Arco, 1971).

⁶ For more on Texas Instruments, see Chapter 7.

⁷ Rush 42.

⁸ Rush 42.

Rush presented the experience of T-groups in existential terms similar to those of Alfred Marrow's *Behind the Executive Mask* (discussed at the beginning of Chapter 7):

The rationale for sensitivity training, simply stated, is this: persons tend to live by a set of ritual roles or patterns of behavior that they have learned through living in a particular culture. One presents a 'public façade' and lives his life through these roles, which may not be indicative of the real character of the individual. Sensitivity training provides an opportunity for participants to discard the facades they present to the world and to experiment with expressing their true feelings. Participants may behave with one another according to their inherent natures, without the tremendous waste of psychic energy required to maintain their acceptable facades.⁹

Here, corporate sensitivity training emerged as a tool for the achievement of personal authenticity—and yet was not, according to Rush, equivalent to therapy. In group therapy, he explained, the purpose is “overcoming the neuroses or psychoses of the individuals who constitute the group,” whereas in the T-group the focus is “on the process of group interaction and the individual's role in this interaction, and not on the personal problems of its members.”¹⁰

According to Rush, statistics suggested an increased rise in corporate sensitivity training since its “modest beginnings” with industrial groups. A Conference Board report from 1964 reported that 38% of companies responding to a survey about management development practices reported “that they had used sensitivity training to some extent,” and 80% of those companies indicated that they planned to continue using it. The Conference Board issued another survey in 1968 to 241 companies that had indicated interest in or experience with behavioral science. Of those, 85 reported that they had used sensitivity training sponsored by NTL or universities, and 18 reported that they conducted sensitivity training in-house.¹¹ Rush

⁹ Rush 43.

¹⁰ Rush 44.

¹¹ Rush 44.

explained that of those who participated in sensitivity training, the “majority” characterized it as an “emotionally moving experience,” commonly ending with “separation anxiety” as participants faced the prospect of returning home. Participants experienced “emotionally shaking encounters with each other, ranging from contempt, to acceptance, to respect, to genuine affection.” One executive commented at the end of a session: “It was the first time in fifty years of living that I felt anybody cared for me as a human being and not because of what I could do for them.”¹² Another reported that having participated in a T-group, “I’m more capable of authentic relationships with people now.”¹³

By the early 1970s, however, the National training Laboratories and other practitioners of T-groups faced a crisis. The use of T-groups had steeply declined in American corporations and business schools, and researchers increasingly questioned the legitimacy of the method. Many found that while sensitivity training could predictably boost levels of “self-actualization” in individuals, there was little to no evidence that the technique increased profits or fueled organizational reform.¹⁴ Critics charged that the T-group produced personal authenticity, not organizational efficiency. At the same time, participative management theory became hotly contested in the business world. As the economy of the 1970s plunged downward, critics began to question the bottom-line benefits of participation and democratic decision-making. Some called for statistics confirming participation’s material benefits; others called for a wholesale rejection of the anti-hierarchical model and a revival of traditional authority within organizations. The end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s marked a crossroads for the theories of Lewin, Likert, McGregor, and Maslow. Though these men had always celebrated

¹² Rush 48.

¹³ Rush 49.

¹⁴ See detailed explanations of critics’ positions below.

participation and self-actualization as tools for the larger good (including organizational profit), their methods and theories fell prey to ultimately damning charges of self-indulgent individualism and senseless idealism.

The rhetoric of authenticity surrounding T-groups represented an increasingly potent identity crisis within the ranks of the National Training Laboratories. According to the founders of NTL, its exponential institutional growth in the 1960s was a mixed blessing that marked a “decade of continued crises.”¹⁵ NTL President Leland Bradford noted that one of the central forces behind the T-group’s explosion was its evolution away from the original principles of Kurt Lewin’s Basic Skills Training Group, from a focus on “group behavior and social and organizational change” to “self-awareness and interpersonal relations.”¹⁶ T-groups had always aimed to integrate humanistic psychology with theories of group behavior and organizational change, and NTL’s original founders had adamantly privileged training in “democratic leadership” over the therapeutic growth of individuals. These two foci entered a heated relationship through the 1950s, but developments in the 1960s exacerbated the rift. Most notably, the “Encounter movement” took the west coast by storm and introduced a new realm of theories and exercises to the intensive group movement, equating T-groups with personal growth and presenting self-actualization as an end in itself.

NTL had maintained a dialogue with west coast institutions since the early 1950s, when Paul Sheats left Bethel to establish the Western Training Laboratories in Group Development (WTLGD). From the beginning, he had aligned the institute strongly with humanistic psychology and emphasized the dynamics of individuals over group relations. A tension began

¹⁵ Leland Powers Bradford, *National Training Laboratories: Its History, 1947-1970: Originally National Training Laboratory in Group Development and Now NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science* (Bethel, Me: Bradford, 1974), 150.

¹⁶ Bradford 126.

to grow between NTL and WTLGD.¹⁷ In 1959, Carl Rogers opened his own institute, the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, which took the term “sensitivity training” (first popularized by the Western Training Labs in 1954) and raised it to a new level. Whereas NTL had long insisted that its function was educational as opposed to therapeutic, Rogers envisioned his establishment as a provider of “therapy for normals”—an extension of the idea that “the best solution to any problem is the people who have the problem.”¹⁸ His counseling methods advanced the key principles of humanistic psychology, aiming to liberate people’s healthy cores through “peak experiences” within small groups. Like Maslow, Rogers envisioned man as an inherently good, inherently healthy creature whose potential could be maximized by locating the “divine spark,” the “deep, untapped resources of decency and strength and good” within him.¹⁹ Throughout the 1960s, this tendency would intensify and fuel the Human Potential movement, in which techniques expanded from intensive group talk to include meditation, massage, holistic medicine, and yoga. Writing in 1969, *New York Times* writer Marilyn Bender summed up the growing regional dichotomy: “On the west coast, encounter groups emphasize joy, ecstasy, and nudity. On the east coast, the stress is on making corporate and organizational life more tolerable, fully clothed.”²⁰

¹⁷ Jane Howard, *Please Touch; a Guided Tour of the Human Potential Movement* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 134; Kurt W. Back, *Beyond Words; the Story of Sensitivity Training and the Encounter Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972), 61.

¹⁸ Howard 19.

¹⁹ Ellen Herman, “Being and Doing: Humanistic Psychology and the Spirit of the 1960s” in Barbara Tischler, Ed., *Sights on the Sixties* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 88; Howard 19. See also Wendy Kaminer, *I’m Dysfunctional, You’re Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 57.

²⁰ Marilyn Bener, “Sensitivity Training: A Workout for the Psyche and Emotions,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1969, 36. Jane Howard refers to the two wings of the movement as “right-wing” and “left-wing” extremes of the encounter movement’s continuum. See Howard 21.

It would be misguided, however, to draw a sharp dividing line between west coast and east coast wings of the encounter movement, for the two camps remained in dialogue throughout the 1960s. The relationship between NTL and the Esalen Institute, founded by Michael Murphy and Richard Price in 1962, reveals the extent to which the T-group united the two coasts. Esalen embodied the Human Potential movement more than any other growth center on the west coast (Abraham Maslow was said to have called it “one of the nation’s most important educational institutions”), but its “encounter” methods were derived from an early exposure to NTL’s methods.²¹ Murphy’s original inspiration for the establishment of Esalen came from a talk by Aldous Huxley on “Human Potentialities.” He established the center as a venue for continuing dialogue about the kinds of mind-expanding techniques that Murphy and Price were attracted to in the work of people like Huxley and Maslow, as well as Eastern religions (Murphy had studied in India after leaving Stanford in the early 1950s).²²

In 1963, Murphy expanded his mission to include workshops in group dynamics inspired by—surprisingly enough—an event being held by the American Management Association at Highlands Inn in Carmel, California. One of Murphy’s biographers recounted of the training session:

It was a 5-day T-group for junior executives, a real *encounter* session in which people talked about their feelings, confronted each other, worked through problems right there in front of everybody. Murphy found the workshop as much of a mindblower as psychedelic drugs. In fact, he wrote an essay about the similarities between the group experience and the drug experience, and concluded that, of the two, groups were more powerful and effective. Groups, he decided, would be one of the New American Yogas—a path of union between the individual and the cosmos. Straight out of the world of the corporations and the bureaucracies came a process that was showing people

²¹ Walt Anderson, *The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the American Awakening* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1983), 67.

²² Back 66.

how to heighten their awareness of one another, to grow and change and communicate.²³

Murphy exported the T-group from the American Management Association to the cliffs of Big Sur, California, where it remained a trademark of the Esalen experience throughout the 1960s.

Soon after, Murphy began recruiting members of NTL's staff to lead workshops at Esalen. Most notably, he stumbled upon a social psychologist named William Schutz who had been leading T-groups since the mid-1950s, and who embodied the changes taking place at both Esalen and NTL.²⁴ Schutz had begun his career with group dynamics work at the University of Chicago after earning his PhD from UCLA in 1951. Soon after, he went Harvard, where he started teaching a group dynamics seminar as a "modified T-group" and continued to do so for four years. After running some workshops at the Western Training Laboratories, in 1963, he was invited by Murphy to conduct a seminar at Esalen. He turned down the opportunity because he was about to move to the east coast to serve an appointment at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine in New York, and to experiment with new methods of experimental group work at the National Training Laboratories. He commuted between Einstein and Bethel through the mid-1960s.

Schutz had been recruited by NTL in the aftermath of its becoming "rigid in the late 1950s, a victim of its own success." The institute was "looking for new ways to loosen it up," and Schutz was one of a small group of trainers who fit the bill.²⁵ Due to NTL's concern that things might "go too far and charge off into unexplored emotional territory," Schutz was

²³ Anderson 85.

²⁴ Anderson 151.

²⁵ Anderson 154.

cautioned to proceed with “extreme caution.” Nonetheless, he experimented with “things that people in T-groups had never done before”:

[T]hey drew pictures, tried group fantasies and nonverbal exercises, tried ‘happening’ sessions with no prearranged structure, just making things up as they went along. They got rid of the huge oak tables that had been a standard feature of T-groups and sat in a circle of chairs. Then they got rid of the chairs and sat on the floor.²⁶

Meanwhile, Schutz began studying more experimental forms of therapy. In the mid-1960s, he introduced some of them to Bethel’s newly developed Personal Growth labs: imagery work from psychosynthesis, emotion-releasing techniques from bioenergetics, and action methods from psychodrama. In one new T-group exercise called “High Noon,” he had people who were in conflict stand at opposite ends of the room and walk to meet each other in the middle, “at which point they were to do whatever they felt like doing, anything that expressed the truth about where they were with each other at the moment—wrestle, embrace, shake hands, whatever.”²⁷

As Schutz continued with this work, he became dissatisfied with the label of “T-group” or “sensitivity training” and opted instead for “open encounter.” Soon thereafter, in 1966, he agreed to leave the east coast in order to lead three Esalen seminars at Big Sur. He had a cause: “He wanted to bring encounter to the world.”²⁸ In the summer of 1967, he began leading more workshops, and soon thereafter became a fulltime leader of Esalen’s residential program. Schutz’s greatest lasting legacy was his 1967 book *Joy: Expanding Human Awareness*, which proved a huge success; it propelled Schutz onto the talk show circuit and attracted the greatest amount of publicity for Esalen that it had yet received.²⁹ Ironically, as one observer has pointed

²⁶ Anderson 154.

²⁷ Anderson 155.

²⁸ Anderson 157.

²⁹ Anderson 158.

out, the book became an emblem of west coast culture even though it had been written in New York, using information gathered on the east coast—particularly at NTL.³⁰

Will Schutz's biography illuminates the identity struggle taking place at NTL in the 1960s, as the organization's leaders scrambled to define the institute against the backdrop of larger changes taking place within the encounter movement. On the one hand, NTL's Personal Growth labs (established in 1964) accommodated the sort of experimental, self-expressive techniques that were coming into vogue on the west coast. By the time journalist Jane Howard attended a 2-week "Advanced Personal Growth Laboratory" in Bethel in the late 1960s, her exercises included crawling around like an oozing blob on the floor, dancing on her hands, playing an imaginary tug of war with an imaginary rope, and envisioning herself as a tropical fish.³¹

In 1966, a philosophy professor from MIT named Huston Smith wrote a report for the NTL newsletter in which he attempted to capture the transcendent experience of such a laboratory.³² The experience of his first Laboratory on Human Relations, he reported, "proved fascinating and engrossing beyond all expectations. Only marriage, my first trip around the world, and LSD compare."³³ His free-associational report read more like a treatise from Ken Kesey or William Burroughs than like that of a social scientist:

Days of near-delirium and wide-ranging, disordered thought. Deeper currents of feeling. Two weeks crawling around the playpen of love and pain, the human heart...Attempts to answer strange signals. What *do* I feel? And what is

³⁰ Anderson 158.

³¹ Howard 114-120.

³² Huston Smith (Professor of Philosophy MIT), "Laboratory on Human Relations, Bethel, Maine, Third Session, 1965," *Human Relations Training News* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1965-66).

³³ Smith 2.

appropriate to speak? How difficult to be honest, or even to know what honesty means in such a setting. One may say, ‘Now, for these days, just as an experiment, I’m going to speak the truth,’ but the truth hears and runs away and hides before one’s even done speaking...Confusion so great it is metropolitan. With meanings not double or triple, merely, but in countless wavering outlines, the possibilities for misunderstanding endless. Normal bonds of communication have been torn to shreds....What- the- hell – is- going – on! How curious this life we have been given to lead. No model will ever be subtle enough for it. ...People sprung loose from their defenses, their masks, their fixations. How hard it all is! Is this what Kierkegaard had in mind when he said, ‘Only when we have known hell through and through will we become really serious’? ³⁴

Smith’s experience at NTL’s Human Relations training lab—with its “river of grief and self-condemnation,” its “extreme intensity” and “heavy sorrow” paired with the ecstasy of deep human connection, represented the experiences of a growing population of seekers who entered human relations labs seeking transcendence and left with new selves in tow.

Meanwhile, NTL’s more conservative leaders like Bradford began panicking about the institute’s declining emphases on group behavior and social change. Bradford feared that Esalen and similar growth centers around the country had set off a wave of publicity for brands of therapy and T-group training that were “erroneously connected” to NTL. “While some was helpful to NTL,” he explained, “much was not,” and “NTL faced the problem of living with an image foreign to its activities.”³⁵ NTL’s quarterly newsletter, *Human Relations Training News*, reflected the heated dialogue about the goals of laboratory training. In the spring of 1962, a staff member from the Temple University Group Dynamics Center wrote that he was “increasingly concerned” about the mission of NTL and its many offshoots. “If I recollect correctly,” he

³⁴ Smith 2.

³⁵ Leland Powers Bradford, *National Training Laboratories: Its History, 1947-1970: Originally National Training Laboratory in Group Development and Now NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science* (Bethel, Me: Bradford, 1974), 129.

wrote, “the early NTL training was not oriented toward sensitivity as such; it was oriented toward skill training (the groups were called basic skill training groups). The concept that was active was that awareness of a situation and ability to diagnose it were requirements of effective skill development.”³⁶ He regretfully noted “an increased emphasis on self and other-awareness in relationship to group situations” and urged the organization to clarify “the status of the therapy vs. training issue.”³⁷

Other members of the NTL community disagreed and urged the discarding of such dichotomous distinctions. In response to the lament above, for instance, another NTL member wrote to suggest “that both the increased participation of clinicians and the greater emphasis on self-awareness and personal sharing are not indicative of a distortion of the original goals of training, but rather a response to deep-seated needs in the trainees for authentic relatedness.”³⁸ The increasingly therapeutic orientation of the staff, he suggested, might reflect not only the needs of these trainees (whom he commended for having “the folly, courage, and most of all...the human need to move into new realms of human relations training”) but also the changing skills of their trainers, who increasingly came from psychological and therapeutic professional backgrounds.³⁹ Warren Bennis, one of NTL’s most prominent and respected

³⁶ Letter from David Jenkins of the Group Dynamics Center of Temple University, *Human Relations Training News* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1962).

³⁷ Jenkins 3.

³⁸ Thomas Greening, “More Issues in Human Relations Training: Group Therapy or Group Development?” from *Human Relations Training News* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1962), 6. A similar outlook was expressed in Edward Nevis, “The Trainee’s Goals in Laboratory Training,” *Human Relations Training News* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1963). Nevis expressed his conviction that “there is a great, dammed-up hunger among adult people in our society in the direction of greater self-actualization as defined by heightened awareness of sensations and feelings off authentic communication with other people. I think more people are beginning to say to other people, ‘I may not be able to solve a particular problem, but I can at least be aware of my feelings in the matter and communicate them meaningfully with other people involved.’” Nevis 3.

³⁹ Greening 6.

members, similarly expressed his contention that “[a]uthenticity, ‘leveling,’ and ‘expressing feelings’ comprise an important part of the laboratory argot, all of which can be summed up in a passage from *King Lear*: ‘Speak what you feel, not what we ought to say.’”⁴⁰

Such arguments in favor of authenticity and soul-bearing did not persuade NTL Director Leland Bradford. During an “historical meeting” in July 1965, Bradford and his comrades developed the “Vision 70” document, which proposed a redefined direction for the organization. “Now is the time,” they declared, “to move actively and aggressively in the direction of becoming an organization seen as the key organization for applied behavioral science, turned to by government, industry, education, and other institutional and community areas for action, guidance, and conduct of programs of training, research, and action.”⁴¹ It was time for NTL to return to its roots and cultivate a more scientifically legitimate character. For Bradford, the key to success lay with NTL’s occupational labs—those used by industry, education, and government—because their fundamentally organizational focus could serve as “a counteractive force or, perhaps, as an equally strong divergence from the emphasis on self-awareness training.”⁴² Other attempts at legitimization included the publication of NTL’s *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* beginning in 1965—marking an effort to cultivate a distinctly scientific and academic character for the organization—and the changing of NTL’s name to NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science in 1967.

⁴⁰ Warren Bennis, “Goals and Meta-Goals of Laboratory Training,” *Human Relations Training News* 6, no. 3 (Fall 1962).

⁴¹ Bradford 165.

⁴² Bradford 128.

Unfortunately, the management press of the 1960s repeatedly challenged Bradford's faith in the scientific legitimacy of occupational labs. Many critics charged that since the 1950s, in spite of their organizational rhetoric, occupational labs had been steadily advancing toward the same fate of NTL's personal growth labs: they had become workshops for self-expression and self-actualization. Social scientists and corporate witnesses began to testify that there was no empirical evidence to support the T-group's effectiveness on an organizational level, and that—even worse—T-groups could do harm by making executives feel *too* liberated from the constraints of corporate convention. They suggested that the structure of the T-group, meant to nurture the intimate connections between individual and organization, had left the second part of its equation behind. Many critics focused on the lack of empirical evidence as a central problem within sensitivity training. According to these skeptics, not only was there insufficient evidence to show that T-groups accomplished what they were supposed to accomplish within a small group setting, but there was not even satisfactory *methodology* in place to test the effectiveness of T-groups on participants.⁴³

One observer commented that “Although sensitivity training has actually been used since 1947, there is little scientific research evidence that the training actually changes executive behavior. Returning trainees seem to feel that they have benefited, but they can't be specific

⁴³ See Paul C. Buchanan, “Laboratory Training and Organizational Development,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (September 1969): 466-480; Frank Gibson and Clyde Teasley, “The Humanistic Model of Organizational Motivation: A Review of Research Support,” *Public Administration Review* 33, no. 1 (January-February 1973): 89-96; Herbert Hand and John Slocum, Jr., “Human Relations Training for Middle Management: A Field Experiment,” *The Academy of Management Journal* 13, no. 4 (December 1970): 403-410; Ernest Miller, “The Impact of T-groups on Managerial Behavior,” *Public Administration Review* 30, no. 3 (May-June 1970): 296-7; Reed Powell, “Participative Management a Panacea?” *The Academy of Management Journal* 14, no. 2 (June 1971): 165-73; Frank Paine, “Management Perspective: Sensitivity Training: The Current State of the Question,” *The Academy of Management Journal* (September 1965); Wilcox, “Hierarchy, Human Nature, and the Participative Panacea”; Wendell Wolfe, “Human Relations Laboratory Training: Three Questions,” *The Journal of Business* 39, no. 4 (October 1966): 512-515.

about the changes.”⁴⁴ Another critic lobbed his attack directly at NTL, claiming that “after almost 20 years of operation,” the organization was “unable to produce supporting evidence through scientifically designed studies to prove that labs actually produce changes in human behavior.” The same survey of research reported that of 200 executives and managers who participated in sensitivity training laboratories in 1960, 22% of the participants did not notice any changes in their behavior.⁴⁵ Another scholar diagnosed a “honeymoon-disillusion cycle” regarding sensitivity training within industry, suggesting that corporate leaders had gotten fed up with experimenting with new training programs only to find that the results were at best vague, and at worst nonexistent.⁴⁶

Other critics deduced that T-groups helped bolster self-awareness within individuals, but that without sustained programs of organizational support, increased self-awareness had no effect on the larger organizational structure or rates of productivity.⁴⁷ “Without the supporting social interaction,” one critic charged, “the norms and values of sensitivity training wither away...Sensitivity trainers might be able to create, momentarily, for a small group, a ‘little bit of heaven,’ where authenticity and trust reign, but there would be a need for intermittently resensitizing the group.”⁴⁸ Here was Bradford’s nightmare: one spokesman for General Electric complained that “Sensitivity training...is designed to change an individual, not necessarily the environment he works in,” so that “when the individual attempts to use what he has learned, he

⁴⁴ Paine 230.

⁴⁵ Wolfe 514.

⁴⁶ Back 173.

⁴⁷ See Hand and Wilcox.

⁴⁸ Wilcox 61.

often finds his coworkers unwilling to accept it.”⁴⁹ Even when participants were able to cite a concrete change in their group behavior in the aftermath of a T-group, it seemed, positive results would begin to fade out within the first year after training—leaving participants right back where they started, under-actualized and with an organization that neglected the interpersonal needs of its employees.⁵⁰ In worst case scenarios, some critics argued that T-groups could actually *retard* sensitivity or, in the case of already-fragile individuals, lead to psychological breakdowns.⁵¹

In 1969, the *Wall Street Journal* published an exposé suggesting the possibility that sensitivity training was working *too* well.⁵² It acknowledged that a growing number of companies were “taking a much more critical look at sensitivity training” due to unproven effectiveness and the aforementioned problem of institutions changing without a necessary, corresponding change in corporate structure. The article also introduced a new segment of sensitized managers: those who had reached such heights of self-actualization that they ditched the corporate world altogether:

Last year a big New York consumer products company sent Mrs. D., a product manager, to a week-long sensitivity training program. Mrs. D. loved that part. ‘It was a whole week of truth serum, all openness,’ she recalls. ‘But then I came back to work and found it shrouded in the usual unnecessary tactfulness and diplomacy. I discovered that training had so opened me of that I was tired of the Mickey Mouse.’ When her superiors wanted to delay a decision on a new product development program she had been working on for more than a year, she told them she was tired of their procrastination and quit to take a comparable job

⁴⁹ Byron E. Calame, “The Truth Hurts: Some Companies See More Harm Than Good in Sensitivity Training,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 1969, 1.

⁵⁰ Paine 228; Wolfe 514.

⁵¹ See Ronald Taft’s review of Henry Clay’s *Sensitivity to People*, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 20, no. 3 (April 1967): 527; and Calame, “The Truth Hurts.” It is worth noting that NTL was highly sensitive to the charge that its training programs could lead to psychological collapse. Their training literature emphasized the need for T-group participants to be psychologically stable before attending a lab, and NTL insisted that less than 1% of its participants had suffered any kind of undesirable psychological effects over the course of its history (see “The Truth Hurts.”)

⁵² Calame 1.

elsewhere, where she has more latitude. Her old employer dropped the sensitivity training program in which she participated.⁵³

In another worst case scenario, a “ruthlessly aggressive guy” was sent by his company to sensitivity training, “where he found out exactly what people thought of him. So he stopped being a beast...and his effectiveness fell apart. The reason he’d been so good was that he didn’t understand what a beast he was. Eventually, they put in a new manager.”

Finally, the article offered an anecdote that reaffirmed the cultural dichotomy between the counterculture and corporate culture. An advertising executive for a “major West Coast firm” had attended a “far-out sensitivity training program” at the Esalen institute, and he was so profoundly affected by his experience that he quit his job to become a dishwasher at Esalen. At the time of the article’s publication, he was unemployed. These examples—and the larger realm of criticism of T-groups—challenged the very foundation upon which NTL had developed its methodology: the idea that self-actualization was not only good for the soul, but also for the organization, and that bureaucratic woes could be erased by the establishment of more authentic relationships between people. Even more powerful than the critique that T-groups failed to bolster personal authenticity was the critique that authenticity was not good for the workplace in the first place.

At the same time that NTL was enduring assaults from the management press and beyond, the participative management theories of Douglas McGregor and Rensis Likert came under attack. By the early 1970s, the fundamentally utopian visions of Theory Y and System 4 had earned a slew of harsh critics. Skeptics charged that humanistic management theorists’ research was insufficiently scientific; that their theories found little support in real-world

⁵³ Calame 1.

practice; that their utopian dreams would necessarily crash and burn during hard economic times; and that satisfactions of individuals and productivity of the organization were, in fact, rarely compatible.

The idea of participative management was already in dispute by the late 1950s. In 1958, Robert McMurry published a widely read *Harvard Business Review* article that encapsulated the opposition's stance. In "The Case for Benevolent Autocracy," McMurry argued that participative management—which he alternately referred to as "democratic," "humanistic," or "bottom-up" management—was a theoretically inspiring but pragmatically bankrupt idea.⁵⁴ According to McMurry, the approach disregarded fundamental facts about both individuals and the organizations in which they worked. McMurry launched a multi-pronged assault against contemporary management theorists' persistent emphasis on "groupness" and their insistence that "management must democratize" – which he said was already "everywhere" by the time of his writing in the late 1950s. "Such a philosophy is a welcome swing of the pendulum away from the brutality of the ill-famed Pennsylvania Coal and Iron Police and the 'company store,'" he explained, "[a]nd it is a fine ideal – an ultimate to goal to shoot for. But it is as one-sided as the pessimistic vision of human nature it replaces... Human nature being what it is, democratic management is practical in only a small minority of companies."⁵⁵

McMurry presented multiple reasons for participative management's inevitable failure. First, he argued, the theory grossly over-estimated most workers' appetites for self-direction and work itself. There will always be a group of workers who chronically dislike their work, he explained, and who will not perform well no matter what psychological enticements they

⁵⁴ Robert N. McMurry, "The Case for Benevolent Autocracy," *Harvard Business Review* 36, no. 1 (February 1958): 82–90.

⁵⁵ McMurry 82.

receive. Conversely, there will always be a group of middle managers – the emblem of which McMurry called “The Bureaucratic Man”—who like their work as it is. They are comforted by bureaucracy; they crave it security and stability; they “live by the book.” He elaborated, “Such people often make excellent subordinates. In their search for security, they do their best to meet their superiors’ expectations as completely as they can...they are the ‘good soldiers,’ the loyal ‘organization men.’ But they cannot administer, direct, or inspire others.”⁵⁶ And the qualities lacked by these men were precisely those embodied by the best of top management: “hard-driving, ego-centric entrepreneurs” who may not always rub people the right way, but who ultimately know how to lead and get things done. McMurry added to these concerns his larger suspicions of group work, which he believed often generated a sort of “group autocracy” rather than the kind of self-expression and individualism envisioned by Likert and McGregor.⁵⁷

McMurry concluded that the most realistically desirable system of management was “benevolent autocracy.” This system provided a strong leader with a clear vision who “does not exploit his employees or willfully mistreat them,” but might “[forget] at times that they are human beings with their own needs and problems.”⁵⁸ The benevolent autocrat would act like a “father figure” who invited employees’ perspectives but ultimately reach his own conclusions about what was right. He might even “stress the desirability of the humanistic, democratic philosophy of management” when communicating with workers, in order to “convey the impression that the holders of supreme power in the company are in favor of the avant-garde

⁵⁶ McMurry 83.

⁵⁷ McMurry 85.

⁵⁸ McMurry 86.

decision-making” – while privately recognizing the fundamental limitations of the bottom-up system and doing as he saw fit. McMurry ultimately promised:

What benevolent autocracy offers is not a beautiful vision of a world to come. Instead, it simply accepts reality with all of its limitations. While hardly a noble philosophy of management, it does have one attribute: where it has been tried, it works.⁵⁹

McMurry could not have known the prescience of this sentiment in 1958, when many in the field of management remained optimistic about the potential of participation in the workplace.⁶⁰

By the time Rensis Likert published his second volume of management theory, *The Human Organization*, in 1967, he likely anticipated a glowing response akin to that received by *New Patterns of Management* in 1961. Instead, he found that the tide had started to change. Critics slammed the new work for its pseudo-science, blind optimism, and flawed logic. Abraham Zaleznik, a professor at Harvard Business School, lambasted Likert’s desire to “convert managers from authoritarian to democratic styles” and his promise that the latter was inherently more effective. “The problem is,” Zaleznik explained, “the research proves no such thing.”⁶¹ Zaleznik charged Likert with gross over-simplification, incensed that he had overlooked the intrinsically complicated and unpredictable nature of organizations and the large role played by uncontrollable external forces (like foreign competition and business cycles). He also challenged Likert’s romanticized conception of the “unsung middle managers” who toiled

⁵⁹ McMurry 90.

⁶⁰ It is worth noting that McMurry’s article attracted its fair share of critics. One particularly prominent voice, Warren Bennis, charged that McMurry’s idealization of the benevolent autocracy was as naïve as his caricature of humanistic optimism—that McMurry had, in his defense of bureaucratic relationships and traditionally authoritative leaders, created a myth of “great men” who would set American corporations on a path to victory. Bennis also charged that McMurry’s denial of human potential was blindly pessimistic; that even Sigmund Freud, who boldly confronted the weakness of the human spirit, believed that people and societies were capable of change. See Warren Bennis, “Revisionist Theory of Leadership,” 39 (1961). Also see Warren Bennis and Philip Slater, “Democracy is Inevitable,” *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1964): 51-59.

⁶¹ Abraham Zaleznik, Review of *The Human Organization* by Rensis Likert, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 21, no. 4 (July 1968): 624-5.

against the tyranny of top management. Surely, Zaleznik insisted, some middle managers were stubborn tyrants in their own right, while top management could consist of human beings with good intentions. The only thing Likert had effectively demonstrated was the way in which “social science can be used in the service of making myths.”⁶²

Another critic questioned Likert’s repeated assertion that “the art of management can be based on verifiable information derived from rigorous and quantitative research” and his insistence—“again and again”—that his system of management was “science-based.”⁶³ What about the limitations posed by cultural variation, this critic implored, or differences in personality? Yet another lamented that Likert’s unconvincing data were gathered, problematically, from the perspectives of organizational members rather than from more neutral observers.⁶⁴ In six years, Likert’s work had transformed from fashionable avant-garde to whipping post.

The critique of participative management grew increasingly scathing as the US economy declined. In 1970, *Management Review* published an article by George Berkwitt declaring, “Recession Explodes New Myths of Management.”⁶⁵ “Forged in the boom years of the 1960s,” Berkwitt explained, “a number of management’s most compelling new maxims held up until

⁶² Abraham Zaleznik, Review of *The New Utopians: A Study of System Design and Social Change* by Robert Boguslaw; *Organizing Men and Power: Patterns of Behavior and Line-Staff Models* by Robert T. Golembiewski; *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* by Rensis Likert; *Organizations in Action: Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory* by James D. Thompson, *American Journal of Sociology* 73, no. 6 (May, 1968): 775-777.

⁶³ Harry Triandis, Review of *The Human Organization* by Rensis Likert, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (December 1967): 503-506, 503.

⁶⁴ Thomas Ference, Review of *The Human Organization* by Rensis Likert, *Management Science* 14, no. 2 (October 1967): B130-B131.

⁶⁵ George Berkwitt, “Recession Explodes New Myths of Management,” *Management Review*.

they met the acid test of a receding economy” in which “earnings collapsed.”⁶⁶ In the 1960s, the maxims held lofty promise of an egalitarian and cooperative industrial future; in hard times, the principles simply could not hold. Berkwitt cited participative management as one of the prime offenders, with its conviction that work motivation increased as employees were “allowed more self-expression and more influence.” “All well and good,” he explained “– “in boom times, that is. In times of consolidation and retrenchment, participative management becomes a myth.”⁶⁷

Such pronouncements set the tone for the 1970s, as advocates of participative management dwindled and critics grew increasingly scathing. A 1976 *Management Today* article announced that Likert’s theories were “no longer ‘in’” and explained that “the most recent recession, the worst since the 1930s,” had dealt a fatal blow to the organizational theory of the 1960s, with General Motors as one of the few exceptions.⁶⁸ The author’s article explained that “Many sacred texts and tenets in the behavior field didn’t stand up to reality in a grimmer, results-oriented environment”; “It was goodbye to Chris Argyris, Rensis Likert, Douglas McGregor, and all that.”⁶⁹ He elaborated, “The ugly word power, which the behaviorists brushed under the carpet, is now again a part of the vocabulary.”⁷⁰ The humanistic assumption that democratic participation could make coercion and inequality obsolete now seemed a quaint relic of affluent times.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Berkwitt 13.

⁶⁷ Berkwitt 17.

⁶⁸ John Thackray, “US Managers Think Again,” *Management Today*, October 1976, 82-84, folder “RLA Correspondence: Management Today (1976),” box 22, Likert Papers, Bentley Library.

⁶⁹ *Management Today*, 82.

⁷⁰ *Management Today*, 83.

⁷¹ Note that three years after the *Management Today* critique, the *Harvard Business Review* published an article by Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch in which the authors singled out Likert’s theories as symptoms of a larger, problematic epidemic: the tendency of behavioral scientists to present universal theories of human relations with

In the late 1960s, NTL too faced a crisis. The institute was in financial trouble, criticism of its methods was mounting, and its core leaders were anguishing over NTL's deviation from its original mission.⁷² The T-group had exploded within the American cultural landscape to an extent that the institute's founders never could have anticipated, but its increasingly therapeutic orientation alarmed many of those who held it dear. In 1969, Bradford prepared to retire as Director of NTL, and many within the organization agreed that Warren Bennis would be an ideal replacement. Bennis had been affiliated with NTL for years and had co-edited one of the most influential volumes on sensitivity training. He was also young, dashing, and the author of multiple popular business volumes about the challenge of organization in a "temporary" society.⁷³ Bennis hesitated accepting the appointment at first due to his reservations about the character of NTL, and laid out a "reorganization of purpose" as a prerequisite for his assuming the position of director. He issued three main resolutions: "Social change was to be the primary aim"; "the board would be reconstituted to de-emphasize business connections"; and a

little regard for specifics of industry, geographic location, or company size. (Jay W. Lorsch, "Making Behavioral Science More Useful," *Harvard Business Review* 57, no. 2 (March 1979): 171–180.) Participative management had become a "fad," they explained, and its failure to deliver results had contributed to widespread disenchantment with the field of behavioral science in corporations. The authors called for a new school of management theory, explicitly distanced from quick fixes like System 4 and Theory Y, which prioritized specificity and situation over lofty principles about human nature. Likert responded to both this article and the *Management Today* dismissal with characteristically spunky dismay. He cited "several hundred studies" confirming the success of System 4 and defended his own attention to situational factors. (See Likert's Letter to the editor of the *Harvard Business Review*, "Using Behavioral Science" (Harvard Business School Publication Corp., September 1979).) He also promised that System 4 could deliver a 15-20% increase in productivity at any organization, across the board. To Thackray of *Management Today*, he insisted that "more companies are successfully moving towards System 4 today than before the recession started." (See Rensis Likert, Letter to Robert Heller of *Management Today*, 4 December 1976, folder "RLA Correspondence," box 22, Likert papers, Bentley Library.) He promised that his publications and surveys were in greater demand than ever before. Yet it was impossible to deny that the world of mainstream management theory had turned its back on System 4 and other humanistic theories, and by Likert's death in 1981, few companies or publications gave even lip service to the theory he had spent much of his life vigorously defending.

⁷² For financial issues see Back 212.

⁷³ See Edgar H. Schein and Warren G. Bennis, eds., *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods* (New York: Wiley, 1965). For the search for a successor, see Back 73 and Bradford 189. For Bennis's works of the era, see *American Bureaucracy* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co, 1970); Warren G Bennis, *Beyond Bureaucracy: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); Warren G Bennis, *The Temporary Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

university-like institute would be built near Washington, D.C. for the training of “change agents.”⁷⁴

Briefly convinced that NTL was prepared to conform to his vision, Bennis accepted the directorship, but soon thereafter backed down, having concluded that the institute was not ready to go in his direction after all. After lengthy searching (and many rejected offers), the Board chose a man named Vladimir Dupre to assume the position of director in the fall of 1970. Amidst other changes, Dupre instituted a new training program that offered accreditation to T-group leaders—a gesture towards the air of renewed academic credibility that some staff members at NTL craved.⁷⁵ He also pledged to draw the institute into closer affiliations with professional researchers, psychologists and behavioral scientists within the academy. He aimed to signal a return to the NTL of the 1950s, when the organization had been linked in the public imagination to universities and government agencies as opposed to frolicking hippies and psychedelic gurus.

The end of the sixties had delivered an ironic fate to the NTL: the institute had bequeathed its methods to a nation of soul-searchers and gained great notoriety within the rapidly expanding Encounter community, only to denounce its legacy as a deliverer of self-actualization to the masses. By the end of the 1970s, the T-group had reached epidemic proportions as a staple of the Esalen Institute and est, while NTL had faded into anonymity. Its greatest contribution to postwar culture, in the end, had been that which it ultimately denounced: With the T-group, Leland Bradford, Kenneth Benne, and Ronald Lippitt had developed a technique that enabled people from all walks of life to comfortably discuss their feelings with a room full

⁷⁴ Back 73.

⁷⁵ Under the new system, trainers were required to participate in a minimum of a six-week internship followed by a year’s supervised training. At the time of Jane Howard’s publishing of *Please Touch* in 1970, NTL was the only institute to set such stringent training requirements for its leaders.

of strangers. In an age and a culture in which authenticity was increasingly prized as the pinnacle of human experience, these men had located a method that ostensibly delivered it within a two- to three-week laboratory training course.

NTL's management labs, in particular, had signaled a cultural transformation within the corporate world. While intended to cure management and productivity problems within organizations, T-groups had introduced something quite different to the world of the Organization Man: the groundwork for what Tom Wolfe has termed the "Third Great Awakening."⁷⁶ As critics and scholars reflected on the massive movement toward sensitivity training that took place within industry in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in light of its conspicuously absent empirical evidence, they began to speculate that T-groups, once envisioned as the ultimate bureaucratic panacea, had served instead as a sort of *spiritual* panacea for the managerial leaders of the new middle class. Reflecting on the lack of evidence regarding T-groups' organizational effectiveness, Kurt Back concluded that sensitivity training provided "a faith, a sense of mission" for its adherents and suggested, "Perhaps the industrial state today needs more a new religion than a new technique, and for this purpose sensitivity training is as good a candidate as any."⁷⁷ Another observer noted "an almost metaphysical attraction to the Maslow hierarchy" within organizations and asserted, in light of recent research into the effectiveness of humanistic methods, that "for now faith rather than empirical evidence must be used to support the concept."⁷⁸ Warren Bennis supported such analogies with his own eulogizing of Abraham Maslow: "Science to Abe was a way of life and love," Bennis explained,

⁷⁶Tom Wolfe, *The Purple Decades: A Reader* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1983).

⁷⁷ Back 173.

⁷⁸ Frank Gibson and Clyde Teasley, "The Humanistic Model of Organizational Motivation: A Review of Research Support," *Public Administration Review* 33, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1973): 94.

“and debureaucratizing it (or as he would prefer—*resacralizing* it) was his goal... Science was his poetry, his religion, his wonder.”⁷⁹

It was not just faith in the T-group’s efficacy that invited religious analogies. Other observers concluded that the entire T-group exercise was a secularized version of traditional spiritual quests for conversion through candor and intimacy. A 1969 *New York Times* article noted a swelling of spirituality on college campuses throughout America.⁸⁰ It cited young people’s growing dissatisfaction with the rational emptiness of the modern world and found them turning to witches, warlocks, cultists, and Asian religions for a greater sense of authenticity. (One young man explained, “What we’re really concerned about is whether anything is real, I mean, whether it is *really real*. Is there something that is so powerful that It can even make *us* real?”) In addition to alternative religions, the article noted that the “quest for community in small groups makes the neo-sacralists quite conscious of the relevance to their quest of T-groups...encounter groups, and the whole bag of group-dynamics tricks. Just as for some students of group dynamics or sensitivity training becomes almost a religion, so for others already involved in quasi-religious behavior, sensitivity training and its cousins become an important means of religious growth.”⁸¹

In a 1972 book entitled *The Intensive Group Experience: The New Pietism*, Protestant theologian Thomas C. Oden took this argument one step further. He argued that sensitivity training embodied the fundamental tenets of 17th-century Judeo-Christian pietism, with its emphasis on “here and now” experiencing, intensive small-group encounter, honest confession,

⁷⁹ Bennis quoted in *Maslow on Management*.

⁸⁰ Andrew M. Greeley, “There’s a New-Time Religion on Campus,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1969, SM14.

⁸¹ Greeley, “New-Time Religion.”

and trusting community.⁸² He recognized in T-groups a “resacralization of intimate relationships” that would eventually bridge the secular proponents of intense group experience with the religious traditions of the past.⁸³

By the early 1970s, then, NTL and the legion of humanistic management theorists faced a mission of redemption. How might they restore sensitivity training to its rightful place among strategies of organizational efficiency, as opposed to new-age religion? Chris Argyris suggested a defense in an article encapsulating the ideological paradox that had plagued NTL since its inception. In the 1973 article “Organization Man: Rational *and* Self-Actualizing,” he responded to a critic of humanistic management who charged that self-actualization damaged the rational efficiency of organizations.⁸⁴ Firmly establishing himself on the straight side of the 1960s and ‘70s countercultural explosion, Argyris decried “the bankruptcy of most of the youth rebellion” (while suggesting that “we are partially responsible for the rebellion because we provided no model of organization that went much beyond the traditional ones.”).⁸⁵ He affirmed his role as an advocate of organizations—not selfhood—by declaring, “I am not against structure” and by differentiating between “Maslow’s global view of self-actualization and a more restricted view that I have suggested.”⁸⁶ Addressing the charge that his work sacrificed efficiency for emotional

⁸² Thomas C. Oden, *The Intensive Group Experience: The New Pietism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 13.

⁸³ Oden 20.

⁸⁴ Chris Argyris, “Organization Man: Rational *and* Self-Actualizing,” *Public Administration Review* 33, no. 4 (July-August 1973): 354-7.

⁸⁵ Argyris, “Organization Man: Rational *and* Self-Actualizing,” 354.

⁸⁶ Argyris, “Organization Man: Rational *and* Self-Actualizing,” 355. This same combination of characteristics became central to the Organizational Development (OD) movement that thrived in the 1970s and still persists today. Though many in the field of OD began their careers working with more humanistic behavioral science principles and practices, they increasingly gravitated toward a rhetoric that emphasized the organization over the individual. For overviews of the OD movement, see Warren G Bennis, *Changing Organizations; Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization*, McGraw-Hill Series in Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966);

expression, Argyris explained, “a primary purpose of my research...has always been to enhance the rational activity of rational activity in organizations....Reason, for me, is not, and has never been, a shackle of freedom.”⁸⁷ Try as he might to re-align himself with the Organization Man, however, Argyris’s attempt came too late. By the end of the 1970s, bottom-up management had lost a long-fought battle to the bottom line.

Warren G Bennis, *Organization Development: Its Nature, Origins, and Prospects* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1969); Joan V. Gallos, ed., *Organization Development: A Jossey-Bass Reader*, 1st ed. (Jossey-Bass, 2006); Daniel L. Kegan, “Organizational Development: Description, Issues, and Some Research Results,” *The Academy of Management Journal* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 1971): 453–464; .Michael McGill, “The Evolution of Organizational Development: 1947-1960,” *Public Administration Review* 34, no. 2 (April 1974): 98–105.

⁸⁷ Argyris, “Organization Man: Rational *and* Self-Actualizing,” 355-6.

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